

Living in a shared flat in Germany: tips for international students

What is a WG? In Germany, living in a shared flat (WG for short) is a very popular form of accommodation, especially among students. Several people share a flat. While each person usually has their own room, the kitchen, bathroom and sometimes a living room are shared. Living in a shared flat can be a great way to meet new people, speak German and save money – but it also comes with some peculiarities.

There are many different types of WGs. In some shared flats, life is very communal. You cook together, hang out in the living room together and perhaps even go out together. Other shared flats are less community-oriented – you simply share the flat but live independently of each other (“funktionale WG”). When moving in, it is important to clarify how the shared flat works and what the flatmates expect.

Communication is key. In a shared flat, it is important to communicate openly and respectfully, beginning with the introductory meeting. Many shared flats have so-called “castings” where applicants are invited to see who fits in well with the group. Be honest, friendly and interested in the others – don’t just ask about the room, but also show that you are interested in living together.

Cleanliness and tidiness. These are frequent issues in shared flats. Clear agreements help! Many shared flats have cleaning schedules or rules for kitchen and bathroom and for taking out the rubbish. Cleanliness is especially important in communal areas. If you are unsure about the customs, simply ask.

Quiet times and consideration. In rental flats, statutory quiet times apply, usually between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. and all day on Sundays and public holidays. Loud music, partying or vacuuming should be avoided during these times. Consideration is also important in shared flat: ask your flatmates if you want to have guests over or use the kitchen longer.

Money and contracts. Rent and utilities (e.g. electricity, internet, broadcasting fee) are usually shared. It is important to know exactly what is included in the rent. In some shared flats, everyone has their own rental agreement, in others you pay the rent to a main tenant. Ask whether you can officially register with the registration office – this is important for your residence permit.

Living in a shared flat can be a valuable experience, not only financially, but also culturally and socially. With a little openness, respect and curiosity, living in a shared flat can be an enjoyable and educational time.

Kind regards,
International Office