



Furniture & Appliances
for Landlords, Agents & Developers



The Essential Guide to furnishing rental property

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Tap into decades of experience

The future is bright, the future is furnished...



Introduction by Simon Myers,
Managing Director

“In over two decades spent working with successful property developers I have seen many new ideas, clever ways of doing things and innovations come, and sometimes go. Staying one step ahead has always paid off, so spotting the way things are moving in the market is essential if you want to make property work hard.”

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With property prices having risen so much faster than earnings, the number of households in the rented sector has almost doubled since 2001 to 4.61 million in England. Across the UK today, 13 million people rent from a private landlord - that's 1 in 5 people¹.

In this **Essential Guide** we take a look at some of the key trends in the private rented sector, how they can impact on your business, and how to make them work for you...

Source: ¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/286444/england-number-of-private-rented-households>



Why furnish your rental property

There has always been a choice of how to rent – fully furnished, part-furnished/unfurnished. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. Simon takes a look at the pros and cons, and looks at how the market has changed, and makes a case for the future of furnished...

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Unfurnished rentals are never completely empty, they usually have carpets, curtains, some have appliances and fitted furniture like wardrobes... But they rely on people having all their own furniture – and this implies a longer let, a more permanent tenancy. If they have the bare minimum but lack certain key elements (such as beds or fridges) they would be seen as part-furnished. They are basic by definition and as such rely on the tenant to supply much of the essentials, limiting the appeal and making such properties less attractive to the majority of tenants.

Furnished lets represent a slightly greater investment on behalf of the landlord, but they add a great deal of scope for targeting specific types of tenant and creating a more competitive offer in a busy marketplace.

But that's where you need a more strategic approach... Simply adding the essentials with little or no consideration of the way people want to live, what is acceptable and what is considered essential, and what is seen as a bonus!

When we started out in this business over 20 years ago, the furnished market was different – and people had different expectations.

Furnished usually meant basic at best. Second-hand or downright scruffy furniture and rock-bottom appliances were often sufficient – people expected far less.

Now items such as microwaves, dishwashers and fridge freezers are seen as standard by some, and beds and soft furnishing need to be comfortable and create a look and feel...



What we have found is that as the market has come to expect more, there is a growing need for a more planned, strategic approach. It's more professional, and gets better results.

We generally start by looking at the target market first – if it is students, or young professionals, families or singles sharing, it makes a massive difference to the level and type of furnishing that will make your property an attractive prospect for the tenants you want.

Landlords find our 'tenant-centred' approach delivers better results than the random selection of appliances and furniture. The type of tenant you want defines the kind of finish, the tone, look and feel, as well as the level of appliances.

We start with a conversation with the landlord, take a look at who they want as tenants, as well as their budget and longer-term objectives. We can also look at multiple properties and take economies of scale into account...

We think about how the people you want as tenants want to live their lives – are they students, will they need a desk and a light? Are they young professionals, will they enjoy cooking at home? If they are a family, is the washing machine up to the job?

Above all, we aim to create a property that feels like it has a single-minded identity, a complete and consistent level of quality and functionality. This will make a big difference to how you market your property, and how quickly and readily a tenant will sign up.

Our strategic approach will also help you focus on what will provide a better return on your investment, avoiding the trap of furnishing to your taste or preference, rather than with a commercial eye.

In general, furnishing your property means fewer void periods, higher rents and people can move straight in as they don't need the hassle of moving larger items around with them.

But only if you can factor out the added workload and admin, manage the repairs and maintenance and make sure you understand the legislation and compliance.

“When we started out in this business over 20 years ago, the furnished market was different – and people had different expectations.

Furnished usually meant basic at best. Second-hand or downright scruffy furniture and rock-bottom appliances were often sufficient – people expected far less.”

2.

Styles, trends and how to use them



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Interior design is all around us – and whether you like it or not, the decisions you make will send a message to your tenants about the relationship you are looking for, the kind of lifestyle you are offering, and the investment you have made in the property. There is a simple way to ensure your furnished property hits the mark.

We at Instore have some great advice.

It is important to make sure you are offering a fairly neutral foundation that your tenants can build upon – let them project their own style (should they so wish) onto your furnishings with something on-trend without having to make any drastic changes. So, rather than going for the most up-to-the-minute shades and flourishes yourself, start simple – a few hints of contemporary design will naturally create an instant uplift.

