

# PROPERTY NEWS



## ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

PERFECT GETAWAYS FOR JUST THE TWO OF YOU

**HOME TRENDS**  
HOTTEST HOME DECOR  
TRENDS THIS SPRING

**LOVE YOUR GARDEN**  
GET THE MOST FROM  
YOUR PERFECT PLOT

**MEAL FOR TWO**  
SIMPLE ROMANTIC MEALS  
YOU CAN MAKE AT HOME

**SIX NATIONS**  
RUGBY FIXTURES FOR THE  
UPCOMING SIX NATIONS

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# CLEAN GENIE

**B**ack in the dim and distant past before daytime TV and the internet, homes would get a thorough cleaning once a year. And by thorough, we mean windows open, furniture moved and rugs up: a forensic deep clean from the coving to under the carpets.

In the northern hemisphere it usually takes place in late February and early March, just as the seasons start to turn, generally because it is just starting to get warm enough to allow fresh air in through open windows, but still cold enough to keep flying insects gounded. Also, soot and ash marks could be cleaned from areas around the coal fire, which wouldn't be needed again, at least until the autumn.



So that, in essence, is the thinking behind spring cleaning. For some cultures, it is more than just a habit: for Iranians it coincides with the ancient festival of Nowruz where they practice "khooneh tekouni" or "shaking the house" - a ritual where the entire house is cleaned - while before their New Year, the Chinese celebrate the holiday of Ninyabaat, hence their saying "wash away the dirt on Ninyabaat".

In Britain, it is greeted with a hearty chorus of: "Must we?"

## WELCOME TO THE FEBRUARY ISSUE!

Love is in the air, as is cleanliness. It's Spring, which means it's time to get out the mop and bucket and give your home a full blown clean. On pages 2&3 we offer some helpful hints and tips to achieve Spring clean greatness this month. Keeping inside your home, on pages 8&9 we look at some of the hottest interior design trends coming this year.

It is also Valentine's Day this month, so show your special someone you care with our guide to some of the most romantic getaways available in the UK. A special spark isn't just with your significant other though, on pages 6&7 we look as how to make the most of the electricity in your home as well as our guide to

the best electric cars available for all budgets.

That's not all, if you want to treat your partner without going away, on page 12 we have some great romantic recipes, while on page 13 we preview the upcoming Six Nations tournament. February also means half term, so on page 14&15 we look at great ways your kids can help around the home with some simple and fun DIY jobs.

So, pour a glass of wine, light turn up the heating, and snuggle up with the February edition.

**Jonathan Wheatley**  
Editor

It need not be that way. For example, the hauling down of the Christmas decorations provides the ideal opportunity to at least get some groundwork done, tackling the areas which have been hidden behind trees and that inflatable Santa which miraculously appeared after the girls' night out.

Because spring cleaning is best tackled step by step, room by room, over a mutually agreed period of time, trying to do it in one go will only result in a hernia or some areas not getting the attention they deserve or need.

### START GENTLY

Break yourself in gently by cleaning the windows, inside and out. Clean those on the shady side of the house first – trying to do it in direct sun only leads to streaks – and don't forget to wash down the sills. Internally, plastic blinds can be dusted down while fabric shades and curtains can be vacuumed, but don't forget those bits around the hooks. You could even give the curtains a good blow by putting them in the tumble dryer for 10 minutes on the cool cycle.

### KITCHEN

Feeling brave? Then set aside a good few hours to tackle the cooker and extractor fan. Both will have been working overtime during the winter with the combination of heat, steam and grease proving a stubborn enemy if left. Soaking in hot water and washing up liquid, plus a good scrub, should help bring the fan's grille's up a treat, and it might be worthwhile just checking the outside vent to make sure it is not blocked.

On the external surfaces only elbow grease will do, while if you are lucky to enough to have a self-cleaning oven, one click and it's job done. If you haven't, there are commercial cleaners available which can at least make the job a little easier.

