

Technical Award in  
**Residential Inventory  
Management and Practice**



MOL Sample Workbook



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QUALIFICATIONS



## **INTRODUCTION TO THE SAMPLE WORKBOOK**

This sample workbook is a guide to the learning materials for the Technical Award in Residential Inventory Management and Practice, written and provided by MOL on behalf of the National Federation of Property Professionals Awarding Body (NFOPP AB).

The full range of property qualifications available from MOL/NFOPP AB is as follows.

### **Award in Introduction to Residential Property Management Practice (Level 2)**

This is an introductory qualification offering basic knowledge in the most important subject areas related to residential letting and property management.

- Unit 1 General Law, Health, Safety and Security in Relation to Residential Letting and Property Management (Level 3)
- Unit 2 Customer Service within the Property Sector
- Unit 3 Introduction to Residential Property Letting Practice
- Unit 4 Introduction to Residential Property Management Practice

### **Award in Introduction to the Sale of Residential Property (Level 2)**

This is an introductory qualification offering basic knowledge in the most important subject areas related to the sale of residential property.

- Unit 1 General Law, Health, Safety and Security in Relation to the Sale of Residential Property
- Unit 2 Customer Service within the Property Sector
- Unit 3 Regulations Relating to the Sale of Residential Property
- Unit 4 Practice Relating to the Sale of Residential Property

### **Technical Award in Residential Letting and Property Management (Level 3)**

This programme is designed as an introduction to the knowledge and understanding required by those working, or aspiring to work, in residential letting agency.

- Unit 1 General Law, Health, Safety and Security in Relation to Residential Letting and Property Management
- Unit 2 Legal Aspects of Letting and Management
- Unit 3 Residential Property Letting Practice
- Unit 4 Residential Property Management Practice

### **Technical Award in the Sale of Residential Property (Level 3)**

The Technical Award in the Sale of Residential Property is designed as an introduction to the knowledge and understanding required by those working, or aspiring to work, in residential estate agency or new homes sales.

- Unit 1 General Law, Health, Safety and Security in Relation to the Sale of Residential Property
- Unit 2 Law Relating to Residential Property Sales
- Unit 3 Practice Relating to Residential Property Sales
- Unit 4 Property Appraisal and Basic Building Construction/Defects

### **Technical Award in Commercial Property Agency (Level 3)**

The Technical Award in Commercial Property Agency is designed as an introduction to the knowledge and understanding required by those working, or aspiring to work, in commercial property agency.

- Unit 1 General Law, Health, Safety and Security in Relation to Commercial Property Agency
- Unit 2 Practice and Law Relating to Commercial Property Agency
- Unit 3 Law Relating to Commercial Property
- Unit 4 Commercial Property and Business Appraisal and Basic Building Construction

### **Technical Award in Real Property Auctioneering (Level 3)**

This programme is designed as an introduction to the knowledge and understanding required by those working, or aspiring to work, in estate agency where auctioneering is an important part of the work of the agency.

- Unit 1 General Law, Health, Safety and Security in Relation to Real Property Auctioneering
- Unit 2 Law Relating to Real Property Auctions
- Unit 3 Real Property Auctioneering Practice and Procedures
- Unit 4 Property Appraisal and the Auction Process

### **Technical Award in Chattels Auctioneering (Level 3)**

This programme is designed as an introduction to the knowledge and understanding required by those working, or aspiring to work, in chattels auctioneering.

- Unit 1 General Law, Health, Safety and Security in Relation to Chattels Auctioneering
- Unit 2 Law Relating to Chattels Auctions
- Unit 3 Chattels Auctioneering Practice and Procedures
- Unit 4 Chattels Appraisal and the Auctioneer's Duties and Liabilities

### **Technical Award in Residential Inventory Management and Practice (Level 3)**

This programme covers the law and practice of letting agency and inventory management in England and Wales.