So be careful – if you're providing rental homes to students and executives and you go too trendy, you might find your taste clashing with that of your tenants – let them add their personality to your home rather than you trying to do the thinking for them.

We are constantly watching the market for new trends, but as you can see from our furniture packages, neutral is still king. Take, for example, our City pack – a strong white base in the living room is suddenly brought to life by an emerald feature chair.

<https://www.instoredirect.com/furniture-packages/city>

And in the bedroom using our Urban package replete with walnut hardwood, your focus is drawn to the greens of the scatter cushions and throw.

<https://www.instoredirect.com/furniture-packages/urban>



“Contemporary should not say ‘oh look we are trendy and cool’ - it should say ‘we have recently refurbished in keeping with modern trends, but in a way you can still make your own’.”

Of course you can have more fun for instance, with properties for the short term, serviced accommodation market, but always remember - your taste may not be to everyone else's!

Small touches can make a big difference - your market should dictate how far you need to go.

Greys are still the classic for sofas and beds but when it comes to adding those extra flourishes, accessories containing blues, greens and golds are really popular with a lot of designers right now, so get creative by all means, we can certainly help you with trends and colours, but don't forget who you are trying to appeal to.





Getting things right is never easy



Size matters

You need to think about the lifestyle of the people you want to attract as tenants. Professional couples tend to eat out, entertain at home and lead busy lives. So a massive fridge freezer might seem impressive, but in reality it might dominate a smaller kitchen and add little in terms of use.

A family home though, with only a small under-counter fridge would be hard to sell. Big double beds are great, but only if they leave enough space around them...

Style

Style is not the same as design. Style should tell your tenants and prospective tenants what kind of life they will enjoy here, how it will feel to live here.

A crowded, mismatched, ill-thought-out selection of furnishing and appliances may do the job, but the message is that people will feel restricted, out of place and uncared for living here.

Something that seems to have been planned with them in mind will simply feel like home.

Detail

Little things make a big difference. Don't think that people won't notice, they do. Make sure the little things are done – that little bit of grout, that scuffed stair runner, those tired curtains - they all add up to the impression that you are just not bothered.

Tenants who are happy to make do with shabby décor might not be the best ones to have...

First impressions

You are trying to get the very best return on your investment. A carefully thought out décor, with appliances that are fit for purpose for your target tenant, will sell itself.

Something that seems thrown together will make it harder to rent and could cost you in terms of time and effort.

Thoughtful

Tenants want to feel a place has been designed with them in mind. Give them too much thinking to do, make it hard for them to imagine being happy there, and they may well not see the value of your offer.

Thoughtfully furnished property makes a good first impression, but also conveys the care you have taken, which attracts the kind of tenant who will take care of your property. A sloppy, mismatched let could attract people who think you don't care – and they don't care either...



Get professional



Although there are still more unfurnished properties, furnished lets are more attractive to professionals looking in city centres who prefer not to have to buy or move larger furniture and appliances around. Furnished places will also let more quickly and therefore will spend less time unoccupied.

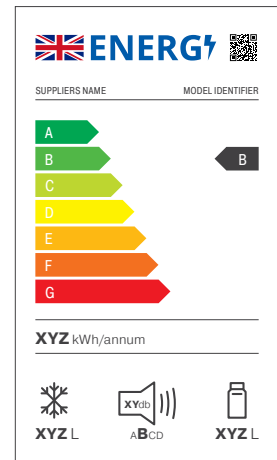
4.



It's not just about furniture

➤ **Furnished means appliances too...**

and with a wide range of washing machines, dryers, dishwashers, cookers, refrigerators and freezers to suit your tenants needs, purchasing your appliances from Instore Direct offers piece of mind and total convenience. Our team can install, integrate, maintain and dispose of old faulty appliances and with brands to suit all budgets.”



Simon Myers is clear, ‘In the past, appliances were seen as an afterthought – any old cooker or fridge, cheap and cheerful washer, dryer if you were lucky...

Now they are pretty near the top of the list for tenants. They say kitchens sell houses – well increasingly now, we see appliances (in the kitchen or elsewhere) are key in the way people assess a property.

Life is busy, and renters are often focussed on convenience, simplicity, efficiency and they want appliances that are fit for purpose, as well as certifiably safe, and eco-friendly.