Kitchen cabinets are also magnets for dirt and grease, so wash the doors and handles with warm soapy water to restore that 'just installed' look. The same approach can be taken to the fridge, where bacteria and spillages can be wiped away, while a solution of water, chopped up citrus fruit – either lemon, lime or orange – and a few spoonfuls of vinegar can be placed in a cup and popped in the microwave. Turn the oven on high until the solution boils and the window is steamy, leave it for a few minutes to cool and then wipe down the interior with a sponge.

### BATHROOM

While you've got the Marigolds on, it's off to the bathroom where grout can be whitened by making a paste of three parts baking soda and one of water (avoid using vinegar as it can stain some natural stones, such as marble) and brushing it into the grout before rinsing off. A mix of oxygenated bleach and water is a good alternative.

And you can spruce up your plastic or vinyl shower curtains by popping them into the washing machine with a few bath towels, while extractor fans can be cleaned with an old toothbrush. If the cover can be removed, try to clear out the cobwebs that will inevitably lurk behind it.

### BEDROOM

You already Hoover your mattress regularly and probably air the pillows two or three times during the summer, but now's the time to pull the bed away from the wall and get behind and vacuum underneath it. Also, clear out your winter wardrobe and give your storage space a good dust before restoring your spring and summer clothes. Anything you haven't worn could be relocated to a charity shop.



# ROMANTIC UK GETAWAYS FOR TWO



Romance is important, whether you've been together for one year or fifty, so why not treat yourselves to a getaway for just the two of you?



Every once in a while, it doesn't hurt to treat your relationship with your loved one to a private getaway for two, for you both to remind each other why you're both so special to one another, and these locations around the UK will afford you that very opportunity. These beautiful spots will allow for that perfect kiss, or perhaps even a proposal for marriage.

## CAMBRIDGE

One of the most elegant, period places in the UK is Cambridge, housing the second oldest university in the UK. The city itself has many romantic spots, including the architectural eye-candy gracing the place. Everywhere you look there are churches and cathedrals just adding to that timeless, gentle feel of the city. Many of the buildings go as far back as the 13th century, which includes the university and colleges. Also, no visit to Cambridge would be complete without hopping on one of the many people-powered punts, the distinctive flat-bottomed watercraft used to move people around the city's shallow canals and on the River Cam. Punting is a delightful way to spend an hour or two with a loved one and provides views of this historic college town you may otherwise have missed.

For over 2000 years, Bath has been providing a soaking service to travellers which is said to possess healing qualities in the hot springs they have there. These springs still gush today, with an impressive 275,000 gallons of it a day.





## EDINBURGH

Edinburgh is easily one of the most romantic places in Europe, let alone the UK, with breathtaking views and historical landmarks which crack the imagination wide open. Edinburgh Castle particularly lends itself to some beautiful sunset views, and proves to be a fantastic place to spend a day exploring together. Calton Hill is another romantic spot in Edinburgh, enjoying famous views from the folly, a replica of the columns from the Acropolis in Athens.

Some of the best restaurants in the area, such as the award-winning Tower Restaurant atop the National Museum of Scotland, come with stunning views over landmarks such as the castle.

The city also offers some notable theatre and cultural activities, including such world-renowned events as the Edinburgh Fringe, or the equally popular Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

## LAKE DISTRICT

By far the most popular mountainous region in England and possibly the UK, the Lake District is a much-loved holiday destination for couples everywhere, with more than 19 million visitors each year. Largely famous for its lakes, forests and mountains, it is also well-known for its associations with William Wordsworth and other Lake Poets, as well as Beatrix Potter and John Ruskin. All the land in England which is higher than 3,000 feet above sea level exclusively lies

within the Lake District National Park, including Scafell Pike which is officially the highest mountain in England. The deepest (Wastwater) and largest (Windermere) natural lakes in England are here too. With hotels, camping sites, and various exhibitions to offer, it will be a winner for any couple on a romantic getaway.

## THE COTSWOLDS

Hire a cosy cottage out here in the Cotswolds to bask in a stay which is graced with quaint architecture and beauty at every turn. Romantic, leisurely strolling hand-in-hand through the picture-perfect countryside is a popular pastime for loved ones here, as they explore the picturesque, quintessentially British villages with cobbled streets and colourful floral gardens.