- Unit 1 General Law, Health, Safety and Security in Relation to Residential Inventory Management and Practice
- Unit 2 Legal Aspects of Residential Inventory Management and Practice
- Unit 3 Residential Letting and Property Management
- Unit 4 Residential Inventory Management and Practice

### **Technical Award in Residential Tenancy Deposit Protection and Management (Level 3)**

This programme is designed as an introduction to the knowledge and understanding required by those working, or aspiring to work, in residential letting agency and who will be dealing with tenancy deposits.

- Unit 1 General Law, Health, Safety and Security in Relation to Residential Letting and Property Management
- Unit 2 Legal Aspects of Letting and Management
- Unit 3 Handling, Protecting and Processing Residential Tenancy Deposits
- Unit 4 Returning Residential Tenancy Deposits and Dispute Resolution Procedures

### **Certificate (Level 4)**

The Level 4 Certificate programmes are designed for more experienced people working within agency such as senior negotiators, managers and principles. The full certificate has 8 units, but the first two are carried forward from the relevant technical award. There are four additional technical units specific to each pathway, and two common office/people management units.

The common management units are

- Unit 7 Introduction to Office Management
- Unit 8 Advanced Office Management (Level 5)

The two pathways and their technical units are as follows.

#### **Certificate in Residential Letting and Property Management**

- Unit 3 Legal Aspects Relating to Residential Letting and Management
- Unit 4 Practice Relating to Residential Property Management
- Unit 5 Appraisal and Residential Property Letting Practice
- Unit 6 Applied Law Relating to Residential Letting and Management (Level 5)

#### **Certificate in the Sale of Residential Property**

- Unit 3 Legal Aspects Relating to Residential Estate Agency
- Unit 4 Practice Relating to Residential Estate Agency
- Unit 5 Market Appraisal, Value and Inspection Relating to Residential Estate Agency
- Unit 6 Building Design and Defects for Residential Estate Agency (Level 5)



Technical Award in  
**RESIDENTIAL INVENTORY  
MANAGEMENT AND PRACTICE**

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**Unit 4**

Residential Inventory Management and Practice

Produced for



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## INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with the specific work that inventory providers undertake for residential letting and management agents and landlords. It starts by considering the typical terms of business that an inventory provider should have and then moves on to cover the process of compiling the inventory and schedule of condition.

The unit then looks at the processes involved in using the compiled inventory and schedule of condition, starting with the check-in procedure, continuing with periodic visits and then considering check-out procedures at the end of a tenancy.

The unit concludes by considering the post check-out procedures, including assessing compensation to the landlord where damage has occurred, deposit holding and returning requirements. The unit concludes by considering how to deal with disputes and the various alternative dispute resolution procedures that are common in this area of work.



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Having completed this unit you will know and understand

- what should be included in typical terms of business and why
- how to compile an inventory and schedule of condition and what should be included in the final report
- the check-in procedure using the inventory and schedule of condition
- how to arrange, prepare for, conduct and report on periodic visits
- the check-out procedure, including landlord and tenant rights and reporting requirements
- the post check-out procedure, including the assessment of damages and return of deposits under different scenarios, and the methods of dealing with disputes

## 2.5 THE RECORDING OF AN INVENTORY

The inventory needs to be recorded by the inventory provider physically going around the property and making a detailed record of all of the relevant inventory items and their condition.

There are various methods and equipment that can be used to achieve this. There is no right or wrong method, as long as the end result is a thorough and detailed document and in line with all the requirements of best practice. However, in reality there are some methods that are more efficient and less time consuming than others, but it is for the individual to determine which method suits them best.

### Handwriting

This can be done simply by writing a record on paper, or possibly into a pre-prepared form. The disadvantage of this method is that it is very time-consuming and, depending on the provider's handwriting, can often be messy and poorly presented, although the position of defects on walls, floors, ceilings, etc can be easily and accurately recorded in a sketch.

### Voice Recording

Traditionally, this is the preferred option for many inventory providers, using a digital Dictaphone to record all of the inventory information. This resulting recording can then be available to be transcribed into the correct format. The advantage of this technology is

- speed
- the ability to record a high level of detailed descriptive information that is difficult to capture by writing either via a personal digital assistant (PDA) or paper
- the inventory provider has use of their hands while recording information – important when lifting or moving items

### Voice Recognition Technology

This takes voice recording a stage further and the inventory can be automatically transcribed via a voice recorder (usually a SMART phone or Bluetooth microphone). This technology has improved greatly in recent years, but is still susceptible to external noise and local accents which can result in more time being spent correcting text.

