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Apartment Hunting — How to Find Housing in Germany

A comprehensive guide to finding an apartment in Germany, covering the best online platforms, required documents, tips to increase your chances, and common scams to avoid.

Deutsche Begriffe: Wohnungssuche | Wohnungsbesichtigung | Selbstauskunft | Schufa | Mietschuldenfreiheitsbescheinigung | Bewerbermappe | Gehaltsnachweise | WBS | Wohnberechtigungsschein | Sozialwohnung | Bestellerprinzip | Kaltmiete | Warmmiete | Nebenkosten | Mietpreisbremse | Mietspiegel | Mietvertrag | Kaution | Anmeldung | Wohnungsgeberbestätigung | Hausmeister | Besichtigung | Maklergebühr

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Wohnungssuche — How to Search for an Apartment

Where to Search?

Online Portals (Most Popular):

- **ImmoScout24** — the largest
- **Immowelt**
- **Kleinanzeigen** (formerly eBay Kleinanzeigen)
- **WG-Gesucht** — rooms and shared apartments

Other Methods:

- Facebook groups (e.g., "Wohnung Hamburg")

• Local notices, flyers in supermarkets, Hausmeister

• **Sozialwohnung** — cheaper, but requires a WBS (Wohnberechtigungsschein) certificate from the local office for low-income earners

What Documents to Prepare? (Bewerbermappe)

1. Selbstauskunft — form with personal data and income

2. Schufa Report — credit reliability report (order at meineschufa.de)

3. Gehaltsnachweise — last 3 pay slips

4. Mietschuldenfreiheitsbescheinigung — certificate of no rental arrears from your previous landlord

5. Copy of ID/passport

Landlords almost always ask for Schufa — order the report in advance (the free version "Datenkopie nach Art. 15 DSGVO" is sufficient).

How to Increase Your Chances?

• **Speed** — respond within hours, have all documents in one PDF

• **Good impression** at Besichtigung — punctuality, cleanliness, brief motivational letter

• In tight markets, 50–100 people apply for one apartment — expect rejections

Broker and Commission

Since 2015, **Bestellerprinzip** applies: the person who ordered the broker pays — usually the landlord. Therefore, the tenant typically **does not pay** a commission. If someone demands a Maklergebühr from you for a regular rental — that's a warning sign.

What to Watch Out For?

⚠ **SCAMS:**

• Never pay before viewing the apartment or send money abroad

• Don't provide bank details via email

• Price significantly below market = almost certainly a scam (e.g., fake "landlord abroad")

How Much Does an Apartment Cost?

City	Kaltmiete per m²
Hamburg	13–18€
Berlin	12–17€
München	18–25€
Frankfurt	15–20€
Köln	12–16€

These rates are **Kaltmiete** (cold rent). Add Nebenkosten (utilities allowance) — together they make up Warmmiete. In areas with **Mietpreisbremse**, the new rent cannot exceed the local level (Mietspiegel) by more than 10%.

After Finding an Apartment

- Before signing, carefully read the rental agreement (Mietvertrag)
- Prepare the deposit — max 3 cold rents, you can pay in 3 installments
- Within **14 days** of moving in, register (Anmeldung) with Wohnungsgeberbestätigung

Rule: Rent Max 30% of Net Income