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Apartment Handover — Protocol, Repairs and Meter Readings

Proper apartment handover: handover protocol, cosmetic repairs, meter readings and common mistakes to avoid.

Deutsche Begriffe: Übergabeprotokoll | Schönheitsreparaturen | Zählerstand | Wohnungsübergabe | Abnutzung

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What is an apartment handover?

Apartment handover takes place during move-in and move-out. The condition of the apartment is documented. A proper protocol protects both parties from later disputes.

The Handover Protocol

What must be included?

- **Date and time** of handover
- **Persons present** (tenant, landlord, possibly witnesses)
- **Condition of each room** — walls, floors, windows, doors
- **Existing defects** — scratches, stains, damage
- **Meter readings** — electricity, gas, water, heating
- **Number of keys** — apartment key, mailbox, basement
- **Photos** as evidence (with date!)

Tip: Conduct the handover in **daylight** — defects are difficult to spot in artificial light.

Sample template

A handover protocol typically contains a table:

Room	Condition	Defects
Hallway	good	Scratch on door
Living room	good	—
Kitchen	satisfactory	Lime scale in sink
Bathroom	good	Silicone sealant needs renewal

Cosmetic Repairs

What are they?

Cosmetic repairs include **painting and wallpapering** walls and ceilings, painting doors and radiators.

Must tenants renovate?

• Many clauses in rental contracts are **invalid** (e.g., fixed periods like "paint every 3 years")

• The Federal Court of Justice has ruled: tenants must only renovate if they took over the apartment **in renovated condition**

• **Taken over unrenovated** → no renovation obligation at move-out

• If in doubt: ask your **tenant association** (membership approx. 60–90 €/year)

What is normal wear and tear?

No grounds for deductions from deposit:

• Slightly yellowed walls

• Small anchor holes (up to 5 mm)

• Worn-out carpet

• Light wear marks on door handles

Reading Meter Levels

On the day of handover, **read all meters** and note them in the protocol:

- **Electricity meter** — for deregistration with electricity provider
- **Gas meter** — if available
- **Water meter** (hot/cold) — for utility cost settlement
- **Heating** — heat cost allocators on radiators

Avoid Common Mistakes

- **No protocol** — without a protocol, the landlord has a free hand with the deposit
- **Defects not documented** — photos with date are decisive
- **Complaints too late** — report defects immediately at handover
- **Keys given without receipt** — always demand confirmation
- **Apartment not cleaned** — the apartment must be handed over **broom-clean** (not renovated, but clean)