## ST IVES

Cornwall is world famous, and not just for its pasties, but also for its amazing, award-winning beaches. There's nothing like the fresh sea air to leave you feeling like you're truly escaping the hustle and bustle of daily life, and to escape into nature with your loved one by your side. St Ives is the epitome of a tranquil seaside resort with plenty of cosy bed and breakfasts, independent restaurants, and a wealth of picturesque views from the harbour to the beaches.

## BATH (ROMAN BATHS)

Bath is one of the absolute most attractive smaller towns in the whole of the UK, and an incredibly romantic spot to celebrate your love as a couple. For over 2000 years, Bath has been providing a soaking service to travellers which is said to possess healing qualities in the hot springs they have there. These springs still gush today, with an impressive 275,000 gallons of it a day. The Romans built the first structures here, including the spectacular Roman Baths, and is today left largely unchanged since those first visitors from far and wide availed themselves of these therapeutic waters.

A variety of special packages are available for couples, including massages for two with a lovely meal served afterwards. An alternative spa experience can be enjoyed at the historic Cross Bath, an 18th-century open-air facility that can be booked for private 1.5-hour sessions.

Some of the most romantic London spots:

- The West End theatre scene.
- St Paul's Cathedral.
- South Bank.
- Tower Bridge.
- London Eye.
- Regent Street.
- Buckingham Palace.
- Hyde Park.

# DRIVING EV HAS NEVER BEEN MORE EASY

If you've kitted out your home accordingly, then perhaps your next thought should be towards driving electric. These vehicles may seem an expensive purchase, but in the long run, will save money on fuel. What's more, is that like traditional cars, there are a variety of motors to choose from. So here are just a few of options, from ones on the cheaper side, to the more luxurious end.

## VOLKSWAGEN E-UP (2ND GENERATION)

2021 marked the release of Volkswagen's new electric range, and this particular model is great if you don't require anything too spacious. This vehicle has the same dimensions as a classic UP, and is available for £16,000. This model was first released in 2016, but this second generation will see its battery size doubled. But where this car is the real deal is in the ease of charging. If you thought that your car would need to charge overnight in order to get use of it, think again. This car can take you approximately 135 miles, on a full charge, and can charge up to 80% in only 45 minutes, making it the car for the person on the move.

