

# INFORMATION

## Looking for Residence in the City of Siegen

In Germany you are not automatically allocated a room when receiving a study place. You must find and apply for dormitory rooms independently.

The University of Siegen does not own any dormitories or apartments. The centralized property manager is the "Studierendenwerk Siegen".

Since the rooms in the dorms of the Student Services are limited, you should begin searching for an apartment or a room early, on the general housing market as well.

You are well advised to begin this search even while still abroad. Be flexible, search not only in Siegen, but also in the adjacent cities and towns, such as Kreuztal, Netphen, Hilchenbach, Wilnsdorf, Freudenberg, Dillenburg, Betzdorf, Kirchen...

### Tips for Room Hunting:

At the beginning of each semester, especially the winter semester (September, October) the real estate market is extremely tight. **Therefore, it is important to start your room search early!**

For students, the favorite parts of town are Siegen center and Siegen-Weidenau. We recommend including the other parts of Siegen in your search: Geisweid, Eiserfeld, Kaan-Marienborn, Achenbach, Trupbach, as well as the cities of Kreuztal and Netphen.

You can either rent privately or from one of the dormitories, in a residential community, or an apartment or private room, on your own.

During your search, please consider the proximity to campus, where most of your classes will be held, to the shopping possibilities, as well as the bus and train connections.

All students, whether from Germany or abroad, are in the exact same position, and the search for an adequate location may take time, therefore patience is required.

### **1. Dormitory**

The centralized property management for dormitory rooms is the Studierendenwerk Siegen (Siegen Student Services). Rooms in the dormitories of the Student Services are very popular. They are in close proximity to the university and are relatively economical. However, space is limited and at times there are long waiting periods. The average monthly rent for a furnished room ranges between 215,- € and 375,- €. In addition to this, a deposit, equivalent to two-months rent, has to be paid, which will be returned to you once you move out, if you are leaving the room in good condition.

You should make efforts to obtain a room as soon as you know that you will be studying in Siegen. You will be required to be enrolled for study, but not until the actual signing of the rental agreement.

Please note that interns who are not registered to study do not have any claim to a room in a dorm.

You will find further information about rents and applications on the web pages of the Studierendenwerk Siegen:

[www.studierendenwerk-siegen.de/wohnen/wohnanlagen/](http://www.studierendenwerk-siegen.de/wohnen/wohnanlagen/)

Contact: Ms. Anna Wagener,  
Tel: +49-271-740-4841,  
e-mail: [anna.wagener@studierendenwerk.uni-siegen.de](mailto:anna.wagener@studierendenwerk.uni-siegen.de)

There are privately owned dormitories, where you can also apply.

- 1.) City Campus Siegen: [www.city-campus-siegen.de/](http://www.city-campus-siegen.de/)
- 2.) Studentenwohnanlage Am Oberen Schloss  
Burgstraße 18/20, 57072 Siegen  
Telephone: +49-271-56370  
E-mail: [studis-oberstadt@bub-siegen.de](mailto:studis-oberstadt@bub-siegen.de)

## 2. Private Renting

An apartment exchange with current offers for students is available on the web page of the Student Services at [www.studentisches-wohnen-in-siegen.de](http://www.studentisches-wohnen-in-siegen.de)

The city of Siegen also offers a list of real estate companies who let apartments in various locations throughout the city:

[www.siegen.de/leben-in-siegen/bauen-und-wohnen/wohnungsgesellschaften](http://www.siegen.de/leben-in-siegen/bauen-und-wohnen/wohnungsgesellschaften)

The classified ads of local newspapers, as well as free weekly notice papers, also contain offers for apartments:

Siegerländer Wochenanzeiger: [www.swa-wwa.de](http://www.swa-wwa.de)  
Siegerlandkurier: [www.anzeigen.siegerlandkurier.de/immobilien](http://www.anzeigen.siegerlandkurier.de/immobilien)  
Siegener Zeitung: [www.siegener-zeitung.de](http://www.siegener-zeitung.de)  
Westfalenpost: [www.wp.immowelt.de](http://www.wp.immowelt.de)  
Westfälische Rundschau: [www.westfaelische-rundschau.de](http://www.westfaelische-rundschau.de)

On the private commercial market you can find flats, apartments, or a room in a flat-sharing-community. Flat-sharing-communities are very popular, since the inhabitants share the cost of the rent. Generally, everyone has his or her own room, while bath and kitchen are shared.

Rooms or apartments can be rented either furnished or empty.

Always insist on a rental agreement and read it thoroughly. You can find information about this topic in the following section.

The internet provides a number of portals to search for rental locations, which also contain offers for students and doctoral students.

