Essential Electrical Checks Landlords Should Arrange Between Tenancies

When a tenancy ends and a new one is about to begin, landlords have a short window to prepare the property. Among the many tasks on the to-do list, electrical safety checks are often the most overlooked, yet they carry serious legal and practical weight. The direct answer is that the most important check between tenancies is a new electrical installation condition report (EICR) if the existing one is more than five years old, or if there have been any changes to the electrical installation since the last inspection. But the full picture is more detailed, and getting it right matters for both the property and the incoming tenant.

Why the period between tenancies matters for electrical safety

The gap between tenants is the ideal time to assess the condition of the fixed wiring, sockets, switches, and the consumer unit. During a tenancy, access for electrical inspections can be inconvenient for tenants, and some may be reluctant to allow engineers into the property. Once the property is empty, there are no such barriers. An inspector can access every room, test every circuit, and examine the consumer unit without moving furniture or working around someone's daily life. This makes the inter-tenancy period the most efficient time to carry out an EICR, which is the formal assessment of the electrical installation's safety and condition.

Landlords in England and Wales have been legally required to ensure the electrical installation in their rental property is inspected and tested at least every five years, and to provide a copy of the EICR to the tenant before they move in. The regulations, which came into force in 2020, mean that between tenancies is often the only practical window to arrange the inspection without causing disruption. For properties in Colchester and across Essex, local electricians and inspection services such as those offered through eicrcolchester.co.uk can carry out the work promptly when the property is vacant.

What an EICR covers and why it is not just a quick check

An electrical installation condition report is a thorough examination of the fixed wiring and associated equipment. The inspector checks for damage, deterioration, and any signs of overheating or electrical stress. They test the earthing and bonding, verify that circuits are properly labelled, and look for any DIY modifications that may not comply with wiring regulations. The result is a report that classifies each observation into one of three categories: 'danger present', 'potentially dangerous', or 'requires improvement'. Landlords must act on any code 1 (danger present) or code 2 (potentially dangerous) findings before a new tenant moves in.



It is important to understand that an EICR is not the same as a portable appliance test (PAT). PAT covers appliances that plug into a socket, such as a kettle or a television. An EICR covers the fixed installation: the cables in the walls, the sockets, the light fittings, and the consumer unit. Both may be relevant, but the legal requirement for rental properties focuses on the fixed wiring. Between tenancies, landlords should arrange an EICR if the last one is due for renewal, even if the property appears to be in good condition. Some issues are only visible under test conditions, such as a loss of insulation resistance that could indicate a future fault or a risk of electric shock.

What else to check besides the EICR

While the EICR is the main event, there are other electrical checks that landlords should consider between tenancies. These are not always legally required, but they help maintain a safe and functional property.

- Check that all smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are working and meet current regulations. In England, a smoke alarm must be installed on every floor of a rental property, and a carbon monoxide alarm must be fitted in any room with a solid fuel burning appliance. Between tenancies, replace batteries or units if needed.

- Examine all sockets, switches, and light fittings for visible damage such as cracks, burn marks, or loose fixings. Any damaged items should be replaced before the new tenant arrives.
- Look at the consumer unit. It should be modern, with no signs of rust, damp, or tampering. Older consumer units with wooden backs or rewirable fuses may need upgrading to comply with current wiring regulations.
- Test any integral appliances that stay with the property, such as a cooker, extractor fan, or immersion heater. While not part of the EICR, these items should be confirmed safe and functional.

These checks are straightforward and can be done by a landlord or a general handyperson, but any findings that point to a deeper issue should be referred to a qualified electrician. The goal is to avoid discovering a problem after the new tenant has moved in, when access becomes more difficult and the tenant's safety is at stake.

How to use the inspection report to plan remedial work

Once the EICR is complete, the report will list any remedial work required. This is where the landlord's role becomes practical. Some remedial work is minor, such as replacing a damaged socket or securing a loose cable. Other work can be more substantial, such as rewiring a circuit or upgrading the earthing. The report will give a clear priority order. Code 1 issues must be fixed immediately. Code 2 issues should be fixed as soon as possible, and code 3 issues are recommendations for improvement that are not urgent but should be addressed before the next inspection.

Between tenancies, landlords have the time to arrange for a qualified electrician to carry out the remedial work without rushing. This is also a good moment to consider whether any upgrades would add value or improve safety, such as adding RCD protection to circuits that lack it, or installing extra sockets in rooms where tenants may rely on extension leads. Extension leads are a common cause of overheating and fires, so providing enough fixed sockets reduces that risk.

Documentation and communication with the new tenant

After the electrical checks and any remedial work are complete, the landlord must provide the new tenant with a copy of the EICR before they move in, or within 28 days of the start of the tenancy if the report was not available at the start. The report must also be kept for the next inspection and for any future tenant to see. Good record-keeping between tenancies makes this straightforward. Keep the report in a safe place, along with invoices for any remedial work, and note the date of the next recommended inspection.



Some landlords also choose to provide the tenant with a simple guide to the electrical installation, such as where the consumer unit is located and how to reset a tripped circuit breaker. This is not a legal requirement, but it helps tenants feel informed and reduces the number of calls about minor electrical issues. It also shows that the landlord takes electrical safety seriously, which builds trust from the start of the tenancy.

When to call in a professional

Landlords can carry out visual checks themselves, but the formal inspection and testing must be done by a qualified person. In practice, this means an electrician who is registered with a competent person scheme, such as NICEIC or NAPIT. The electrician will have the test equipment and the knowledge of current wiring regulations to produce a valid EICR. Attempting to do the inspection without the right equipment and training can miss dangerous faults and leaves the landlord without the legal protection a proper report provides.

For landlords in and around Colchester, finding a reliable electrician to carry out the EICR and any necessary remedial work is straightforward. Services like those available through eicrcolchester.co.uk can connect landlords with qualified inspectors who understand the specific requirements for rental properties in Essex. Using a local service also means the electrician is familiar with the area and can often schedule the work quickly when the property is vacant.

Common mistakes landlords make between tenancies

One common mistake is assuming that because the property looks fine, the electrical installation is safe. Many faults are hidden inside walls or at the back of sockets. Another mistake is delaying the EICR until the new tenant has already moved in, which creates disruption and may mean the tenant has to be present for the testing. A third mistake is ignoring code 3 observations, which are recommendations for improvement. While not urgent, these items can become serious over time, and addressing them between tenancies prevents them from turning into code 2 or code 1 issues later.

Some landlords also forget to check that the consumer unit is accessible. If a tenant needs to reset a tripped breaker, they should be able to reach the consumer unit without difficulty. Between tenancies, ensure it is not blocked by furniture or stored items, and that it is clearly labelled so the tenant knows which circuit each switch controls.



The most important thing is to treat the inter-tenancy period as an opportunity, not an inconvenience. A vacant property is the easiest time to carry out electrical checks, and doing so thoroughly protects the landlord from liability, keeps the tenant safe, and maintains the property's value. The cost of an EICR and any remedial work is small compared to the cost of a fire, an electric shock incident, or a legal dispute over non-compliance with the regulations.

In short, the electrical checks landlords should arrange between tenancies centre on a current EICR, supported by a visual inspection of all accessible electrical items, testing of alarms, and prompt remedial work on any faults. Getting this right every time a property changes hands is the mark of a responsible landlord and a safe rental home.