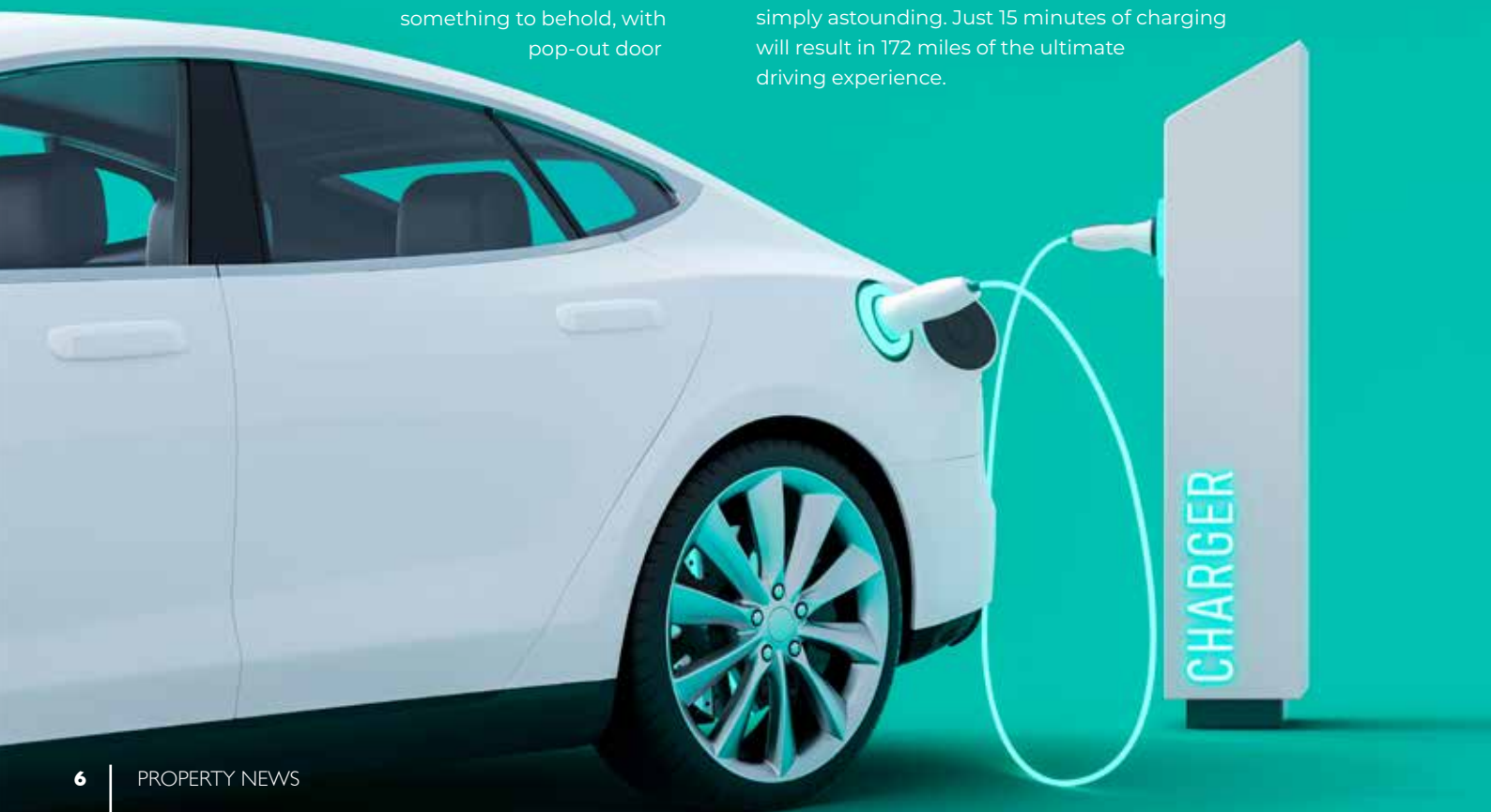
## HONDA E

Priced around the £30,000 mark, this vehicle is not cheap, but is absolute value for money. It's Honda's first electric offering, and can even better Volkswagen's charging time, with this little number getting to 80% charge in a mere 31 minutes. And its physical features are something to behold, with pop-out door

handles and a side camera mirror system oozing modernity and sophistication. Honda also emphasises that the interior of this car is all centred around a lack of clutter. But don't let that distract you from the fact that its power capabilities aren't a main feature. Drivers can get from 0-60mph in a frightening 8.3 seconds, meaning that this vehicle can both go anywhere, and get anywhere, fast.

## TESLA MODEL 3

When you think of electric cars, Tesla comes to mind straight away, with their pioneering work in creating energy-efficient, decadent methods of travel. And this vehicle certainly lives up to that billing. It's available from around £43,000, and buyers can customise their design, from wheels, to the interior. These cars also come with a built-in touchscreen, including streaming services like Netflix, meaning that the whole family can be entertained. You can also cleverly use your smartphone as an alternative to a key to this powerhouse, which will travel 360 miles on a single charge. And the charging capabilities are simply astounding. Just 15 minutes of charging will result in 172 miles of the ultimate driving experience.



# GIVE YOUR HOME THE HEAD START

As the requirement to become eco-friendly in every way of life becomes all the more pressing, making sure that your home is ready for this new future is vitally important. Here are just some of the ways that you can transform your living space.

## INSULATION

Finding sustainable methods of heating your home are paramount to ensuring that you keep all of your gas and electricity bills down. One of the most effective things you can do is go 'fabric first', and reduce any thermal bridging, in order to stop the releasing of heat. This isn't the easiest solution to implement though, so you'll need to find workmen who uphold the highest of standards.