### Electronic Templates

There are now many software programmes available which allow an inventory provider to key in all the necessary information for an inventory on to one of a number of electronic devices including PDAs, tablets and smart phones. This information is set into an inventory format and can be uploaded to a server and be available for printing as a hard copy document (if needed) almost immediately.

The technology available in this area is being constantly updated and improved. The great advantage of this technology is the speed of turnaround that can be achieved. However, it is easy to make mistakes and the final document should be checked thoroughly before being released.

## Photography

Photographs are now considered to be an essential and integral part of any inventory. However, they should only be used as an addition to, and not as a substitute for, the written word.

Photographs are very useful for giving an overview of the general condition and layout of the rooms in a property and for showing the extent of specific damage such as broken items. In addition they are an excellent indicator of garden conditions, and it is always advisable to take photographs if a garden is part of the property. However, photographs are not particularly useful for showing some aspects of dirt, such as dust or even many stains on carpets, walls or ceilings.

Photographs should ideally be incorporated into the relevant section of the inventory, and become part of the inventory embedded into the correct page. There can never be any doubt that the photographs taken by the inventory provider and embedded in the document, which is then signed and dated, are of the property in question and were taken at the time of the existing inventory.

Alternatively, photographs can be grouped together at the end of the inventory, providing it is clearly stated under each picture what and where it relates to, although you should be aware that providing photographs separately is not foolproof evidence of time, as the dates can be altered. However, new geotagging technology, which adds geographical identification data to various media, does have this level of proof, as time, date and location can be proved.

When photographs are provided, care must be taken

- to use a pen or pointer to highlight a small spot, especially on light surfaces
- to make sure the photo can be matched with the appropriate room in the report and has a clear explanation alongside
- to provide a scale, eg by placing a small ruler or pen alongside a stain on a carpet or scratch on a wall

## Video Recording

A video recording of a property cannot replace a written inventory and cannot provide the detail required. Even if a video recording is provided as an addition to a printed inventory it must, by nature, always be a separate item and therefore difficult to prove that it is a true reflection of the property described in the printed document.

## Use of Abbreviations

It is tempting to use a large number of abbreviations, particularly when describing the condition or an aspect of a room or an item. It can, however, cause confusion. Abbreviations are acceptable for recording purposes but should be avoided wherever possible in the final inventory document.

If abbreviations are used, there needs to be an index or glossary of these attached to the inventory for reference. However, to the inexperienced user of the inventory (ie the landlord and the tenant) this can mean a lot of referring back and forth, so best practice is not to use abbreviations.



**SELF CHECK QUESTION 5**

Write down the advantages and disadvantages of using a voice recording or electronic template on a tablet device when recording the inventory.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Voice recording		
Tablet device		

Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the section.

**The Final Document**

The final document should follow a consistent format and be well presented, clear and concise.

At the beginning of the report, the document needs to include

- the property address, date of report and person compiling the report
- the scope and limitations of the report
- glossary of terms of condition
- glossary of terms of cleanliness
- definitions, points of clarity of any assumptions
- a means for all required parties to validate the document

**Inventory Structure and Detail**

The inventory and schedule of condition needs to show all relevant information in a clear and concise manner, so that it is easily read by professionals and lay people alike.

The main body of the inventory report is usually presented in a tabular form with individual areas in rooms at the property listed down the left-hand side and the description, condition for each area and spaces for check-in and check-out comments along the top of the report providing a grid for completion. An example is given in figure 2.1, covering just one room.

A fully completed inventory is given in an appendix at the end of this unit.



Index	Living room	Condition at check-in	Check-in comments	Checkout comments
31	Door			
32	Walls			
33	Ceiling			
34	Woodwork			
35	Floor			
36	Glazing			
37	Curtains			
38	Lighting			
39	Electrical fittings			

fig 2.1 Example of inventory report headings for one room

The inventory will progress on a room by room basis and will also cover any external areas such as gardens, yards and garages, sheds, etc until all the property has been covered in the inventory. You will note in figure 2.1 that each item is given an index number for identification purposes.