The best way to make sure you have the best kit for the job is to start with a budget – and that will be defined by your prospective tenant and what they might be prepared to pay. Then you can look at the appliances market – there really is a vast array of options now – and make your choice.

We spend a lot of time looking at the kind of appliances tenants want, and that landlords can rely on, so we know the market pretty well. There are significant savings to be made by choosing models from last year's ranges which none the less have a lot of desirable features. But you have to know your suppliers well, and these kinds of deals are often only available to larger buyers.

The important phrase is ‘all the appliances’ – because one or two low efficiency appliances can cancel out the benefit. And that will impact on the running cost of the property...

Top Tip



“An energy efficient washing machine will save your tenants money on their electricity bills and, if you have a meter, their water bill too.”

Energy Saving Trust, Sep. 2022

If all the appliances are aligned in this manner you are virtually putting money back in the pockets of your tenants, which will certainly help pay the rent!





Keeping track



▸ Inventories are essential!

According to a recent article in Landlord and Buy to Let Magazine, the issue of inventories is still causing headaches.

The key issue seems to be the lack of detail and specifics – if you are expecting to hold tenants to account for those small, often quite expensive details, you need to be able to accurately define the exact specification of everything you provide.

With a furnished property this can be both exhaustive and exhausting – the model, make and style of each and every piece of furniture and appliance must be carefully recorded and logged.

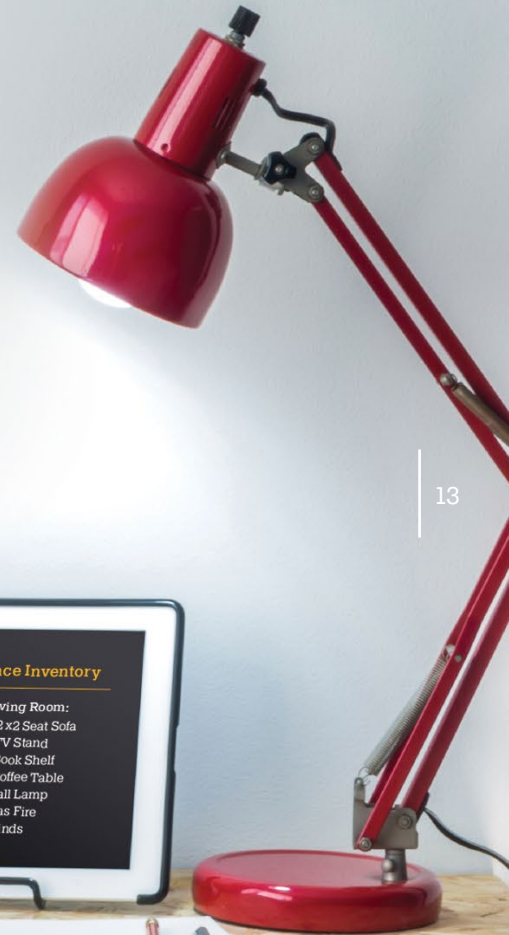
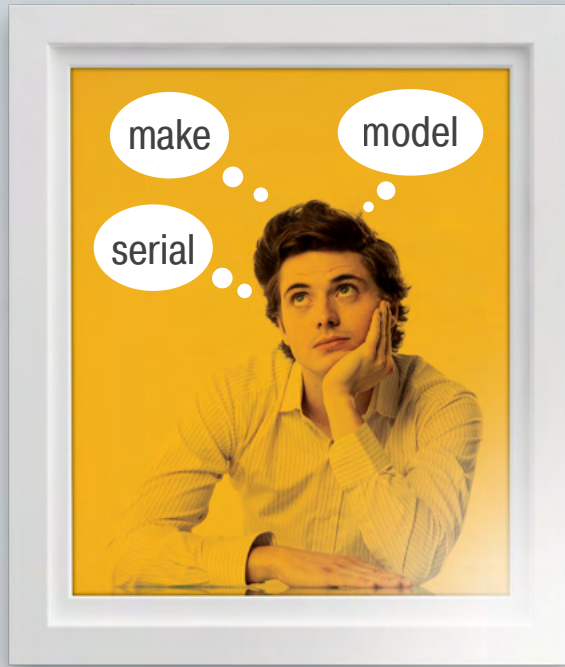
Working with a single supplier for all your appliances and furniture gives you a real head start on this kind of thing – and is a real benefit when dealing with more than one property – where slight variations in make or model, fabric or finish could make a major difference if ever there was a need to make a claim, or pursue payment.