An alternative way of dealing with the issue of heat is to address the numbers of windows and patio and bi-folding doors in your home. As a result of the amount of natural light which these allow in, they act as a 'passive solar design', and help to trap heat in. And of course, putting in some of these doors will give your home some added natural light, thus reducing the amount of artificial light required. As well as this, underfloor heating is recommended as a long-term solution to keeping us toasty. This low-energy emitter will help keep bills down, and with the removal of radiators, helps a home to look less cluttered.

## SMART TECHNOLOGY

Technology beyond our wildest dreams has been available at our fingertips for years, but now your home can experience some of these benefits. For example, with USB cables now taking over our lives, why not bypass the middle-man of a plug socket, and simply install a USB charging port wherever is convenient, such as near your bed?

Or perhaps you can solve all of your energy issues in one go? With the Theben LUXORliving system, you can put your lighting, heating, and even your blinds on timers. What's more, is that you can control each room individually, resulting in the ultimate ease of running your house. Rather cleverly, this system can also be automatically controlled according to the local weather in your area.



## EV CHARGING POINTS

Electric cars are here, and they're here to stay. There were nearly 350,000 purely electric cars on our roads in October 2021, and this figure will only grow. So to aid the eventuality of going electric, get an EV charging point installed. When you commit to one of these chargers, they are fitted as part of the service, and come with a warranty. You can even use an app to track your vehicle's charging progress, and be made aware of any software updates.

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# EMBRACE THE SPRING REFRESH

## HOME DESIGN TRENDS FOR SPRING



If you're thinking of updating your house in Spring, you've chosen the perfect time! If you're planning on moving, Spring is the time of year when motivated buyers focus on moving. They're more prepared to go out house hunting and view properties when the weather's mild. With more buyers looking, there is a knock-on effect on prices, which means you could get even more for your home. If you're not thinking of moving, refreshing your home design in Spring means you'll be ready to enjoy it during the Summer months.

First to consider are dedicated activity spaces. People have been relying on their homes to provide new avenues of activity and entertainment since the beginning of the pandemic and it shows in the emerging trends for art studios, home bars/wine cellars, home theatres, home gyms and home offices. Only you know which type of activity space will suit your needs, but if you're prepping your home to sell, home offices are a no-brainer when re-designing your space.

The trend of bringing the outdoors in is set to stay. The desire for an openness to nature and an abundance of greenery in our homes is a trend that seems to be accelerating. One of the most popular items on an extension, renovation or self-build wish-list is to increase natural light in a home while making the most of the garden. As we're spending more time than ever in our homes, maximising a connection to our surroundings is crucial

The keenness for green is moving beyond botanicals with green kitchen cabinets, bathroom tile, accent chairs and bedrooms

for a healthy home with plenty of wow-factor. Introducing large windows to emphasise a particular view might sound like an obvious idea, but that is just one of many different ways to embrace the great outdoors from within.

The trend of merging the outdoors with inside is referred to as Biophilic design. Biophilic design is a term growing in popularity as an interior buzzword of 2021

and 2022. It relates to the human instinct to interact with nature and the associated health benefits. Improving air circulation and quality, and a home connection with nature through incorporating plants, green roofs and living

walls into domestic design, are all ideas you could adopt to add a touch of biophilic design to your space.

The keenness for green is moving beyond botanicals with green kitchen cabinets, bathroom tile, accent chairs and bedrooms replacing the navy trend of 2020 and 2021. Using raw wood for spring decor can bring a sense of organic beauty to your home. Using raw and untouched materials, resplendent with their perfect imperfections adds to the artistic style of the piece, whether it be furniture or art, plus natural wood tones will complement nearly any decor style.

It might also be time to give your living room a refresh. The living room has always been an important gathering space within the home. As you will have undoubtedly





spent more time within it over the past year, you may be seeking inspiration to refresh the space. Consider updating accent pillows, home accents, abstract paintings, display shelves, or slip and chair covers as relatively inexpensive ways to update the room. We are all looking for a little bit of decadence in our lives, so when updating furnishing, consider luxury fabrics, materials, and colours. Why not incorporate velvet, gold, or crystal? What goes around comes around—and that's definitely the case with the uptick in '80s decor revival. Interior design in the '80s was all about wealth and opulence, pulling inspiration from art deco ideology and minimalist style. Brass and lacquer sculptural forms, and glass and stone with high-shine finishes are one way you can add glamour to your home and encompass the '80s revival tastefully.

