



Our recommendations on Tenant Screening, a 20 point Checklist

Experienced landlords and letting agents know that tenant applicants can be “economical with the truth”. In our experience a small proportion of applicants will try to obtain a tenancy using false information, and invariably they will turn out to be nightmare tenants.

A bad tenant can easily cost a landlord £10,000 - in legal expenses, lost rent and damage to the property - so it's very important to carry out thorough due diligence checks. Don't feel guilty about being too intrusive, the prospect of a big loss should allay all those fears.

Doing a credit check and referencing should be just one part, albeit a very important part, of your holistic assessment to qualify your tenant. The following is our TenantVERIFY® recommended assessment process to eliminate 99% of tenant misinformation risk. 20,000 possession claims a year in England and Wales shows that not all tenants are perfect.

01	The Advertisement	The advertisement is your opportunity to spell out exactly the type of tenant/s you are looking for to exactly match the property type, size, rent level etc., as well as stressing all the positive selling points about the letting.
02	The initial inquiry Checklist / Form	Most initial enquiries come via telephone, so have an Initial Enquiry Checklist by the phone to make sure you ask all the right questions and take down the applicant's basic details.
03	The Viewing	Only arrange viewings for those you deem suitable after the telephone interview. Use the viewing to carefully observe the tenant/s: state of dress, car, behaviour and attitude etc. Don't oversell but point out the positives, and try to close the sale - ask for a Holding Deposit pending further checks if you feel they are suitable tenants, and depending on demand.
04	The Tenancy Application Form	The TenantVERIFY® Application Form is designed to record the tenant's background and comprehensive biographical information; it spells out the basis of the contract, records a declaration that the information is truthful and gives you permission to do credit checks and referencing.
05	The Selection Interview / Form	Conduct a formal selection interview using an Interview Checklist Form. Some landlords like to see the tenant/s at their existing home; not a bad idea, time permitting.
06	ID Verification / Right to Rent Checks	It is now a legal requirement to do Right-to-Rent Checks , which mean face-to-face photo ID and right to reside document checks with every adult tenant. Get the tenant/s to sign a Right to Rent Declaration Form which is a statement of truth putting on record the documentary evidence they are presenting.
07	Copy Documents and Photos	Taking copies of the right to reside documents is a legal requirement, and we recommend you take a “mug shot” photo of the tenant applicant/s on your phone. Always bear in mind the Data Protection Act and the ICO data principles .
08	Credit Checks & Referencing	TenantVERIFY® credit checks and referencing give you fast, accurate and reliable solvency, employment, previous tenancy and previous addresses etc. confirmations, with built-in document based affordability and Right-to-Rent verification.
09	Bank Statements – previous 3 months	Even though you are doing credit checks & referencing, you can't beat seeing how a tenant is managing their finances at first hand

	Utility Bills – previous 3 months	by having sight of 3-months of recent bank statements – showing actual income & expenditure. We recommend this important step. A utility bill or equivalent is proof of residence.
10	Social Media Checks	People are often active on social media and this information is open to all. It gives you an idea of lifestyle and personality. A quick Google search may also reveal previous convictions etc.
11	The Letting Decision	When you have gathered all this information together you should be looking for consistency, openness and honesty, as well as suitability for the property, genuine reasons for moving and affordability. Always bear in mind the discrimination laws .
12	Guarantors	If your tenant applicants are young (e.g. students), they have just started a new job or self-employment, or if their earnings are on the affordability borderline (gross income at least 2.5 x rent), then a Guarantor is a must do precaution. Guarantors need to be credit checked and referenced as well.
13	Rent Guarantee & Legal Expenses cover	For total peace of mind and a relatively low cost (from £2 per week) Rent Guarantee insurance is available for all tenancies when the tenant/s pass a TenantVERIFY® Comprehensive Check. Take out a VerifiedCOVER® Rent Guarantee policy.
14	The Tenancy Agreement	Always use an up-to-date Tenancy Agreement – the law changes regularly, so your agreement must have the latest legal clauses. See: www.landlordzone.co.uk/documents
15	Standing Order Mandate	It's always easier and more certain if you collect rent by Banker's Standing Order, so get your tenants to complete a Standing Order Mandate
16	Safety Risk Assessment	As a landlord you are legally responsible for your tenant/s' safety, so having a written Risk Assessment including Legionella Checks is a great way to show you are fulfilling your health and safety obligations. Do these between each tenancy.
17	Inventory	An Inventory is a must if you are to stand any chance at all of winning a Deposit Dispute , and we recommend you use an independent inventory company to do this for you.
18	Check-in Check-out Checklist	Using a Check-in-Check-out Checklist makes sure you don't overlook important points when you are checking-in and out your tenants. Also, by having this form signed by your tenant you have proof that all the important pre-tenancy checks have been done and documents issued, such as testing smoke alarms.
19	Statutory Information	It is now a legal requirement, and a pre-requisite to using the s21 eviction process, that your tenants are issued with (1) an EPC , (2) a Gas Safety Certificate and (3) the latest version of the Government published How to Rent Guide .
20	Tenant Information Pack	Make sure your tenants have all the information they need about the property and the locality by providing a comprehensive tenant file , which should include safety information, such as stop tap and fuse locations, bin collections, emergency contact information etc., as well as safety and operating instructions for all supplied appliances.

Find the useful documents and checklists referred to above, here: www.tenantverify.co.uk/useful-documents.html