

Renting a house

Listen to four different people talking about their experiences with renting accommodation to practise and improve your listening skills.

Before listening

Do the preparation task first. Then listen to the audio and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. impersonal
2. spacious
3. to give notice
4. a commission
5. a doorstep
6. upmarket
7. a sauna
8. a heatwave

Definition

- a. to inform your landlord of your intention to leave the flat or house
- b. money you earn from selling something for someone else
- c. having a lot of space
- d. unfriendly, distant
- e. a step outside the front door of a house
- f. a short period of unusually hot weather
- g. luxury, for high-income customers
- h. a room made hot with steam

Tasks

Task 1

Circle the best answer.

1. Who is not renting yet?
 - a. Speaker A
 - b. Speaker B
 - c. Speaker C
 - d. Speaker D
2. Who thought they'd found their dream home?
 - a. Speaker A
 - b. Speaker B
 - c. Speaker C
 - d. Speaker D
3. Who told the landlord they were moving out?
 - a. Speaker A
 - b. Speaker B
 - c. Speaker C
 - d. Speaker D

4. Who offers their flat for rental?
 - a. Speaker A
 - b. Speaker B
 - c. Speaker C
 - d. Speaker D
5. Who had a problem with the owner of the house?
 - a. Speaker A
 - b. Speaker B
 - c. Speaker C
 - d. Speaker D
6. Who is doing something they've never done before?
 - a. Speaker A
 - b. Speaker B
 - c. Speaker C
 - d. Speaker D
7. Who feels as if their situation will never improve?
 - a. Speaker A
 - b. Speaker B
 - c. Speaker C
 - d. Speaker D
8. Who regrets the timing of their decision to move in?
 - a. Speaker A
 - b. Speaker B
 - c. Speaker C
 - d. Speaker D

Task 2

Write the correct form of the word in CAPITALS to complete the sentences.

1. This city apartment sleeps 2–4 people. SPACE
2. Buying a house seems so far out of reach it's POSSIBLE
3. We spent my birthday weekend in an boutique hotel in London. MARKET
4. Hotel rooms always feel so to me – identical furniture and the same white towels. PERSONAL
5. If you move out of the city centre, nice flats become more AFFORD
6. It gets so hot in July – you really need air CONDITION

Discussion

Do you think renting or buying a house is better?

Transcript

A

We saw the ad in the summer, in about July, I think, but we weren't really serious about moving then so we didn't even go and see it. It wasn't until November when they readvertised it that we got in touch with the agency and had a look. They'd put the price down since the summer too, I suppose because it had been empty so long, so that made it more affordable for us which helped us make up our minds. It was perfect – a bigger garden for the kids and enough space for an office. In winter it was lovely, very cosy, in fact, which is important to me as I really feel the cold, whereas my husband will open a window when it's minus temperatures outside! Anyway, in July when summer really started and we had that heatwave, we understood why no one had wanted to rent it over summer. It was boiling! All those lovely big windows that made the flat so light and open were like a greenhouse as soon as it got warmer. From about 8 in the morning until 7 in the evening, it was like living in a sauna! We couldn't stand being at home, and weekends were especially bad. No air conditioning, of course. If only we'd gone to see it when it was first advertised in July, we'd never have moved in!

B

I always rent apartments when I go on holiday, rather than staying in hotels. Hotels are so impersonal, aren't they? This way you get to feel like you really live in the place you're visiting. It's the first time I've done it the other way round, though, and rented out my place ... but it seemed like a good way of making some extra money. The website is really easy to use and they only charge five per cent commission, which is lower than a lot of the other holiday rental sites. It's all about the photos and the reviews. Get the photos right and the place can look really upmarket and spacious, but you don't want to make it look too much better than it really is or you end up with a bad review. It's better to undersell and overdeliver so guests are pleasantly surprised and leave an extra positive review. So far, I'm averaging three stars because of one bad review that brought my average down from four and a half stars, but hopefully I'll get it back up during the busy season.

C

Buying a house seems so far out of my reach it's almost impossible, as it is for loads of people my age these days. My parents always told me renting was throwing money away, but it was different in their day. Then people could afford to buy a house on a normal salary, but nowadays house prices are so high and no bank will look at you unless you've got a huge deposit. The problem with my dream of buying is that it's never going to come true. Not unless my parents help me out, but I've got two sisters and we're all in the same position. At least they've both got good jobs. Not good enough to buy a house, but at least they can afford to rent places of their own in nice areas. I just don't earn enough to rent around here. Even if I get promoted to manager, it'll be tough to find somewhere unless I share, and call me fussy, but there aren't that many people I want to share a bathroom and kitchen with. Some days I think I'll be stuck living with my parents forever – even renting is like a dream to me.

D

At first our landlord was really helpful, couldn't do enough for us. You hear stories of nightmare landlords and we felt like we were really lucky, or so we thought anyway. He redecorated the whole place, from top to bottom, and let us keep all the bills in his name so we didn't have the bother of contacting all the companies ourselves. He even offered to come round and do the gardening as he knew we both worked long hours and might not have time. That's where the problems started now I look back. Then he'd pop round 'just to check everything's OK for you' ... once a month, then twice a month. Soon he was coming every week with some excuse or other. In the beginning we'd invite him in for tea, but it was only encouraging him, so when we realised, we'd try to have the conversation on the doorstep instead. It got so bad we pretended to be on our way out if we saw him coming up the path. We'd grab our coats and walk round the block until he'd gone. I don't know if he was just lonely or just didn't trust us not to ruin his precious house. In the end we gave our notice and found somewhere else. It's a shame because we really loved that house, but at least it's more peaceful in the new place.

Answers

Preparation task

1. d
2. c
3. a
4. b
5. e
6. g
7. h
8. f

Task 1

1. c
2. a
3. d
4. b
5. d
6. b
7. c
8. a

Task 2

1. spacious
2. impossible
3. upmarket
4. impersonal
5. affordable
6. conditioning