When you are refreshing your home, the goal is to improve both its overall aesthetic and its functionality. Flexible design, in terms of furniture, may offer more flexibility within the existing footprint of your home. Think TV armoires with pocket doors, queen Murphy beds, and nesting side tables, to create dual uses for a room by creatively hiding them away when not in use. Circular and scalloped furniture is also set to be a trend for 2022, perhaps adding a softer dimension to the bold colours you've chosen for the walls or furnishings.

So, embrace the refresh Spring can offer and get you house ready for you, or its next potential buyer!



# SHOW YOUR GARDEN SOME LOVE

Creating a romantic space can be quite simple

It's wet, it's cold and, truth be told, it's hard to feel romantic about your garden. It might be that time of year, but it's probably not the place for any kind of canoodling. Well, not yet anyway.

Obviously, those warm, heady mid-summer nights are the most alluring but turning a wind-battered, soggy mess into a fragrant, enchanting retreat might not be a wild and sentimental flight of fancy. All it takes is a bit of planning...

For a start, gauge your space. It doesn't matter if your garden is square or irregular, it can be divided into zones to make use of even the most abandoned and neglected corner which can be linked to the rest of the garden by that most cliched of romantic props: an arch.

Now, while it might not be the brightest of ideas to transplant a climbing rose while there is frost in the ground, there's nothing to stop you marking out your planned planting areas.



Or indeed start off those fragrant upwardly-mobile summer favourite – sweet peas – in a biodegradable pot on a sunny windowsill. Once established, they can be relocated to the garden when the weather turns milder without having to be removed from their containers, damaging fragile roots.

It's also important to decide if you want seclusion in your "secret garden" for seclusion or for it to be a quiet, intimate outdoor dining spot. For argument's sake, if it's the latter, four fence posts can be set in a square over a shingled or sandstone-paved area, with twinkling fairy lights draped around them to create atmosphere.

Shingle or wide-spaced slabs can work in your favour as you can plant out some sweet-smelling herbs (lavender perhaps?) which could add to the ambience when brushed against. And, even if your basic soil isn't conducive, you can pot up some vibrant hydrangeas or camelias to add bold colours to the space.





And while your preference may be for either ornate wrought-iron or wood garden furniture, don't skimp on the upholstery: plenty of cushions ... you need to be comfy in that recliner.

If you've chosen a particularly shady spot, there's no need to sweat as lovely, textured greenery such as box, bay or griselinia can create a charming, cool sculptured look, particularly as a backdrop for a dramatic yucca or hebe. And if you want to be really private, a screen of gently swaying bamboo lends a tropical feel, although having said that, they do best in a sunny spot.

At the end of the day, though, this is all about engaging your senses, which brings us on to a water feature. The sound of running water adds an air of serenity and calm – sorry, leaving the outdoor tap running on to the gravel doesn't cut it – and there are some great value solar-powered fountains on the market.

But if all this talk of amour doesn't float your boat and all you want is a more productive garden, then now is the time to, quite literally, dig in.

Even if the ground is still cold, much can be done - particularly if you have a greenhouse or conservatory - to kickstart the growing season. If conditions allow and the

soil is frost free, gently dig over and prepare the area you have earmarked for planting.

This will expose soil pests to cold night-time temperatures and bird predators, giving new plants a better chance to prosper and, if you have moved into a new house, will help identify whether you have inherited a light or heavy soil.

Obviously, a stodgy, clay-based soil will need longer to warm, and this will affect planting plans. But if you discover a light, sandy mixture and live in a mild part of the country you can crack on – after weeding and allowing the soil to settle – by covering the area with clear polythene, cloches or fleece to warm the ground before sowing.

Once you have decided on your crop rotation for the year, then you can sow broad beans, carrots, parsnips, early varieties of beetroot, salad onions, lettuces, radishes, spinach and summer cabbages under the covers, while seed potato tubers can be chitted in the greenhouse.