[www.wg-gesucht.de](http://www.wg-gesucht.de)  
<https://www.studenten-wg.de/>  
[www.zwischenmiete.de](http://www.zwischenmiete.de)  
[www.mitwohnzentrale.de](http://www.mitwohnzentrale.de)  
[www.immowelt.de](http://www.immowelt.de)

An apartment becomes increasingly more affordable the farther it is located from the city or university. Yet, most of the surrounding areas are easily reachable by bus and train. There will be more information about public transport at the end of this document.

### 3. Concerning Rental Agreements

#### **What to look for when signing a rental agreement?**

-*Expenses*: rent, deposit, utilities and common charges. Some landlords request a one-time administration fee.

-*Notice to quit time-limits*: normally 3 months – verify how long in advance you must give notice before you can move out.

Because the rental laws can be complicated we recommend the following rules of thumb in order to avoid problems:

#### **Maintain a written record of all agreements concerning the rental**

Get a written confirmation of all oral or telephone agreements; this will constitute the only proof that you have in case of any disagreements.

All letters to the landlord should be sent with registered mail, or via a service which can provide proof of delivery. When receiving letters from the landlord, retain the envelope for your records, since the date on the envelope may be different from the date on the letter. Keep each and every receipt, bill, picture and notice as proof. We strongly recommend the honoring of all deadlines: react to a letter within the requested time frame and answer any court letters in a timely manner.

In case of any legal problems contact the law services of AStA of the University of Siegen immediately, the service is free of charge. ([www.asta.uni-siegen.de](http://www.asta.uni-siegen.de)).

#### **Before Moving In**

##### **The Rental Agreement**

**The rental agreement is legally binding as soon as it is signed.** Even if you have not moved into your new flat, you cannot revoke the contract. You should receive a “Wohnungsgeberbestätigung” from your landlord (written confirmation of the rental). You need this document in order to register your new place with the City of Siegen.

##### **The Deposit**

The amount of the deposit should never exceed three months Kaltmiete (charge of rent not including heating and other costs) and can be paid in installments. In any case the (first) payment is due together with the first month’s rent.

The deposit should be returned no later than six months after the end of the tenancy.

The landlord is entitled to retain an adequate amount of the deposit for left over bills and additional costs.

## **During Your Stay**

### **Taking Possession (Moving in)**

We recommend creating a transfer protocol, which lists any and all deficiencies that exist when you take possession of the apartment. A detailed list will provide security for both parties. The protocol should also retain reconstruction or renovation work on the part of the landlord (including dates), as well as further agreements and details (e.g. use of cellar rooms, cleaning agreements for staircase and side-walks).

Principally, when taking possession of the property it is advisable to have a German acquaintance there as a witness, who knows the procedures and ensures that there will be no linguistic misunderstandings.

### **Deficiencies of the Apartment**

If there is any deficiency in the apartment, the tenant has to fulfil his or her legal duty of care (according to German Federal Code §536C article 1 BGB). You are obliged to notify the landlord immediately of any deficiency. If you do not comply with this regulation you forfeit your right to rent reduction, and the landlord is entitled to require an adjustment pay from you (rent reduction in case of defect of damage or title, §536c article 2 BGB).

### **Notice of Deficiencies**

The notice of deficiency should be made in writing, in the form of a detailed description (kind of damage, place and extent). It should also contain an adequate time limit for repair. If the damage is extensive rent reduction can be submitted additionally. If the landlord shows crass neglect, in spite of having knowledge of the damage, you are entitled to compensation.

### **Rent Reduction**

Rent reduction is only admissible if the landlord does not remove the damage before the deadline. There exists no set assessment for rent reduction, but rather, the amount varies on a case by case basis. As a first orientation one may look at previous court decisions on similar cases. In principle, rent reduction is allowed until the damage has been completely removed (including re-painting). If possible a gradual adaptation of rent reduction should be made in accordance with the progress of the repairs.

### **Decorative Repairs**

Decorative repairs (as e.g. painting the walls) can be transferred via the rental agreement to the tenant. An approximate guideline has been established for different kinds of rooms, which can provide guidance: kitchens, bathrooms and showers have to be painted every three years; bedrooms and living rooms every five years; all other rooms every seven years. A combined time schedule for current repairs and obligatory final repairs is not allowed.

### **Additional/ Operating Costs**

The basic rule is as follows: only those costs can be charged, which are either defined in the rental agreement or are additionally being incurred at present. Additional costs may be, for instance, trash removal or the cleaning of the side walk. Operating costs which can be

charged according to the rental agreement are covered in the third appendix of § 27 of the second rule for payment (II. BV). The additional costs are usually covered by an agreed monthly advance payment. The calculation of the additional costs must be provided in a comprehensive form within 12 months upon the end of the calculation period. After the end of this period the landlord is no longer allowed to level any demands (except if he or she is not to blame for the delay).

