

MOVE-OUT CHECKLIST

End of lease handover — do it properly

The end of a commercial lease is more than just handing back the keys. Getting move-out right can save thousands in dilapidations costs and avoid prolonged disputes. Start planning at least 3–6 months before your lease ends.

Start early

Dilapidations disputes are the single biggest source of conflict at lease end. Most of them are entirely avoidable if you plan ahead and take professional advice early. Don't wait until the last month.

6 months before lease end

- Confirm your lease end date and any notice requirements
- Review your lease for repair and reinstatement obligations
- Commission an interim schedule of condition
- Get a dilapidations cost estimate from a building surveyor
- Decide: negotiate a cash settlement or do the works yourself
- Identify a new property if you're relocating
- Start removing items and decluttering

3 months before

- Serve any required notices in the correct form
- Begin repair and decoration works if doing them yourself
- Remove all non-landlord signage
- Terminate utility contracts for end-of-lease date
- Notify insurance of pending vacation
- Arrange reinstatement of any alterations required
- Instruct removals company

1 month before

- All contents being removed — ensure complete clearance

- Final decoration and cleaning
- Final test of alarm and life safety systems
- Gather all compliance certificates
- Prepare to return keys, fobs, access cards
- Confirm meter reading date
- Book final inspection with the landlord or surveyor

On the day

- Attend final inspection in person or via your surveyor
- Provide final meter readings
- Return all keys, fobs, cards, and alarm codes
- Photograph the final state of the property
- Receive written acknowledgement of key return
- Provide forwarding address for final account and any correspondence
- Confirm where the final account should be sent

Dilapidations — what to expect

The landlord will normally serve a "terminal schedule of dilapidations" at or around lease end. This lists items of disrepair, decoration issues, and alterations to be reinstated. Against each item, the landlord will claim the estimated cost of remedial works.

Key legal principles:

- **Section 18(1) Landlord and Tenant Act 1927 cap** — Damages cannot exceed the reduction in the value of the landlord's reversion. Often limits claims significantly.
- **Supersession** — If the landlord intends to do different works anyway (e.g. refurbishment), your liability for items being superseded is reduced or removed.
- **Betterment** — You only owe for repair to the contractual standard, not for improvements or modernisation.
- **Reasonableness** — Works claimed must be reasonable, and costs must be at market rates.

Take professional advice

Dilapidations claims are highly negotiable. It is common for a claim of £50,000 to settle for £15,000 — or less. Always instruct a specialist dilapidations surveyor before engaging with the landlord. The fee pays for itself many times over.

Settling the dilapidations claim

- Instruct a dilapidations surveyor early
- They will respond to the landlord's schedule with a Quantified Response
- Negotiation typically follows — aiming for a financial settlement
- Most claims settle through correspondence, not court
- If unresolved, the claim proceeds via court or alternative dispute resolution

After you've left

- Monitor your forwarding address for correspondence
- Settle the final rent, service charge and insurance account
- Respond to any dilapidations correspondence within timeframes
- Close utility accounts and retain final bills
- Update your address with banks, insurers, HMRC, suppliers
- Retain all property records for at least 6 years

Common mistakes to avoid

- Leaving break notice to the last minute — service it **strictly** in accordance with the lease
- Ignoring the dilapidations schedule — the clock is ticking
- DIY negotiating without professional advice
- Forgetting to close utility accounts (you'll keep getting billed)
- Not keeping records of what you did and didn't do
- Assuming the landlord will be reasonable — get it in writing