The start of the inventory will have a title page giving the address of the property along with details about the date of preparation of the inventory and who prepared it. Often the title page will also contain the name of the tenant (if known), the names of the landlord or agent and a brief description of the property.

Before the room by room grid starts, the inventory document will normally set out an introductory section where definitions of key terms can be listed. For example, many inventories assume all areas and items are in good condition unless specifically stated in the inventory. The meaning of 'good condition' will then be explained in this initial section.

Also in this introductory section there may be guidance notes for tenants, eg that they will be responsible for replacing light bulbs or smoke alarm batteries when necessary, how the property should be left at the end of the tenancy and what will happen at check-out.

Finally, in the introductory section will be a general overall description and a list of the disclaimers that are relevant and will have been included in the terms of business with the client. Remember that disclaimers cannot be relied on if not agreed in advance. Look again at section 1 if you want to remind yourself of common disclaimers.

The general overall description will be just one or two sentences about the type of property, eg 'a one-bedroomed purpose-built flat', and the overall condition, eg 'newly carpeted throughout', 'in need of cleaning', 'smells of cigarette smoke/animals', etc.

Following the room by room section and external section of the inventory, the inventory will end by listing any instruction booklets and manuals relating to appliances provided by the landlord, especially the central heating boiler. Many inventories require the tenant to sign to indicate they have received these.

Electric, gas and perhaps water meter readings will also be given, along with the identifying serial numbers and location of the meters. It is considered best practice to photograph meters where possible in order to avoid any confusion regarding the accuracy of the readings. Finally, a list of the keys being handed over will be given, often along with a photograph of the keys for identification purposes.

The very end of the inventory will have a space for signatures. This may simply be the signatures of the tenant(s), or may be the tenant(s) and the landlord(s) or the landlord's agent. There will normally also be space on each page for the tenant to initial the contents.

Any changes agreed at check-in, if written onto the inventory document, should ideally be initialled by each party to show agreement and to prevent arguments at the end of the tenancy.



### SELF CHECK QUESTION 6

*Why do you think it is most common to produce the inventory in tabulated form with columns for comments at check-in and check-out?*

*Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the section.*

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## 2.6 COMPILING THE INVENTORY

### Initial Preparation and Procedure

It is critical when preparing an inventory to follow a series of procedures to ensure nothing is missed, and to cover your safety and security.

Best practice is as follows

- the inventory provider should always knock before entering a property, even if they have been told it is uninhabited
- once inside the property, the inventory provider should check that the property is unoccupied and that the lights are working (for winter months and for dark inner hallways, etc)

- shut and if necessary lock the front door, or the door used for entry, so nobody else can gain access, and always keep the keys of the property on your person. In this way it will be impossible to get locked out of the property by a door slamming shut when working in the garden for example
- set yourself up in a convenient position which in most properties is likely to be the kitchen. Here paperwork can be laid out and/or filled in
- walk around the whole property to begin with to get a general idea of the layout and condition of the property ready to make any general comments at the beginning of the inventory. Things to look out for, do and be aware of ready for the start of the inventory include
  - layout
  - general signs of condition
  - similarities in fittings, door/window furniture, etc
  - lights not working
  - locations of meters
  - access points to the garden

## **Procedure, Formatting and Specific Detail**

### **Procedure**

Preparing the inventory should be systematic and should follow a standard procedure. The recording should always take place in a methodical way and each inventory provider should adopt a standardised method of doing things so all inventories follow the same format.

The inventory provider should work logically around a property and in general should start at the front, then the room or area leading from the front door which is usually the hall and proceed through the rest of the property.

There is no right or wrong way to undertake the recording as long as the method used is systematic and logical and you always follow the same format. You could start on the ground floor and move to the upper floors, but equally you could start at the top and work down. Many people will cover the interior of the property first and then move outside, but you could just as easily start externally and then move to the interior.

