



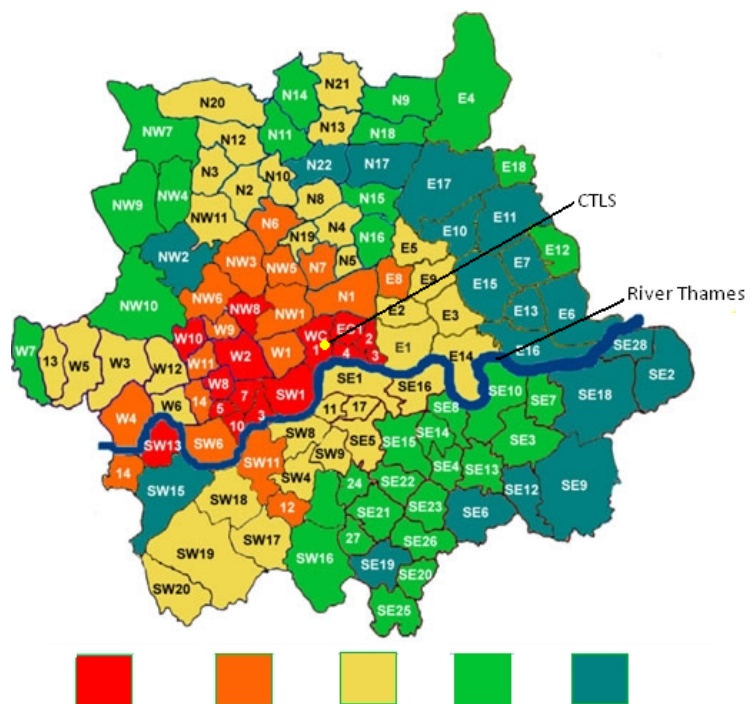
**Center for Transnational Legal Studies
Guide to London Accommodation**

Updated June 2015

Welcome to London, WC1V 6AA

CTLS is located in WC1, which stands for West Central (1). The areas directly surrounding it are all vibrant places in which to live, offering a mix of commercial, residential and student occupancy sites.

This map gives you an idea of where London's different postcodes (districts) are located in relation to the centre. The colour key shows how the postcodes differ in terms of average rental prices for housing, from the most expensive (red) to the cheapest (blue-green).



Living centrally will enable you to reach CTLS within 10-20 minutes using public transport.

Many rental prices further out of London are lower, and the good news is that these areas can still be very accessible. Peak travel times fall within 30 minutes to an hour, using the underground or overland rail services.

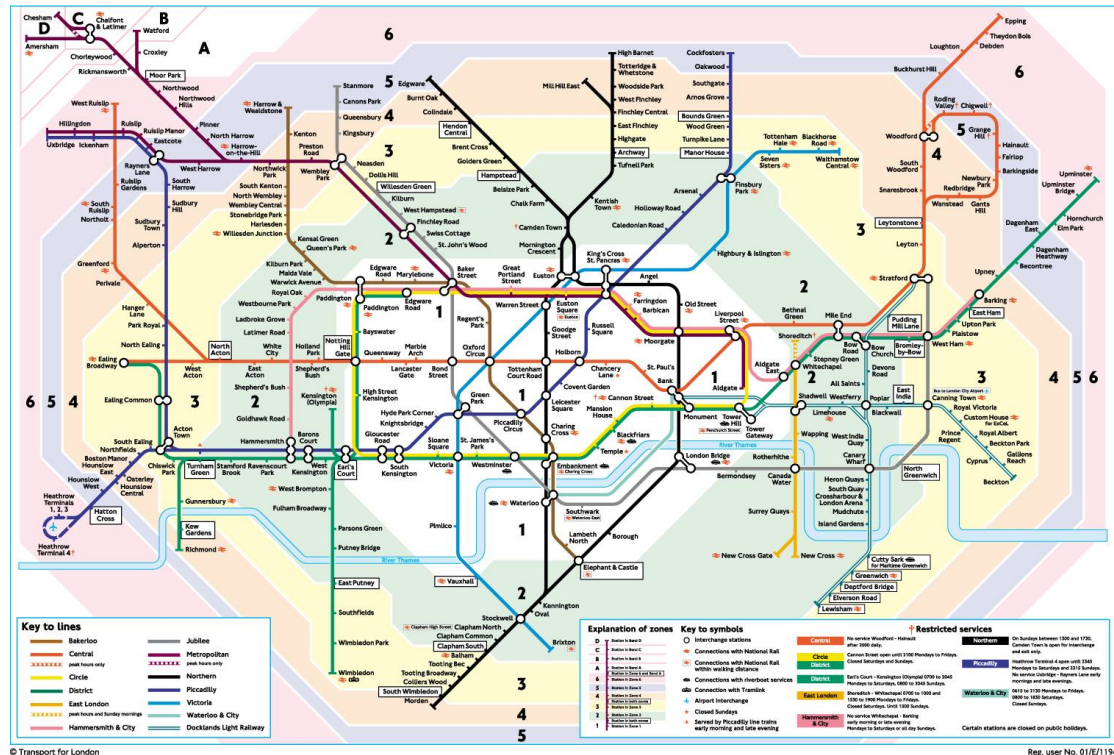
Tried and tested locations – CTLS student picks:



- Battersea (SW11)
- Bloomsbury (WC1)
- Camden Town (NW1)
- Euston (NW1)
- Finsbury Park (N4)
- Goodge Street (W1)
- King's Cross (N1)
- Liverpool Street (EC2)
- London Bridge (SE1)
- Old Street (EC1)
- Shoreditch (E1)
- Vauxhall (SE1)
- Wapping (E1)
- Waterloo (SE1)

Transport for London

London is divided into six travel zones. Zone 1 covers Central London and Zone 6 is furthest away from the centre. We recommend that you make good use of the Transport for London website (tfl.gov.uk) when researching places to live.



- Just type any station name, postcode, street address or well-known destination into the TFL journey planner, and the site will generate a list showing you all the modes of transport which serve that location. It will give corresponding journey times and distances. Searching for bus timetables will also allow you to check what night-time travel is like in your area; it's helpful to note your local night bus route since the underground (Tube) stops running between about midnight and 01.00.



How much you need to pay for transport can vary widely depending on which zones your journey covers, but buying an Oyster card is the most economical way to get around.

- Remember that fares can be up to 30% lower when you apply for an 18+ student photocard to accompany your Oyster. Apply online at the appropriate time by visiting <https://photocard.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/showLogon.do?selection=student>.¹ Just

¹ From August onwards for **Fall** semester students, or from December onwards for **Spring** semester students.

click on Create web account and select CTLS from the dropdown menu on the next page, then follow through the links.

Housing options

Unless you have made arrangements to rent a student room through CTLS (see below), it's a good idea to arrive at least one week before classes start, to give yourself time to find accommodation and settle in. Some students choose to make a separate house-hunting trip to London in the month preceding their move, which can save stress later on.

Liberty Living [£ 5,440.50]

In recent years housing associations and private companies have invested in highly equipped independent halls of residence for students. Liberty Living, with whom CTLS has an ongoing agreement, was rated the best private halls provider on the 2010 National Student Housing Survey.

- Refer to the following webpage for details about this tailored option for CTLS students: <http://www.ctls.georgetown.edu/housing.cfm>
- Or read the same information in our online student guide: <http://www.ctls.georgetown.edu/upload/LondonStudentGuide201413052014.pdf>

Other independent halls [Variable]

A small number of independent halls of residence offer short-term housing for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The University of London maintains a list of registered halls which you may want to consider. However, bear in mind that renting this way does not represent best value for money, as many halls tie students into contracts that last for a minimum number of weeks, usually exceeding the length of one semester at CTLS.