A detailed and accurate inventory makes all the difference. And being precise about the make and model is important.



INVENTORIES

“Landlords who produce their own inventories and conduct the check-in and check-out with paper documentation make common mistakes which place them at a higher risk of losing a potential tenant dispute.” P10 November 2015



Furniture & Appliance Inventory	
Kitchen:	Living Room:
- Washer Dryer	- 2 x2 Seat Sofa
- Fridge Freezer	- TV Stand
- Electric Oven	- Book Shelf
- Electric Hob	- Coffee Table
- Electric Chimney Hood	- Tall Lamp
- Blinds	- Gas Fire
	- Blinds





Getting a return on your investment



1.

Know your market

Look carefully at your market – they are not as straight-forward as you think. People don't fit into simple categories anymore. So the classic student is not all they seem – some are older, some are from overseas, some may be looking for a more professional property and are willing to pay for the privilege – others may be looking for shared accommodation.

Also, if you simply aim at the norm, the average, there is less of an opportunity to give your property distinction. Look at other similarly priced properties in your area, look around them if you like, and try to see where you can add something that will make your place more appealing to your target market.

For example, students need a work space, so a decent desk, WiFi and a lamp can be a deal-maker...

2.

The complete package

There's no point in paying a lot for a kitchen, if the lounge lets it down, and there's no point in saving a few quid on the fridge if you actually need a fridge freezer. Tenants are choosy and when they want furnished they expect it to be in keeping with their existing lifestyle.

Planning the right level of furnishing and appliances is essential – you can spend a lot on items that will never add to the final rent you can demand. Cutting a few corners to save a few quid may mean you will never get what your property deserves...

3.

Create a home

However much a landlord values a property, tenants value a home. Property has to be commercial sure, but there needs to be a sense that this could be someone's home. Just meeting the basics and offering logical solutions could result in a property that is cold and unwelcoming. The tenant will want to see themselves in that property, coming home to it every day, and building their life there.

The consideration of the fundamentals should be complemented with a touch of thoughtful care.

Renters look for features that they feel will make them happy and comfortable - lack of double glazing or a gas hob could potentially be a deal breaker. Likewise, dirty walls and carpets could be a huge put-off to any prospective tenants.



Get it right

The right furniture and appliances can help you get the most from your investment – but simply checking off a list is not always the best way.

Your property must tell a story...

...let them see that the cosy lounge has soft lighting, that the kitchen is well lit and the perfect size for them, that the appliances have been chosen with them in mind. That way, they will more easily see themselves living there.

Set a budget and stick to it...

...if you can. Of course we know that in the real world you might find it hard to predict prices and spot savings, but without a budget you'll find a project drifts. We are happy to work with your budget – of course we will always challenge you if we think what you are trying to achieve is going to be difficult, and we are the first to let you know if there are savings to be made, as long as they don't compromise your plans.





DIY vs SOS

The amazing innovation, in the look, functionality and design of furnishing has changed all that. There are now bigger ranges, better economies, and ergonomic designs freely available all over the country.

However, what might work well for furnishing something on a personal level, is simply not as practical for a commercial operation. We have identified three key areas where doing it yourself can lead to problems.

1. Time

Although flat-pack and self-assembly furnishing may seem relatively simple to put together, these jobs all take time – and while adding a piece at a time might suit young couples or students, building all the furniture you need in time for a professional let can take days not hours. Add to that all the hassle of travel and ordering time, disposing of packaging, recycling old furniture or appliances, and you might have a serious delay on your hands.

2. Consistency

Ikea may have a consistent look, but what happens when something breaks and needs replacing?

Do you need to go to Ikea to find the replacement? What if it's discontinued? What if you just don't have the time?

You could source a similar looking item elsewhere, but it's easy to see how eventually, what started out as a nice enough range of furniture soon becomes rather odd-looking and mismatched.

3. Cost

Of course, some of these items are very cheap, and some are very well-made but are they designed to go the distance? A great many products have been developed for general domestic use and simply do not have the durability demanded by commercial lets. Which means they won't last and will prove to be a false economy.