As for those who want colourful borders in the spring and summer, it's about time to start off summer bedding, such as lobelia and Busy Lizzies, in propagators, giving them a head start before they are big enough to be planted out or in hanging baskets.

# SCRUM-TIOUS!

Six Nations could serve up a really tasty finale this year

If Marty McFly hadn't parked his time-travelling DeLorean in the path of an incoming train, would you, as a rugby fan, borrow the keys and fast forward to March 19th for the final round of matches in this year's Guinness Six Nations Championship? Or would you want to sit and suffer/savour the whole tournament week by week?

Because there's a very real chance that this year's competition will be decided by the final round of games. And, quite possibly, the very last game.

It is very finely poised with every team - bar Italy - having a shout, with encouraging results from the Autumn Internationals providing a few key pointers.

From that perspective, England will be most relieved. A miserable Six Nations last season - fifth and with a negative points difference - heightened the pressure on coach Eddie Jones and his misfiring team. But a thumping win against Tonga and morale-boosting victories against Australia and world champions South Africa in November put them back on course.

They should be second favourites behind France, who

sauntered past Argentina and Georgia before crushing New Zealand 40-25 in November. Of course, you never know which French team is likely to turn up, which makes the Six Nations conclusion between Les Bleus and the English on March 19th all the more tantalising.

France don't do 'last-game deciders' very well. They blew up against Scotland last year when heavily fancied to win, raising questions once again over their mental fragility.

Which brings us nicely to the Scots, who have been making significant progress and were only beaten by the South Africans in the autumn. Many observers feel they are a work in progress and just a season or so shy of hitting their peak ... which is just as well as it would take them nicely into World Cup year.

Scotland start their Six Nations programme against England and wind up in Ireland, another nearly side who should have a major part to play.

And should it all go down to the last game, defending champions Wales face Italy in Cardiff, the closest thing to a pushover and a bonus point.

## ONE

February 5th

Ireland v Wales (2.15pm)

Scotland v England (4.45pm)

February 6th - France v Italy (3pm)

## TWO

February 12th

Wales v Scotland (2.15pm)

France v Ireland (4.45pm)

February 13th - Italy v England (3pm)

## THREE

February 26th

Scotland v France (2.15pm)

England v Wales (4.45pm)

February 27th - Ireland v Italy (3pm)

## FOUR

March 11th

Wales v France (8pm)

March 12th - Italy v Scotland (2.15pm)

England v Ireland (4.45pm)

## FIVE

March 19th

Wales v Italy (2.15pm)

Ireland v Scotland (4.45pm)

France v England (8pm)



# THE PERFECT ROMANTIC MEAL FOR TWO

This is our recipe for the perfect romantic meal for two, including a starter and a main course, and they will be sure to woo anyone over a nice glass of wine or two

## SALMON AND CRAB COCKTAIL

Premium crab meat tub (x1)  
 Salmon fillets (x2)  
 Tomato ketchup (100g)  
 Mayonnaise (200g)

Simply combine the ketchup, mayonnaise, cayenne pepper and lemon juice (along with salt and pepper) in a mixing bowl and place in the fridge to keep it cold and to allow those wonderful flavours to marry. Place the two salmon fillets skin side down in a frying pan on a high heat with a touch of olive oil. Once the fillets begin to cook and the skin is dark and crispy (but not burned!), turn them over and reduce the heat to low. Let them sit there and gently cook through. Once they've cooked through completely, place them on a chopping board, remove the skin from both fillets, and then chop the crispy skin with a knife, creating a kind of crispy

Cayenne pepper (tsp)  
 Lemon juice (3 tbsp)  
 Baby gem lettuce (x2)

onion consistency, which we will sprinkle on the cocktail at the end as an edible garnish. Gently break up the salmon with a fork so the flesh is in shards. Take out the cocktail sauce you made earlier, and add the premium crab meat, along with the now-cooled salmon shards. Mix well. Take two large martini glasses and place two baby gem lettuce leaves neatly in the base and so they stick upward on either side. Gently place the cocktail mixture into the glass but leaving about half of the leaves still showing. Garnish with the crispy salmon skin (option), and enjoy!