Be attentive to the cost distribution key, and verify that the actual charges are accordingly. (e.g. per square meter, per person) Also make sure, that the single payment charges are in accordance with the rental agreement, so that no hidden repair cost is charged to you. The tenant has the right to view all receipts and invoices related to your additional costs. If you make use of this right, make copies of everything, so that the landlord is not required to present the documents to you twice.

## **Raising the Rent**

You must be notified in writing of any upcoming rent increase, and the reasons for it have to be given. From the day you receive this notice you have two months time to check out whether to accept the increase or not. If you decide that you accept the increase it goes into effect the first day of the third month after receipt. The landlord is allowed to raise your rent only if the following three conditions are met:

- The rent has not changed for one year
- The intended amount of rent increase is not higher than the rent index
- The rental amount did not rise more than 20% in the last three years.

## **Flat-Sharing Communities**

If you decide to live in a flat-sharing community consider carefully who represents the community towards the landlord. If the rental agreement is merely made with one person, then this one person is the **only contact person** for the landlord, and is **solely responsible** for the payment of rent as well as other contract obligations. The other co-inhabitants are considered subtenants of the regular tenant. If all tenants sign the rental agreement, they are collectively responsible for all payments and contract obligations with respect to the landlord. The tenants are mutually responsible to each other and are in charge of administrative duties. The rental agreement can only be canceled by all of the tenants. This can become complicated, since the demographics of the co-inhabitants often changes.

## **Before Moving**

### **Giving Notice**

Generally, the notice time is three months, unless there is a different individual agreement. Other exceptions are temporary contracts, student dormitories, residence opportunities provided by seniors, and furnished rooms. As far as temporary contracts are concerned one needs to remember that these agreements are only valid when a concrete reason is given at the time of signing the contract. If there is no such clause the contract is considered to be for an indefinite time. The landlord has to adhere to the following staggered times to give notice: three months for a rental period of five years; six months for five to eight years; nine months for more than nine years. There is, however, a "new" form of time-restricted rental agreement, which establishes a mutual waiver of notice periods for rentals up to four years. You should therefore consider carefully, whether you

are willing to bind yourself to a long tenancy. Sometimes you can avoid the notice period, if you find somebody to take over the flat. Please ask your landlord about those possibilities.

### **Apartment Return (Moving Out)**

Basically you are obligated to undo all changes you made during your stay in the apartment, unless you made other arrangements with your landlord. It is quite helpful to make a protocol, and photos if needed, so as to avert possible unjust demands on the part of the landlord. We strongly advise against signing any protocol if you have objections (as e.g. the obligation to repair damages), as this would give the landlord the right to insist on your meeting those demands. If you documented any existing damages in the apartment when moving in, you can use those protocols and photos to prove that you did not cause the damages.

### **Accommodation during Apartment Search**

The city of Siegen provides support for accommodations during the search for an apartment, during enrollment or simply to get to know Siegen and the region prior to moving here:

[www.siegen.de/tourismus/hotels-pensionen-ferienwohnungen](http://www.siegen.de/tourismus/hotels-pensionen-ferienwohnungen)

Unfortunately, there is no youth hostel directly in Siegen. In the general vicinity, however, there are the following youth hostels:

Jugendherberge Hilchenbach: [www.djh-wl.de/de/jugendherbergen/hilchenbach](http://www.djh-wl.de/de/jugendherbergen/hilchenbach)

Jugendherberge Freusburg: [www.djh-wl.de/de/jugendherbergen/freusburg](http://www.djh-wl.de/de/jugendherbergen/freusburg)

Independently, you may also try to find free or affordable accommodations under:

[www.couchsurfing.org](http://www.couchsurfing.org)

[www.airbnb.de](http://www.airbnb.de)

In emergencies: The Studierendenwerk provides emergency housing for freshmen who have not found any accommodation at the beginning of the lecture period. Please contact the Studierendenwerk: [www.studierendenwerk-siegen.de/wohnen/wohnanlagen/](http://www.studierendenwerk-siegen.de/wohnen/wohnanlagen/)

### **Further Information**

#### **Registration with the city**

Within two weeks upon your moving-in, you must register in one of the Bürgerbüros (local city offices). There, your new address is marked on your id card and – if applicable – on your passport.

You can find the form „Anmeldung des Hauptwohnsitzes bzw. Nebenwohnsitzes“ (registration of a main or secondary residence) under:

[www.siegen.de/fileadmin/cms/olsformulare/AnmeldungWohnsitzInclSpeichern.pdf](http://www.siegen.de/fileadmin/cms/olsformulare/AnmeldungWohnsitzInclSpeichern.pdf).