More suitable recommendations may come from the university's short-term housing page (see below), especially helpful if you need somewhere to stay immediately on arrival, or at the end of another tenancy.

<http://housing.london.ac.uk/cms/short-term-housing/>

- While this is a comprehensive and trustworthy source of information, remember that it is up to you to fully investigate what is on offer and ensure you are satisfied before signing an agreement or paying any money in advance.

Sharing with friends [£100 upwards, per person per week]

Past CTLS students have testified that living with friends (or taking the plunge with strangers who will soon become your friends!) often enhanced

their experiences of living in London. They also recommend connecting with London friends and acquaintances beforehand, asking them to look out for properties that become vacant.

- Each semester a CTLS Facebook group is set up, by and for the students. Consider using this to swap tips with potential roommates, then coordinate your arrival in London and house-hunt together.
- Be realistic in your expectations and prepare to move quickly when something suitable appears.

If you're arriving in the UK without firm housing arrangements in place, *don't panic*. Most students say that it's preferable to book a hostel for the initial 1-2 weeks of your stay, giving you a comfortable base from which to start house-hunting. Given how difficult it is to assess the real standards of the accommodation you view online, and given how quickly flats can be snapped up once they're advertised, this is good advice.

Private rentals and sublets [£100-£200 per person per week]

[Before starting your search for private rented housing, read our advice concerning **internet scams** and other fraudulent schemes \(p.9-10\)](#)

The number of options available for pairs and groups of student sharers can seem overwhelming, so it's important to set aside time to search intensively, and use all the tools available to you. These include nationwide sites such as gumtree.com, dedicated property sites, letting agents and word-of-mouth recommendations.*

At the lower end of this price gauge, you should expect to compromise on the size and possibly also the quality of your room (some accommodations in London are very small, as residential flats and shared houses are often pre-1900 property conversions). Prices in Zone 1 tend to be higher, but there are still affordable areas, particularly near King's Cross, towards the East End and just over the river in London Bridge and Borough.

- If you're searching as an individual it can be much easier to join a household with pre-existing lease- many young professionals or student sharers advertise spare rooms informally via the internet which can be a good way to avoid added costs like agency fees.* Taking this option can also help you to estimate your living costs more effectively, since bills for gas, electricity, water and internet will already be in place, and may well be included in the rental price.

* Refer to **Internet Resources** on p.7 for suggestions

Living with a host family or as a lodger [£150-£200, excluding Zone 1]

Students at CTLS have sometimes opted to stay with a host family. To give you an idea of how this works, the websites londonhostfamilies.com and uk-homestay.com are informative, though the rooms advertised are at the pricier end).

- Please note, when entering into informal arrangements like this, you should use common sense and caution. Always get the terms of your living arrangement in writing (cost, length of stay and notice period).
- Where possible, try to benefit from links with UK acquaintances, or use a tried and tested website that's recommended by other students.

Shared housing based on religious or cultural affiliations

The student guidebook gives details of the many religious facilities that are available in close proximity to CTLS. If in addition to practising your faith privately you would also like to share housing with roommates from a similar cultural or religious background, you may find it helpful to visit one of the sites below. This list is not intended to be comprehensive, and is based on feedback from former students who rated the sites as helpful.

- christianflatshare.org
- totallyjewishproperty.com

Other suggestions, currently untried by CTLS students:

- muslimroommates.org

Tips from former CTLS students...

“Make a point of connecting with friends and acquaintances who live in London beforehand, asking them to keep an eye out.”

“I would recommend student halls for people who need a bit of flexibility.”

“It can be easier to flat hunt as an individual rather than team up.”

“I think that living close to CTLS is an incredibly good idea. Even if it means paying slightly more for accommodation, we found that it was quite economical as we saved a lot of money on transport.”

“If you are two CTLS students looking with budget constraints, consider expanding your search to a one-bedroom flat with a living room that could double as a second bedroom.”

“[Avoid] expensive go-betweens, agencies or schemes. They may offer a good experience but won't represent best value for money.”