Once in the property and recording, it is best to always move round the property in the same direction. Whether this is clockwise or anticlockwise does not matter, as long as you follow the same procedure each time. The same applies to individual rooms within the property where you should move round in the same direction – clockwise or anticlockwise.

Most people will start at the front of a property and move around the property and each individual room in a clockwise direction, starting with the ground floor, and once that is completed moving to the upper floors and finishing externally.

Where rooms have similar functions, eg bedrooms, they are usually numbered in sequence, eg bed 1, bed 2, bed 3 etc with the numbers following the order in which they are entered, not the size of the room. Sometimes an added description is given, eg bed 1 (rear right), bed 2 (front right), bed 3 (front left), etc.

Where descriptors are used, there has to be a clear policy about whether left and right are used while looking at the front of the house or while looking out of the front of the house, and this should be explained at the start of the inventory report in the introductory section.

Through rooms, such as a lounge/diner or kitchen/breakfast room, need to be treated systematically in the same way. These can be recorded individually or together. Best practice is to treat each separate area as a separate room, ie the kitchen-living area as seen in many city apartments would be best treated as a living area and a separate kitchen area. Treating the rooms together can sometimes be easier if it is unfurnished and if the décor is the same for both parts, but it is safer to treat as two.



#### SELF CHECK QUESTION 7

*Why is it regarded as best practice to have a systematic methodology for visiting a property and recording the inventory details?*

*Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the section.*

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#### **Format for Individual Areas**

Just as there should be a methodology for the property as a whole to ensure that all areas are visited, there needs to be a format worked out for visiting each individual room. Just as with the property, there is no right or wrong way to do it, just the need to be consistent in the way you inspect and record.

So, you can move round rooms in a clockwise or anticlockwise direction, start with the ceilings and work down to the floors, or start with the floors and work up to the ceiling. You can deal with floors, walls and ceilings and then move on to fixtures and fittings, or you can deal with the fixtures and fittings within the relevant section of the main components of the room.

For example, you might have separate headings relating to floors, walls, ceilings, doors, windows, woodwork, light fittings, electrical fittings, curtains, furniture, etc. Alternatively you might deal with everything other than furniture under the respective main headings of the room. This would mean that the walls would include doors, windows, woodwork (skirtings, dado rails, etc), electrical fittings (light switches, sockets) etc, and ceilings would have light fittings listed.

Whichever approach you adopt, you must be consistent and use this all the time. Most inventories create separate categories for fixtures and fittings rather than lumping them in with the main room component where they occur. The wall section, if it included doors, windows, woodwork, electrical fittings, etc could be rather large and unwieldy.

### **Specific Detail**

An inventory and schedule of condition must have the following key elements

- the inventory item header – doors, ceiling, walls, etc
- the inventory item and its description – a clear description in plain English of the basic structure that can be understood by a lay person (eg for doors – white painted, four-panelled wooden door, with ornate trim to inner surrounding of each panel and brass effect knob handles)
- a clear and concise condition description with details and location of key marks and damage, etc (it is also good practice to comment on the general condition if it differs from the standard as stated in the declaration) eg referring to a wall might be 'poor condition overall with 10 cm scratch to centre right, patchy paint work with large (25 cm diameter) discoloured spot to lower section'

A typical room might follow this typical format.

#### **Doors and Door Frames**

Type and door furniture (handles, locks, etc).

#### **Floors**

Colour, pattern, type (eg fitted carpets, vinyl lay, stripped wooden floorboards, laminate, etc).

#### **Walls**

Description of finish and whether painted, whether there is a frieze or dado rail.

#### **Ceilings**

Artex or plaster, pattern, coving, colour.

## Woodwork

Skirting boards, dado rails, panelling and finish.

## Windows

Detailed description of window type should be noted, ie sash, transom or side opening, single or double-glazed, frame type (painted wood, uPVC or metal), glass type, window fitting, window sills, ie handles and catches, colour. (NB It is important to record whether lock keys are present.)