#### **Electricity**

When moving into an apartment it is your obligation to choose an electricity provider and register to obtain their service. On this webpage <https://www.stromanbietervergleich.de/> you can compare several providers. You pay a fixed amount every month (deduction); at

the end of the year you may have to pay an additional amount or may get reimbursed, depending on how high your actual usage was. All sockets in Germany are calibrated for 220 Volts, 50Hz AC and dual prong plugs. All adapters you may need are being sold in various electronics retail stores.

## **Garbage Disposal**

In Germany garbage separation is practiced in order to recycle material. Packaging material made of plastic or metal is placed into the yellow trash-can or yellow garbage bag. Paper and glass are being collected separately. Paper is collected in a blue trash-can, or a public container; glass has to be brought to the appropriate public container. Oftentimes biological waste, such as leftover food, is also being collected separately (in brown trash-cans). The residual waste is placed in the grey trash-cans. Garbage is being collected either once a week or once every two weeks. If you have questions ask the landlord or one of your neighbors. Most of the beverage bottles, made of glass or plastic, are being returned to the stores where you bought them, in order to receive back the bottle deposit.

## **Public Transportation**

An apartment may be more affordable the further it is located away from the city or university. In spite of this it maybe easily reachable with bus or train connections. You can check the possibilities on these pages:

[www.zws-online.de](http://www.zws-online.de)  
[www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de)

In addition to the regular buses, there are special buses which drive to Campus during lecture time (UX-lines).

Each student receives the NRW and VGWS semester ticket upon registration or re-registration to the corresponding semester. This ticket authorizes you to use all public buses and regional trains within the state of North-Rhine-Westphalia and parts of north Hesse and north Rhineland-Palatinate. You can find information concerning the areas covered by the tickets under: <https://www.asta.uni-siegen.de/about/semesterticket>

Use your student registration card in conjunction with the semester ticket for your travel with public transportation. Additionally, you must also carry your passport or id-card with you.

## **Broadcasting License Fees**

Everyone living in Germany is required by law to pay a monthly license fee, which is used to pay the public broadcasting services of television and radio. Foreign students are also under this obligation. If you don't receive a letter from the relevant authority please register of your own accord at [www.rundfunkbeitrag.de](http://www.rundfunkbeitrag.de)

The cost amounts to 17,50 Euros per month. If there are several persons living in the same apartment, only one of them has to pay the broadcasting license fees; the other co-inhabitants only give their share to the person who pays the contribution. However, every person is obligated to register with the broadcasting license authority; in that case, you can apply for an exemption.

In a dormitory situation every single inhabitant has to pay the full amount of the fee; unless the dorm is segmented into small flat-sharing communities, or has floors which are separately locked.

## **Insurance Matters**

It can easily happen that something breaks in the apartment/room. If you accidentally cause any damage, this can become very expensive in Germany. For that reason it is advisable to take out an insurance policy. The monthly cost for such insurance is relatively low, and it can be very helpful if something does happen. The personal liability insurance compensates damages which the insured person causes accidentally to the property of others. Whether you cause any damage in the dorm or are at fault in an accident.

For damage in your own household, a household insurance is advisable; for example as protection against water damages or burglaries. Some landlords demand additional insurance when signing the rental agreement.

## **Glossary – (German) Technical Terms and Abbreviations**

<b>3Zi.-Whg.</b>	- 3 room apartment
<b>3 ZKDB</b>	- 3 rooms, kitchen, hallway, bathroom
<b>unmöbliert</b>	- not furnished
<b>DG</b>	- attic
<b>EBK</b>	- fitted kitchen / built-in kitchen
<b>EG</b>	- ground level
<b>HH</b>	- rear building (rooms may have less light)
<b>K</b>	- deposit
<b>Kalt</b>	- cost for water, electricity gas and garbage are not included in the rent
<b>NR</b>	- non- smoker
<b>KM</b>	- rent without utilities (see Kalt)
<b>Nachmieter</b>	- renter who takes over the apartment after one moves
<b>NK</b>	- utilities (cost for electricity, water, gas, garbage)
<b>NMM</b>	- net monthly rent (see KM)
<b>MVZ</b>	- monthly advance
<b>Prov.</b>	- commission
<b>qm</b>	- square meters
<b>TG</b>	- underground parking
<b>VH</b>	- front house
<b>WG</b>	- rent-sharing community
<b>WB S erford.</b>	- Wohnberechtigungsschein – qualification needed to move into state subsidized buildings.
<b>Wfl.</b>	- living area
<b>WM</b>	- rent including heating
<b>ZI</b>	- room
<b>ZH</b>	- central heating
<b>Zzgl. NK</b>	- plus utilities (heating, electricity, etc.)