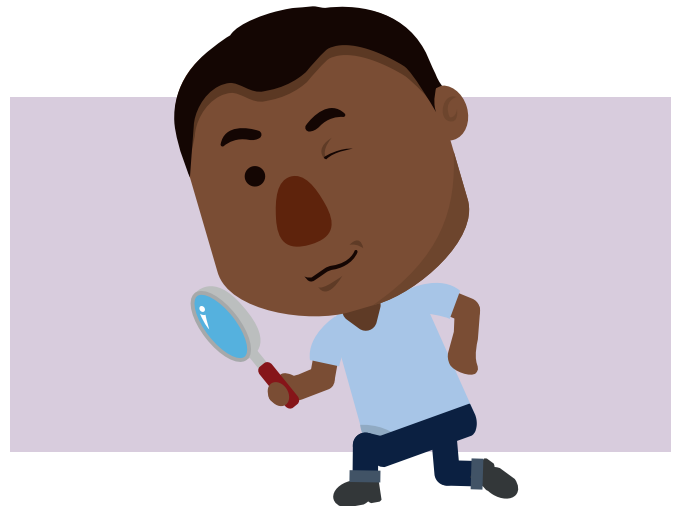


Moving home is one of the biggest changes you can make, and it's really important to do it right. When swapping, especially if you're keen to get out of where you're living, it can be easy to get swept away in the excitement and forget the practicalities.

Here are our top 10 tips for a successful swap:

1. Research the area

Think about the area. Is it close to public transport? Close to a busy road? Does it feel safe during the day? What about at night? Are there playgrounds and good schools nearby for the kids? Is it near a hospital? If so can you hear ambulances all the time? Is it near a noisy pub or club? etc...



2. What's included?

You need to find out what belongs to the tenant and what belongs to the landlord. Even if they say they're leaving something of theirs behind, there is no guarantee they will as this isn't included in the paperwork. If in doubt, assume anything that isn't the landlords' property will be going. Ask specifically about white goods, curtains etc.

3. Décor

While it would be brilliant to swap into exactly the home of your dreams, it can often be necessary to do a bit of decoration (with permission of course!) once you move in to make the property really feel like home. It's worth jotting down what you'd like to change and how important it is, so you've got a realistic picture of any costs before you move in.

4. Tenancy type

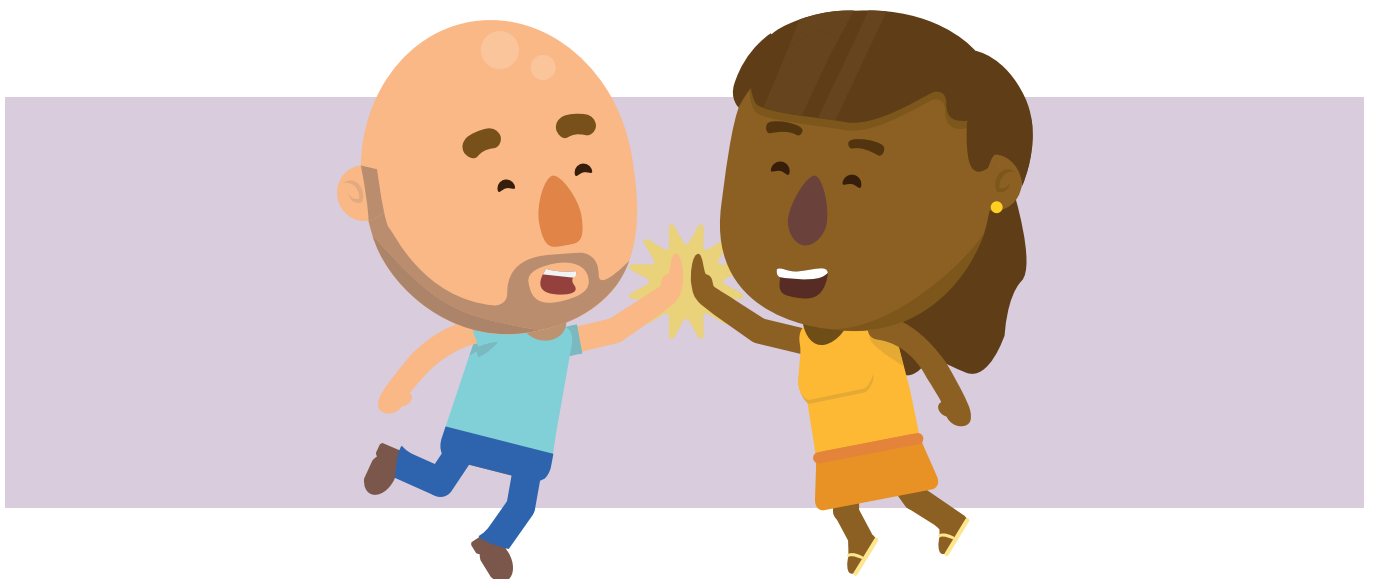
Check the tenancy type of the home you want to swap into, and make sure you know yours. If you're not sure, ask your landlord. When you swap homes, you don't take your tenancy with you, so this can be a really important factor for lots of people as it can affect things like right to buy.