## Curtains/Blinds

Window coverings (curtain tracks, curtains, etc). Curtain length should be stated – whether sill or floor length, together with a description of the fabric, including colours and patterns and whether they are lined. The description should also note the style of the curtain, eg tab-topped, pinch pleated, swags and tails, etc. Any tiebacks should also be described and listed. Curtain tracks or poles – details should include what they are made from, ie plastic, wood or metal and whether there are finials attached. In the case of tracks with rings, the number of rings should be noted.

## Fittings

It makes sense to include fittings in the logical format of the inventory, eg wall fittings should be placed in the report after the wall description.

## Heating

Radiators, vents, wall heaters, etc – it should be noted whether there are fitted thermostat controls and whether any end caps are missing.

## Lighting

Light fittings should include a description of the shades and whether any bulbs are missing or not in working order.

## Electrical Fittings

Lights, switches, power points, etc – the type, number and finish should be noted, eg plastic (colour), metal, etc.

## Removable Items

Ornaments, telephone handsets, crockery, cutlery, etc – these should be described sufficiently for later identification along with the condition.

## Furniture

Description, condition and whether fire and furnishing labels are seen must be recorded, eg

- under settees the description should cover the fabric, colour and pattern, number and condition of cushions, type and condition of arms and legs
- under tables the description should cover the type (dining, occasional, coffee, etc), the material of the tops and legs/bases (glass, wood, laminate topped, etc) and the condition
- wardrobe descriptions should cover whether they are fitted or free-standing, the material and other fittings (handles, inset mirrors, hanging rails, shelves, internal hooks, etc) and the condition

**SELF CHECK QUESTION 8**

*Why do you think it is necessary to accurately describe the items listed, including finishes and colours, and give details of their condition?*

*Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the section.*

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**Removable Items**

Although this can be extremely time consuming, it is important that this is done as thoroughly as possible. Crockery should be counted and listed in full, including colour, pattern, whether there are matching sets or not and their usage (eg vegetable dish, cereal/soup bowl, ramekin dish, etc). The same detail would apply to cutlery and all kitchen utensils.

Pictures (paintings and photographs) should either note the title (if stated) or otherwise a general description should be given including the type of frame and whether there is a glass covering. All ornaments and other removable items should be described and listed.

General contents – it is not necessary to itemise collections of books or CDs. It is merely sufficient to state that for example, 'there is a quantity of hardback and paperback books'. Nor is it necessary to record any consumables nor individually itemise trivial household items that have been left, such as decorating materials left for touch-up purposes.

The inventory provider should be aware that there are an increasing number of commercially available cleaning products that should not be used in the home, and garden chemical products such as pesticides that it is illegal to sell. Where these are found, best practice should be that any such items should be itemised in the inventory. In addition it is recommended that the inventory provider telephones/emails the agent to report this. Even if the agent advises they will remove such items they should be listed. The inventory can be amended at check-in if they are in fact removed.

The inventory provider should beware of omitting relatively cheap items, especially in the kitchen. The landlord may have provided certain items to prevent wear and tear to the property. Typically this could be a plastic washing up bowl (to avoid chipping a ceramic sink) or a plastic chopping board (to prevent knife cut marks on a worktop).

While exercising a degree of common sense, the best advice is **if in doubt include it**.

### **A Note on Describing Inventory Items**

If in doubt about any of the descriptions use a qualifying adverb, eg 'of plastic appearance' or 'wood effect'. Beware of using words like gold, chrome, brass, etc when describing the colour of an item as it may give the impression that the item is actually constructed of such a material. It is better to use phrases like 'gold coloured' or 'gold effect'. Equally beware of using incorrect proper names like Hoover instead of vacuum cleaner (or even worse, a Dyson hoover).

### **Phraseology and Vocabulary**

Where possible the document should express items in plain English and not become over technical. However, aspects of building construction have specific words to describe items and features. For the avoidance of doubt every effort should be made to apply the correct name.

So, for example, an inventory provider ought to know the difference between a transom window and a casement window, and should familiarise themselves with the proper vocabulary for various items related to this market (eg finials, sashes).

This is not a highly specialised skill and does not mean that a degree of technical knowledge is required. By paying careful attention when walking around any high street 'do-it-yourself' retailer, the inventory provider will be able to acquire most of the knowledge that is required.

