



According to the Belgian Civil Code, tenants must honour the "bonus pater familias" principle, taking care of a rental property as "a reasonable family father" would. The "bonus pater familias" concept, originating in Roman law, refers to a standard of reasonable care (Belgian Civil Code, Article 1728), entailing several points of attention. This document lists some of these points, which will help you avoid technical problems in the property you rent.

### Long summer, warm winter

#### Activate the heating system during the summer



In most properties, the **heating system** is disabled during the warm summer months, only to be activated when the first cold days arrive. If the system fails during those first winter days, it will be difficult to get hold of heating specialists, who have a busy schedule at that time of the year.

Therefore, you should activate the heating system a while before and verify if all **radiators** come on. If a problem arises, there is sufficient time to have a specialist come over before winter.

Moreover, activating the heating system now and then prevents the pump from blocking after an extended rest period. During summer, leave the **thermostatic radiator valves** turned on to prevent blocking.

#### Order fuel in time



It is unpleasant to have the first winter evenings spoiled by an **empty fuel tank**. Fuel suppliers also have a very busy schedule during the first cold days, which often leads to delayed deliveries.

Moreover, it is important to never let the tank drain completely empty. Sediments can harm the heating installation, necessitating a full cleaning of the system.

Ensuring there is always a sufficient amount of fuel in the tank can prevent these problems. It is interesting to know that most suppliers offer a promotion tariff when you order at least 2000 litres.

When having the tank refuelled, please take the following into account:

- 1) Before the delivery, switch off the heating installation (by means of the electrical switch that is usually located next to the installation).
- 2) After the delivery, wait 3 to 4 hours before switching the installation back on.

## Prepared for rainy days



Regularly remove **fallen leaves** from paths, terraces and lawns to avoid moss growth. Clear the gutters regularly and check the roof drains as well if your rental property has a flat roof. **Blocked drains and gutters** will cause problems during rainy days and may even lead to water-damaged walls and ceilings.

Also check **floor drains and inspection chambers (usually located** in garages, on driveways and terraces). If there is a pump, check if it is still functioning. During heavy rains, the pump and drains will ensure water flows away from the property.

Before the first frost, turn off the water supply to any **outside taps** to avoid freezing.

## Weeding, trimming and mowing



**Remove weeds** from flower beds and keep paths and terraces clean. **Mow the lawn regularly** in spring and summer, and remove the grass clippings. **Trim hedges and trees** twice a year, once before and once after summer. Most communes collect garden trimmings twice a year, so you can plan this chore right before the collection. If you want to have a professional gardener take care of these tasks, we can provide you with a list of professionals.

## Fighting lime scale, grease and dust

### Hard water



The water in our region is very hard. Toilets, sinks showers and taps must be cleaned regularly to avoid lime scale. Shower screens and tiles are best wiped with a wiper or an absorbent cloth after each use. Avoid aggressive products that can damage the seals of shower doors, the grouting between the tiles and the silicon seals around baths, showers and sinks. Check these seals regularly and if necessary, have them repaired by a professional.

Regularly descale the "perlator" or "aerator": the mouthpiece that reduces the volume of tap water used. Usually, you can take off the mouthpiece, remove the little sieve inside, which can then be soaked in vinegar for a few hours to descale it.

Remove hair and soap deposits to avoid blocked bath and shower drains. If the water fails to drain well, use a rubber plunger, combined with a non-aggressive product. Important! Never attempt to dislocate the round shower drain cover that is fixed with a screw to the shower base. As soon as it is unscrewed, the drain parts that are attached to it are likely to drop under the shower base, making it impossible to retrieve them.

## Grease



Use the **dishwasher** products that are recommended by the manufacturer and ensure there is always sufficient dishwasher salt and rinsing agent in the machine.

If the dishes do not seem as clean as they should be after a normal cycle, it may be necessary to clean the dishwasher as follows:

1. Empty the machine, clean all filters and remove all debris.
2. Start a normal cycle. The machine will first pump away all water that is still located in the drains. Open the machine as soon as this phase is finished.
3. Pour half a litre of vinegar in the machine, and close it to finish the entire cleaning cycle.

Replace or clean the **filters of the extractor fan** regularly. Most metal filters can be cleaned in the dishwasher. Check the manufacturer's recommendations before cleaning the filters.

## Dust



Regularly remove dust from the **air vents** in the bathroom or the toilet to ensure their optimal functioning.

Also clean the **filters** of your washing machine and tumble dryer to remove dust and dirt.

## Yearly checks



Most installations must be **checked yearly by a professional**. Technical installations that require a yearly check are the heating system, chimney, fire place, and water softener and alarm system. Schedule these checks well ahead to distribute costs. Do not delay having the heating system checked until winter, as this is a very busy period for heating specialists.

If your rental property is fitted with an active alarm system that is not connected to a professional alarm centre, you, as a tenant, must register the system via the website [www.police-on-web.be](http://www.police-on-web.be). Please contact our agency if you need help with the registration procedure.

Regularly check the **water meter** for irregularities in water consumption. If irregularities occur, identify the cause of the problem and contact the property owner or -in case Ifac Service manages the property- our agency. Do the same for **electricity and gas meters** and also check the pressure relief valves of the heating installation or boiler. If water is flowing from the valves, shut down the mains and contact the owner or our agency (in case we manage the property).

If there is a **septic tank**, it must be emptied at the end of the rental period.

## Extra attention to safety



Carbon monoxide poisoning is caused by the combustion gases of gas water heaters in poorly ventilated rooms or by blocked chimneys. Never skip the mandatory yearly check of heating appliances and chimneys and do not block any vents in rooms with gas installations or fireplaces. More information about the prevention of CO poisoning can be found on our website, in the section [Info](#).

In the Brussels Capital Region and in Wallonia, optical smoke detectors are mandatory. As smoke detectors and fire extinguishers save lives, we recommend all tenants to install them in the properties they rent. Also check regularly if all wall sockets are still fixed appropriately. Any loose wires should be repaired by an electrician, as they cause real safety hazards.

If you go on holiday, protect your rental property against unwanted visitors. Ask friends or neighbours to keep an eye on the property. You can also ask the police to regularly check your property via the website [www.police-on-web.be](http://www.police-on-web.be).

## Condensation



Black condensation mould on walls, ceilings or furniture is the result of a combination of factors: cold surfaces, like an outside wall, high humidity (e.g. in a shower room) and poor ventilation (e.g. in strongly insulated properties).

You can prevent condensation by

- regularly and thoroughly airing bedrooms and bathrooms (open the windows for at least 20 minutes each day)
- heating all rooms sufficiently so walls and ceilings retain a moderate temperature
- having the ventilation system run for a sufficient period of time after showers or baths, or leaving the window open for about fifteen minutes, while keeping the door to other rooms closed to prevent humidity spreading through the property.
- always switching on the extractor fan when cooking and keeping the filter clean

Condensation on walls or ceilings is best wiped off immediately.

If condensation mould occurs, you can remove it with an appropriate product, like "HG schimmelvlekkenreiniger", available in most drugstores.

## In case of problems...



**It is always possible that, despite your best efforts, problems arise in your rental property. If Ifac Service manages your property, you can contact us by phone on 02 767 14 14 or via e-mail ([info@ifacservice.be](mailto:info@ifacservice.be)). If our agency does not manage the property, please contact the property owner.**