5. Rent and bills

Find out how much the rent is. Remember this can be different to the amount the current tenant pays as they may receive housing benefit as a 'top up'. It's also worth asking what the usual bills are – gas, electricity, internet, water, council tax – as these can vary widely between council areas. It's no guarantee that yours will be the same, but at least you'll have an indicator.

6. Neighbours

This is one of the most important things to think about. What are they like? Can you meet them? Are there any disputes or noise issues? Visit at different times of day to really get a feel for the area, and if it's a block of flats, make sure you think about the neighbours above and below too.



7. Condition

Inspect any white goods that will be staying (fridge, freezer, washing machine, cooker, microwave, dishwasher etc) and check they're in good working order. Remember, you take a property 'as seen' so the landlord will have expected you to do your research.

It's really important to check the current tenant has had permission to make any changes to the property. If they haven't got this permission, it can be a reason for the landlord to refuse the swap.

Some things you should think about are:

- Is it in good condition? Are there signs of damp, flaking paint or infestations of any kind? Do repairs need to be carried out? Are there any broken items of furniture that will be staying?
- Is there central heating? Do all the radiators function properly? Is it properly insulated? Is there double glazing?
- Is there enough storage space for your belongings?
- Is there any sign of dodgy wiring, loose wires or faulty plugs or lights?
- Are there enough kitchen cupboards and work surfaces?
- Check the bathroom(s) and make sure taps are not leaking. Does the shower work properly? Are the sealants around the bath and shower intact?
- Are there enough electrical and telephone points and are they in the right places for your needs?

8. Any eligibility issues

Some homes have eligibility rules in place that you must meet in order to move in. These often don't come up until later in the process and we've seen plenty of swappers be really disappointed because of this. Some of the things to check are:

- Age restrictions
- Mobility restrictions e.g. is it a sheltered home?
- The need for a local connection
- It's been adapted for disability and this isn't applicable for you
- You have to work for the council or in a specific job to move in

There are others but these are the most common. If you're not sure, ask.

9. Occupancy requirements

If the home is too big or too small for your needs, you probably won't be able to move in. Some landlords are more about "over-occupation" than others, but it is a valid reason to decline a swap and it's one of the most common.



10. How serious is the other swapper?

Anyone on a swapping site will have read stories about “time wasters”. People selling furniture only to be let down at the last minute, even withdrawing their children from schools in advance of a move. Our advice is simple:

Don't make any major changes to your life until your swap has been approved and you've signed the paperwork. Swappers (including you) have a legal right to pull out of a mutual exchange at any point before the paperwork is signed.

If you're worried about not having time to do everything, sign the paperwork and set up a swap date for a couple of weeks later to give you the chance to make all these changes. Remember that swaps can fall through for lots of reasons, and someone pulling out usually has a valid reason – they're not doing it to be spiteful. It's really tough but try not to get too emotionally invested in your potential new home before the paperwork is signed.



If you have any questions or need further advice on any of the above, please contact your landlord or raise a ticket with our Help Desk team by emailing:

tenants@homeswapper.co.uk