If technical terms are being used, it is useful if these are listed in a glossary and explained in plain English.

### **External Areas**

Less detail is required compared with the inside of the property (unless specifically requested).

As you start an inventory from the front and work your way back, depending on the layout of the property, the outside may be split around the inventory, eg the front garden at the start and the rear garden at the end of the inventory. If doing in a single section, split the outside up into logical sections, typically garage, front garden, side garden and rear garden. Usually the following will suffice

- garage
  - a brief description of its construction, its doors and if applicable windows
  - the flooring, noting any heavy oil staining
  - the walls, noting any markings and fixings
  - a list of its fittings (electrical fittings, shelving, etc)
  - a list of contents, if any



- for gardens
  - a brief description of the walls or fencing
  - a brief summary of the layout, ie 'paved patio leading to lawn area surrounded by raised flower beds filled with mature shrubs'
  - lawns, condition and appropriate length of grass, eg grass approximately two inches long, patchy and uneven throughout
  - a summary of garden furniture like patio chairs and tables, garden ornaments including bird baths, statues, etc
  - a list of fittings on the outside of the house, for example, taps, meter cabinets, light fittings, etc
- sheds and similar non-permanent structures
  - a brief description of the construction and condition, eg 'wooden shed with door with hasp and padlock' or 'door in a poor condition' and a list of fittings and the contents, if any

### Instruction Books/Manuals

A list of all instruction manuals that refer to any fixture, fitting or appliance should be included and information given on where they can be found in the property. The make and model should also be listed. Typically these will refer to kitchen appliances and the central heating system and/or other heating systems.

There may be additional instruction books for alarm systems, televisions, videos, etc. It is important that these are included so the agent and landlord can ensure the safe use of the appliances in line with electrical safety requirements. Additionally, in the event of any future dispute over broken appliances, a tenant cannot argue that it was broken in ignorance because of the lack of available instructions on how to operate it. A copy of all instruction manuals should be held on file by the landlord or agent and should be signed for by the tenant within the inventory.



#### SELF CHECK QUESTION 9

*An inventory provider has found chemicals in the cupboard under the kitchen sink and in the garage at a property that are now illegal to sell. What should the inventory provider do?*

*Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the section.*



**ANSWERS TO SELF CHECKS**

**QUESTION 5**

Your answer may have covered some of the points in the following table, but you may have been able to think of other relevant advantages and disadvantages.

	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>Voice recording</b>	Quick to record High level of detail possible Hands are free Recording can continue even if inspecting something	Must be transcribed later when back at the office Descriptions can be lengthy
<b>Tablet device</b>	Fairly quick to record Can be recorded direct into the inventory template Can be uploaded from site Quickest method of producing the end inventory	Hands are not free Many templates have drop down set menus and restrict free text Danger of sending out without checking first

**QUESTION 6**

Inventories are usually produced in a tabular form because this allows comments (eg in the check-in or check-out column) to be clearly matched to a specific area or item within an area on the inventory.

**QUESTION 7**

It is regarded as best practice to have a systematic methodology for inspecting and recording information for the inventory, as this gives the best chance that all areas of the property will be visited and nothing will be missed or forgotten.

**QUESTION 8**

It is necessary to give accurate descriptions of items at a property, including finishes and colours and condition, because different people may visit at different times and it will not always be the same person who prepared the inventory who will do the check-in or check-out. Even if the same person returned to the property this will often be months later and they are unlikely to remember fine detail. If the agent or the landlord are to assess damage at the end of the tenancy period and distinguish this from fair wear and tear, the more information they have the better. For example, it is not unknown for tenants to change wall colours in breach of the tenancy agreement. The décor might be in reasonable condition but the wrong colour because of this, and if missed the agent or the inventory provider may be liable for redecoration costs.

**QUESTION 9**

The inventory provider should note the chemicals and their location in the inventory and should notify the landlord or the landlord’s agent. Notification by email or otherwise in writing would ensure the inventory provider could prove that notification was given.