And as alluded to above, how do you put a cost on the time spent travelling, building and disposing of the old, broken pieces?



The explosion of cheap flat-pack and self assembly furniture has changed the way people plan their homes but does it work for the busy landlord, letting agent or property developer?



Sure Ikea sounds like a simple quick fix, but when you factor in time spent travelling, searching, queuing, building and then disposing of both any waste and the broken or unwanted items, it's easy to see how time runs away.

This might suit a family on a weekend, but unlikely to suit a time-pressed landlord.

We have been furnishing rental properties for over two decades. We know the ins and outs of the various different types of furniture – we know what lasts, what does the job and what prospective tenants have come to expect.

We can ensure complete consistency, create the level of finish your target audience will want, and most importantly – save you valuable time.





Tap into decades of experience

➤ **Just give us a call!**



GET IN TOUCH

Thank you for taking a look at our Essential Guide – it's not comprehensive, we just wanted to give you a snapshot of some of the issues we know people face when handling these kinds of projects.

This is set to be a challenging but rewarding year for property – and there are great returns for furnished lets as long as you have the kind of guidance and industry insights our experienced team can provide.

We've worked with hundreds of clients over the years, helping them get a better return on their investment, making sure we guide them through some of the complexities, making it simple and easy for them to get their property on the market and let quickly.

We are here to make your project run smoothly and profitably. We have all the expertise and experience you need to get things done on time, on budget and in a way that will appeal to your ideal tenants.

Whatever your project, if you have any questions or queries we haven't touched on, or if you would like to find out more about any topic we have covered – please do get in touch.

We are always happy to talk to you with absolutely no obligation. Call us today on 0113 240 1114 or visit [instoredirect.com](https://www.instoredirect.com)

Source:

³ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he> (Higher Education Statistics Agency)

Generation rent

There is a growing proportion of people who see rental property not as a short-term necessity while looking out for that dream home to own, but as a longer-term norm. They are not simply biding their time, putting up with second best until they get the chance to move to home ownership, they are settling down, putting down roots.

“Generation rent see their rental property as something more permanent, and that means they will be attracted to property that offers good quality furnishing and appliances.”

Not all tenants will be in their first flush of youth. That means older people with really quite significant incomes, and higher expectations, will be looking to rental as a permanent option – even into middle age and beyond.

They will not put up with student-quality basics, shabby décor and tired flooring. They expect neutral but good quality furnishing, ergonomic, convenient appliances, they don't want too much in the way of personality – they will bring plenty of that themselves – but they don't want bland magnolia either.

Student accommodation

In 2021–22, there were 2,182,560 students studying at UK higher education providers³.

- Undergraduate: 1,734,805
- Postgraduate: 444,760
- Full time: 1,630,505
- Part time: 552,060
- Students from the UK: 2,182,560
- Students from the EU: 120,140
- Students from non-EU countries: 559,825

The foreign student has different needs and expectations – better quality and performance all round, they are less likely to want to survive off take-aways and microwave meals – many cook, entertain at home and spend more time entertaining at home. They demand better cooking appliances, excellent facilities and flexible spaces.

Even the domestic student market has moved a long way from the basic provision of the past. Years ago, only a small percentage of students went into halls, now it is the norm in first year, and common as a solution all the way through. The rise of halls of residence as the typical accommodation for all students has led to more modern, more competitive, more numerous halls of residence.

This improvement has impacted on the other forms of student rented accommodation in that students are looking for more – better facilities, better décor and more up-to-date appliance. Today students (and often their parents) are looking for value for money, clean, spacious, bright and well-appointed accommodation. You can't get away with calling it retro any more.

Sharing economy

Renting by the room is the single biggest factor in property investment for maximising your return. House sharing is still on the rise and those who use it are getting older - the average age of house-sharing website SpareRoom's 5 million+ registered users is 32.

This is understandable. With soaring costs in city centres and fairly flat wage increases, there will be a growing trend for shared properties in prime areas. Larger houses are getting split into flats and shares, with a requirement for more compact, but high spec fridges, washers, dishwashers, and robust, quality flooring and beds.

People are working from home more too, demanding better lighting and flexible work/living space, as well as good Wifi. Rentals will need to be flexible spaces.



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