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Security Deposit — Kaution for Rental Housing in Germany

A security deposit in Germany can be up to 3 months of net rent and can be paid as a lump sum, in installments, or through a bank guarantee. Landlords must hold deposits in a separate account, and tenants have rights to recover their full amount within 3-6 months.

Deutsche Begriffe: Kaution | Mietkaution | Kautionskonto | Bürgschaft

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How Much is the Security Deposit?

Maximum of **3 months of net rent** (Kaltmiete, excluding Nebenkosten).

Examples:

- Net rent €800 → max deposit €2,400
- Net rent €600 → max deposit €1,800

How Can You Pay?

- 1. Lump sum** — before moving in
- 2. In 3 installments** — first upon moving in, next 2 in following months
- 3. Bank guarantee (Bürgschaft)** — bank guarantees it, you don't pay immediately
- 4. Parental deposit** — parents act as guarantors

Where Does the Deposit Go?

The landlord **MUST** open a separate account (Kautionskonto) and deposit your security deposit there. Interest belongs to you.

When Do You Get Your Deposit Back?

- After the lease ends and you move out
- Timeline: **3-6 months** (landlord may retain funds for Nebenkosten settlement)
- Deductions only for documented damages

Important Notes!

- **Never pay the deposit before seeing the apartment!**
- Always get a receipt
- Take photos of the apartment upon move-in (move-in protocol)
- If the landlord doesn't return your deposit — Mieterschutzbund can help

Useful Links

- Mieterbund — tenant protection