# Glossary

**agent for the landlord**

one of the ways in which the tenant deposit can be held. The agent must allocate the deposit as dictated by their landlord client

**alternative dispute resolution (ADR)**

dispute resolution processes to avoid litigation through the courts

**apportionment**

the requirement to take account of the life expectancy of items subject to damage and not try to claim the full cost of a damaged item that needs replacing, so that the landlord does not benefit from **betterment**

**betterment**

a landlord being either financially or materially in a better position at the end of a tenancy than they were at start, having allowed for fair wear and tear, would be classed as betterment

**check-in**

the process of a new tenant comparing an inventory with the property in question, adding valid comments if appropriate. Ideally the check in should be completed before the tenant moves in

**check-out**

the process of an agent checking an inventory against the state of the property in question and noting any discrepancies and damage, etc at the end of the tenancy. The check-out should be done as soon as possible once the tenancy has ended, and ideally with the tenant present

**common law**

law developed from custom, ie all law not enacted by parliament

**contract**

an agreement recognised in law that can be enforced by the courts. It may be written, spoken, a mixture of written and spoken, or implied by the conduct of the parties involved. Contracts for the sale of property must be evidenced in writing and be approved by the solicitors on both sides. Contracts for the letting of property can be oral if the letting is for three years or less. If for more than three years, the contract must be in writing

**damages**

a remedy under common law. The party awarded damages will be put in the same position as if the contract had been performed or the wrong not done. Damages claimed have to be reasonable

**disclaimers**

limitation or exclusion clauses in **terms of business**

**fair wear and tear**

the amount of wear (eg relating to furniture, fixtures and fittings) that would reasonably be expected, depending on the number and age of the tenants, the length of the tenancy, and the age, condition and expected lifespan of the items. Allowance for fair wear and tear must be given when assessing damages at the end of a tenancy

**inventory**

a document listing all moveable items in a rented property, which also details any defects. It should be agreed with the tenant at the start of the tenancy and checked again at the end of the tenancy

**legislation**

laws contained in acts of parliament, regulations and orders. Also known as statute law

**periodic visits**

a method of ascertaining that all is well at a property, usually occurring at three to four monthly intervals during the term of a tenancy

**schedule of condition**

a record of a property's internal and external condition at the start of a tenancy, which should be agreed with the tenant

**tenancy**

a contractual document setting out an agreement between a landlord and a tenant for the tenant to live in a property for a set period

**tenant**

a person given the right by a landlord to live in a property for a set period

**tenancy deposit protection**

the requirements under the Housing Act 2004 which came into force on 6 April 2007 to have all deposits with ASTs protected under one of the approved government schemes

**terms of business**

terms of business set out in advance the service to be provided and the fee to be charged

# Reading List

If you are working in residential letting and management agency or inventory management, you should always be aware of changes that take place in law or practice as these will affect the way in which you do your job. If you or your company belong to one of the professional bodies, they will usually keep their members up-to-date with changes that will affect their working practices.

You may find it useful to check the following publications regularly for relevant articles on letting and management

*Estates Gazette*

*Negotiator Magazine* (now part of Property Drum)

*Property Drum*

*Property Professionals* – the magazine of the National Federation of Property Professionals (NFoPP)

*Tenancy Deposit Schemes* – A guide to deposits, disputes and damages (available from any tenancy deposit scheme website)

When looking through books, articles and references, and when searching on the web, take care to check the date the material was created. This is particularly important for legal references where the law may change from time to time, but also applies to other areas.

It would be useful to download the redress schemes' codes of practice.

## **Useful Websites**

[apip.org.uk](http://apip.org.uk) – Association of Professional Inventory Providers

[arla.co.uk](http://arla.co.uk) – Association of Residential Letting Agents

[nalscheme.co.uk](http://nalscheme.co.uk) – National Approved Letting Scheme

[ombudsman-services.org/property.html](http://ombudsman-services.org/property.html) – The Ombudsman Services: Property Scheme

[tds.gb.com](http://tds.gb.com) – The Dispute Service's Tenancy Deposit Scheme

[tpos.co.uk](http://tpos.co.uk) – The Property Ombudsman scheme





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