“See any place before making commitments.”

... and for pitfalls, see p.9-10

Internet resources *

* Please note that this list is intended as a starting point for your search, and there is no quality control implied. We have made reasonable efforts to check each website's legitimacy and reliability, but you should always rely on your judgment when following up offers from prospective sharers or landlords.

The following links are worth checking daily if you are an individual looking for roommates in a house or flatshare:

Moveflat: moveflat.com

Spare Room: spareroom.co.uk

Easy Roommate: easyroommate.co.uk

For general lettings, remember that many landlords will require you to sign a minimum term lease– make this the first thing you ask about when responding to advertisements. Here some recommended places to start...

Gumtree: gumtree.com/london

This is one of the most popular London flat-sharing sites. The offers are from both students and young professionals. Recently landlords have also begun using this site.

Right Move: rightmove.co.uk

Another website with a searchable database of properties mainly advertised through letting agents.

Loot: loot.com

A popular newspaper for people looking to rent private accommodation in London, Loot also offers a searchable online database. The advantage of using this resource is that you will have access to adverts that have not yet appeared in the printed paper.

Zoopla: zoopla.co.uk

Another very popular and easy-to-use site for lettings. You will find guides on different aspects of the renting process, plus local information for each property containing maps and links to Google street view.

Kangaroom kangaroom.net

An easy to use website that accumulates a huge number of room rental listings from across the web, as well as allowing independent owners of properties, or tenants with a spare room, to list directly on Kangaroom. Helpful to students searching for whole apartments and roommates.

Practicalities

Whenever you set out to view properties, it is useful to carry:

- A comprehensive street map of London (not a tourist one, which only covers the city centre)
- A travel or Oyster card that covers all the zones you're looking in
- A mobile phone– essential for keeping in touch with landlords and prospective house-mates when you're out and about

Some common lettings terminology:

pcm, p/w	Per calendar month or per week (referring to the rate of rent)
en suite	A room described as being en suite will have its own bathroom, shower or toilet
w/m, m/w	Washing machine, microwave
grd flr	Ground floor (remember that in the UK, flats on the ground floor will be at street level, flats on the first floor are one storey up, etc.)
bills inc	Utility bills are included in the rental price
n/s	Non-smoking

Note: most landlords will be put off immediately if you say you are smokers, and many will go so far as to write a no-smoking clause into your tenancy agreement, so be aware.

Inspecting a property for safety

- Smoke detectors: Is there a smoke detector connected to a fire alarm? Would it be easy to get out in a fire?
- Electrical fittings: look for loose wires, plugs coming off walls, burn marks on and around plugs.
- Gas safety: is there a valid gas safety certificate for all the appliances? By law, your landlord must arrange for a Gas Safe registered engineer to carry out a safety check every year.
- Do the main doors lock securely? Is there an outdoor security light?
- Damp and draught-proofing: are there gaps around windows and doors? Is there a musty smell, water staining or visible mould?

Financial safeguards

Before entering into a tenancy

It is common practice for landlords to ask for personal references, proof of funds/income and often, in the case of students, a guarantor who would be liable for the rent in the event that the tenant gets into financial difficulties and cannot pay. Before you enter into any financial agreement make sure that you have money available to cover a deposit and the first 6-8 weeks' rent. CTLS can issue you with a letter of introduction to open a UK bank account, and can also provide a guarantor's letter if it's required.

Before you sign a contract :

- Check the property carefully both inside and outside.
- Make sure you understand what payments you might have to make to the letting agent if you have found the property through them.
- Have guarantors and/or references ready to show to the landlord.
- Get your contract checked and make sure you understand it.

Safeguarding your deposit

You have a responsibility to vacate the property in the same condition that it was in when you took occupancy, allowing for fair wear and tear. Make sure you carefully check the inventory (sometimes called a schedule of contents) as soon as you move in.

