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upad: on a mission to stamp out fraudsters targeting students
– Rental specialist offers its top tips on how students
can avoid potential landlord scams –

upad.co.uk, the UK's marketplace for property rental, is offering students free advice on beating the wave of rental fraudsters offering non-existent properties.

The growth of free property listings sites means fraudsters can advertise non-existent properties and take deposits online leaving tenants out of pocket with nowhere to go.

The problem is so bad among students looking for digs that the Metropolitan Police's 'Operation Sterling' fraud prevention team has issued a warning¹.

Commenting on this issue, James Davis, CEO of www.upad.co.uk, the UK's marketplace for property rental, says: "The fraudsters are using free listings websites to trick people, especially students (particularly at this time of year), into paying large deposits up front or revealing their bank details. Victims are generally told by the 'landlord' that the property can only be viewed if they provide financial information or money up front."

The Metropolitan Police's Fraud Prevention department says that typically the advertisements have no telephone numbers and contain only free email addresses such as Gmail or Hotmail.

Davis continues: "On the **upad** website, we offer a 'report ad' function, which enables renters to contact the **upad** team, if they think an advert is suspicious in any way. The advert is then temporarily removed from the site, for the necessary background checks to be undertaken, and if it does indeed turn out to be fraudulent, it is permanently removed from the site. We want to do as much as we possibly can to protect renters from potential fraudsters."

Here, **upad** has provided its three top tips to avoid potential scams:

1) Where at all possible visit the property with the landlord. This will immediately rule out the possibility of being scammed in this way. If the landlord is reluctant to show you around, then you should definitely be suspicious.

2) If it is not possible to see the property before moving in, then contact your college or university's student union. They will often have approved housing lists, and if they are unable to help directly, should be able to point you in the right direction.



3) Be prepared to walk away. If you have any doubts at all, it is just not worth the risk. Don't send any money or your bank details, cut all contact and start looking elsewhere.

upad launched in October 2008, enabling landlords to advertise each property for a one-off cost of £59. The service then became available to the 1.5 million landlords across the UK in May 2009.

1. http://cms.met.police.uk/news/appeals/students_warned_about_accommodation_fraud

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Notes to editors

upad (<http://www.upad.co.uk>) is the UK's marketplace for property rental. It is a free online service that connects renters to landlords to help them find their ideal property quickly and easily. Launched in October 2008 under the banner 'reinventing renting', the company's innovative approach is aimed at filling a gap in the property rental market.

upad's website deploys bespoke state-of-the-art technology to overcome issues identified by renters such as out-of-date information and poor online experiences. In particular **upad** enables online searches that are interactive and intuitive to produce relevant properties.

Free to renters, **upad** costs landlords £59 per listing.

Read the **upad** blog at <http://www.upad.co.uk/blog/>, or follow **upad** on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/jamesATupad>, and the **upad** Rental Surgery on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/UPAD/16196042214?ref=share>.

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