

### **A short guide to finding housing in Berlin**

Berlin offers a variety of housing options. Depending on your preferences and budget, here is an overview of the forms of housing available for students, as well as how to find them. By far the most common choice of housing among students is a private room in a shared apartment (WG). Ads for rooms and other types of temporary housing are usually indexed on two very popular websites. Berlin also has a network of student dormitories, but the rental process in this case should be started well in advance. All the options below can be of help even if you are based outside of Berlin while you are searching.

#### **1. Popular housing websites: [www.wg-gesucht.de/](http://www.wg-gesucht.de/) and [www.studenten-wg.de/](http://www.studenten-wg.de/)**

**WG (Wohngemeinschaft)** = a room in an apartment typically shared with other young people

- Most Germans speak English, so you'll be able to contact the people posting the rooms in English.
- Neighborhoods we recommend (within reasonable commute):  
  
Pankow  
Prenzlauer Berg  
Wedding  
Mitte  
Friedrichshain  
Moabit  
Reinickendorf
- Prices vary greatly depending on location, size, living conditions, but a room in a WG could range from 300 to 450 EUR. Take a good look at the ads to get an idea of the price range for different areas.
- Finding a WG in Berlin is difficult especially in the months prior to the beginning of the semester, so we recommend starting your search as soon as possible. Still, do not be discouraged if you do not find something right away; housing is usually found at short notice.
- We advise you to contact the most recently posted ads (ideally within one hour). Also, it's better if you include a short description of yourself in the contact email (the more info you can provide, the better).
- Be prepared that there will be other people present if and when you go visit the apartment; the selection process is similar to a job interview.
- We recommend that you always sign a contract for a room or apartment.

- Documents you might need to provide: Anmeldebestätigung, Passport, Student ID, Studienbescheinigung, bank statement or your supporter's proof of income, SCHUFA (credit report in Germany)
- Most owners will expect that you transfer the rent money directly into their bank accounts, so we recommend opening a German bank account. Rent is usually due at the very beginning of the month.

If you are looking for an **apartment**, expect to pay more and provide more documents. You might be asked for proof of your or your guardian's income and for a credit report (SCHUFA). If you have someone in mind whom you want to live with, an apartment might be the better deal in terms of money.

Unless you want to furnish your own room, you should make sure you have at least the basic pieces of furniture there. Your chances of finding a furnished room in a WG might be higher than finding a furnished apartment.

Note: beware of scams! If anyone asks you for credit card information, don't give it to them. Whenever possible, visit the apartments in person, or ask for photos if you can't go in person.

## **2. House of Nations (a collection of houses administered by the Mayor Reuter Foundation)**

**<http://house-of-nations.de/cms/en/home.html>**

- Modern and comfortable accommodation at affordable prices
- The rooms and apartments are located in Wedding and are fully furnished

## **3. Craigslist Berlin - [berlin.en.craigslist.de/](http://berlin.en.craigslist.de/)**

- Mostly English-language ads, often from expats

## **4. <http://www.immobilienscout24.de>**

- Pricier housing from a reliable real estate agency

## **5. <http://kleinanzeigen.ebay.de/anzeigen/stadt/berlin/>**

- A local version of ebay, similar to Craigslist, and includes offers for all kinds of things, among which apartments for rent and WG ads

**6. Housing Associations** (Wohnungsbaugesellschaften) – they are worth a try as a last resort, since they sometimes offer (furnished) apartments for students (with a bit of luck, single apartments located in Pankow, Wedding or Mitte)

<http://www.berlinovo.de/en/suche-apartments>

[http://asp-03.immosolve.eu/immosolve\\_presentation/pub/modern/2136593/284/immo.jsp](http://asp-03.immosolve.eu/immosolve_presentation/pub/modern/2136593/284/immo.jsp)

**You can find other useful resources related to student life in Berlin here:**

<http://www.studentenwerk-berlin.de/en/berlin/international/links/index.html>

### Small dictionary – WG and apartment renting

“ <b>Altbau</b> ” (old building)	Refers to pre-war style buildings, usually 6 stories tall. Altbaus tend to feature high ceilings and hardwood floors, but rarely have an elevator.
“ <b>Neubau</b> ” (new building)	Refers to the style of building built after the war – in East Berlin these may be “Plattenbaus”, the large, Soviet-style buildings that may be 10 or more stories high. Neubaus tend to be more affordable, often have great views from one of the higher floors, usually have elevators, and tend to have PVC flooring or carpet. Overall, the choice between Altbau and Neubau is a matter of personal preference.
“ <b>Renoviert</b> ” (renovated) vs. “ <b>unrenoviert</b> ” (unrenovated)	Unrenovated may mean ‘in need of repair’ or ‘shabby chic.’
“ <b>Heizung</b> ” (heating) and “ <b>Strom</b> ” (electricity)	Be aware that different methods of heating and electricity imply different costs; we don’t recommend apartments which have coal heating (“Kohle”/“Kohleheizung”).
“ <b>Kaltmiete</b> ”	Refers to the rent without utilities and extra services.
“ <b>Nebenkosten</b> ”	Additional costs to the basic rental cost; typically includes utilities and also other services.
“ <b>Warmmiete</b> ”	Rent price which tends to include utilities, but no extra services like telephone and Internet; it is the total amount of money that you should pay directly to the owner.  <b>Total rent = Warmmiete + extra services</b> (that may need to be paid to the service providers)

<b>“Staffelmiete”</b>	Agreement included in the contract that rent will automatically increase every year by a certain amount (the amount specified by the landlord)
<b>“Mindestmietdauer”</b>	Agreement included in the contract that the apartment must be rented for a minimum period of time (landlords are allowed to demand up to 4 years as a minimum rental period)
<b>“Kaution” (security deposit)</b>	Expect to pay the equivalent of 2 or 3 months’ rent; unless you go over your allotted utilities costs or you damage something inside the apartment, you will receive the entire sum of money back when you move out.

### **Housing checklist**

- You have made a preliminary contact with the person posting the ad, and their reply was polite, informative and helpful. Sometimes you will be in touch with the owner of the apartment, sometimes with a person who is just subletting a room.
- You have an overview of where your future room/apartment is located, as well as the amount of time it takes you to commute to Bard College Berlin.
- You know what your room looks like and what sort of furnishing is available.
- If your choice is a WG, you have an idea of who your flat mates will be.
- You have settled the exact dates of moving in and moving out.
- You know the cost of the total rent, the monthly consumption of gas and electricity that is included in the rent price (important especially in winter), and whether you have to pay additional services directly to the providers.
- You know whether Internet is available or not (getting Internet installed can be a hassle and may take up to two months).
- The owner has drawn up a contract, which includes details regarding the condition of your room, the total rent cost, when you will be moving into the room/apartment, when the rent is due and how it should be paid. Most contracts also specify that the owner should be notified at least three months in advance before moving out, so make sure you fully understand the nature of your agreement.