It is vital that you:

- Keep a detailed record of the property's condition, making amendments to the inventory provided if necessary.
- Take photographs of fixtures and fittings and note the date on which they were taken (especially important if you spot any damage that you think may be disputed later).

Scams and pitfalls

Fraudsters often target international students through adverts on sites such as Gumtree and Loot. Fortunately there is now a lot of advice out there on how to spot scams and make sure you have a safe, straightforward experience with renting. Here are a few key points from us, including this link to an article from the Guardian (it was written in 2009, but the advice holds true).

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2009/sep/27/property-fraudsters-students-tourists>

- If you are asked to send money as a deposit to an advertiser without having viewed the property, be suspicious.

- Students may also be asked to transfer funds in advance using Western Union or Moneygram, revealing tracking information to the advertiser of a property in the process. Never agree to do this, as you may become a victim of identity theft.
- If you need to demonstrate that you have sufficient funds to cover a first month's rent (which is common practice among UK letting agents), presenting an official letter or statement from your bank is sufficient.

Remember never to hand over cash under any circumstances– even when supplying a deposit. No legitimate landlord or agency will require cash in hand.

Budgeting

We estimate that while in London you will need £300-£400 per month to spend on miscellaneous living expenses such as food and drink, books, utilities, internet, tube travel and other transport.

Below is a very general idea of the average monthly figures. Please note that these are monthly costs based on average properties – fuel bills can vary considerably based on the energy efficiency of the property and individual usage.

Utilities:

	1-2 bed flat	3-4 bed flat	4-5 bed house
Gas	£55	£80	£90
Electricity	£65	£75	£85
Water	£45	£50	£60

If you need to set up your own **internet** account, opting for a broadband provider such as Virgin can be a good idea, as it doesn't require the installation of a new phone line.

Remember that if you own a television, or stream TV programmes through the internet as they are being broadcast, you must arrange to pay the **TV licensing fee**. In 2015 the cost of the licence is £145.50 for the entire year (it is possible to pay monthly by direct debit).

A note on council tax

Council Tax is set by local authorities to pay for the services they provide, such as rubbish collection, the police and the fire brigade. It is charged

annually, although most people choose to pay it in monthly or quarterly installments. The rates of council tax are different in each borough.

- To receive an exemption from paying council tax, every member of your household must be a student. If students make up the greater proportion of a household, it may be possible to claim a *reduction* in council tax, but it will not be waived altogether.
- Local authorities can refuse to grant exemption to students unless they demonstrate that they are enrolled at an institution in the *UK or EU* on a course that takes place full time, over a period of *at least one academic year*. This can present difficulties for CTLs students only in London for a semester, so you are strongly advised to consider the cost of council tax before you move, and plan your budget accordingly.

The UK Council for International Student affairs has a factsheet containing detailed information on who qualifies for a student exemption, and the key things you'll need to do if you receive a council tax bill during your stay in London:

http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/council_tax.php

Ending your tenancy

If you are on a rolling tenancy (not a fixed number of weeks or months), don't forget to give notice *in writing* that you intend to vacate the property. This is usually required two months in advance.

When you move out, you will need to take meter readings for the gas and electricity, and contact the relevant companies so that they can issue you with a final bill that is accurate.

Remember to arrange with your landlord or agent how you will be returning items such as keys, if no one is going to be at the property for a 'hand-over'.

Under the law, your security deposit (damage deposit) should be returned to you within 30 days. If the landlord or agent has not contacted you to confirm how payment will be made, be firm in chasing this up. If in their opinion some damage has been done to the property for which you are liable, they must be explicit about this and inform you promptly. If you hear nothing about your deposit, don't wait for news– get in touch as soon as possible!

Links you may find useful

The UK Council for International Student Affairs: ukcisa.org.uk

Transport for London: tfl.gov.uk

Explanation of council tax: direct.gov.uk

TV licensing website: tvlicensing.co.uk

Tenancy Deposit Protection: mydeposits.co.uk / depositprotection.com

Citizens Advice online: citizensadvice.org.uk