## CREAMY SAUSAGE, MUSHROOM AND ASPARAGUS PASTA

Sausages (x8)  
 Mushrooms (200g)  
 Asparagus tips (200g)  
 Garlic (4 large cloves)

Using a sharp knife, take the skin off each sausage, and then place into a large saucepan with olive oil and plenty of salt and pepper. Using a spatula, gently break up each sausage into small bite-size pieces, but be careful not to grind it all down to a mince. Once they've been chopped and you're happy with the sizes, just simply leave it there until you can hear hard sizzling. Then carefully move the sausages around to cook them evenly, retaining their shapes and not breaking them up. Once most of

Single cream (300ml)  
 Garofalo Mafalda Corta (but any pasta will do) (500g)

the water is evaporated, chop up the mushrooms and add to the mix. Once the mushroom water content has gone, add the chopped asparagus, before finally adding the chopped garlic. Mix well but gently, and after three minutes, add the cream, and turn down to a low heat. Cook the pasta, adding some of the starchy pasta water to the sausage mixture, before finally adding the pasta itself. Stir well and serve, with a generous cracking of black pepper.

# GET THE KIDS INVOLVED

## DIY JOBS TO KEEP THE KIDS BUSY OVER HALF TERM

Getting kids involved in DIY projects at an early age will help them gain confidence and skills they will put to good use later in life. And when you work on these projects together, it can be a great bonding experience. Better yet, it's a way to stop them from getting bored and doing something productive over the half term break.

### OUTDOOR PROJECTS

Spend some time in the garden and construct a treehouse. This is a DIY project you can do together and make it as basic or intricate as you'd like. You may even find you can reuse materials you already have. A treehouse could be as simple as using a few pallets to construct a mini-den or could be as elaborate as you (and your kids) can imagine. If creating the treehouse is beyond your skillset, why not get your kids involved in the design process and spend some time talking about what they would like in their dream treehouse. Once you've done this, have a look online or contact a local handyman to make their dream a reality.

Painting stones is a DIY project the little ones will love. Collect some stones (the flatter the better) and paint them. Try painting ladybugs, flowers or get creative! Markers would also work for this project. You can then use them to decorate the garden, creating a pebble stone path or display.

Feeding the birds is a great DIY project to do with kids because it isn't too large or overwhelming. Children love to engage with wildlife, so why not try making bird treats with them, so that you can all enjoy an aerial display of the birds flying in and out, and hanging from your chosen feeder? Making fat balls is extremely easy, all you need is solid vegetable oil, beef suet or lard, plus bird seed mix, at a ratio of 1:2. Use a fat that is solid when unrefrigerated to avoid it melting and making a mess.

*Here's what to do:*

1. Mix one part suet to two parts seed in a saucepan and gently heat, stirring until the fat melts.
2. Use an ice cream scoop, or mould with your hands, into balls. If you want them to hang from a tree thread some string through them.
3. Space apart in a plastic container or on a tray and place in the freezer to set firm.
4. Once the fat balls are solid, put in the garden, on a bird feeder or in a fat-ball feeder. Voila!

If you don't fancy making a fat ball, why not reuse empty yoghurt pots to make hanging feeders? Make a small hole in the bottom of each pot and thread some string or twine through the hole in the bottom and out through the top of the pot, leaving it long enough to tie the feeder to a branch. Put the fat and seeds in a saucepan and heat gently until the fat has melted. Pour the mixture into the yoghurt pots, stand in a tray and leave to set overnight in the fridge. Carefully remove the empty pot from the fat and hang the feeder from a tree.



## INDOOR PROJECTS

We aren't always blessed with good weather, so it's a good idea to have some back-up options in case the Great British Weather lives up to its reputation.

One idea is to have a garage sale. Not only will this clean out the house, it will also hone in on your child's project management skills. If you don't want to slave away at an in-person garage sale all day, you could always try selling stuff online. One easy option to consider is Decluttr. This website allows you to just scan bar-codes of products and will instantly give you the price they pay for it.

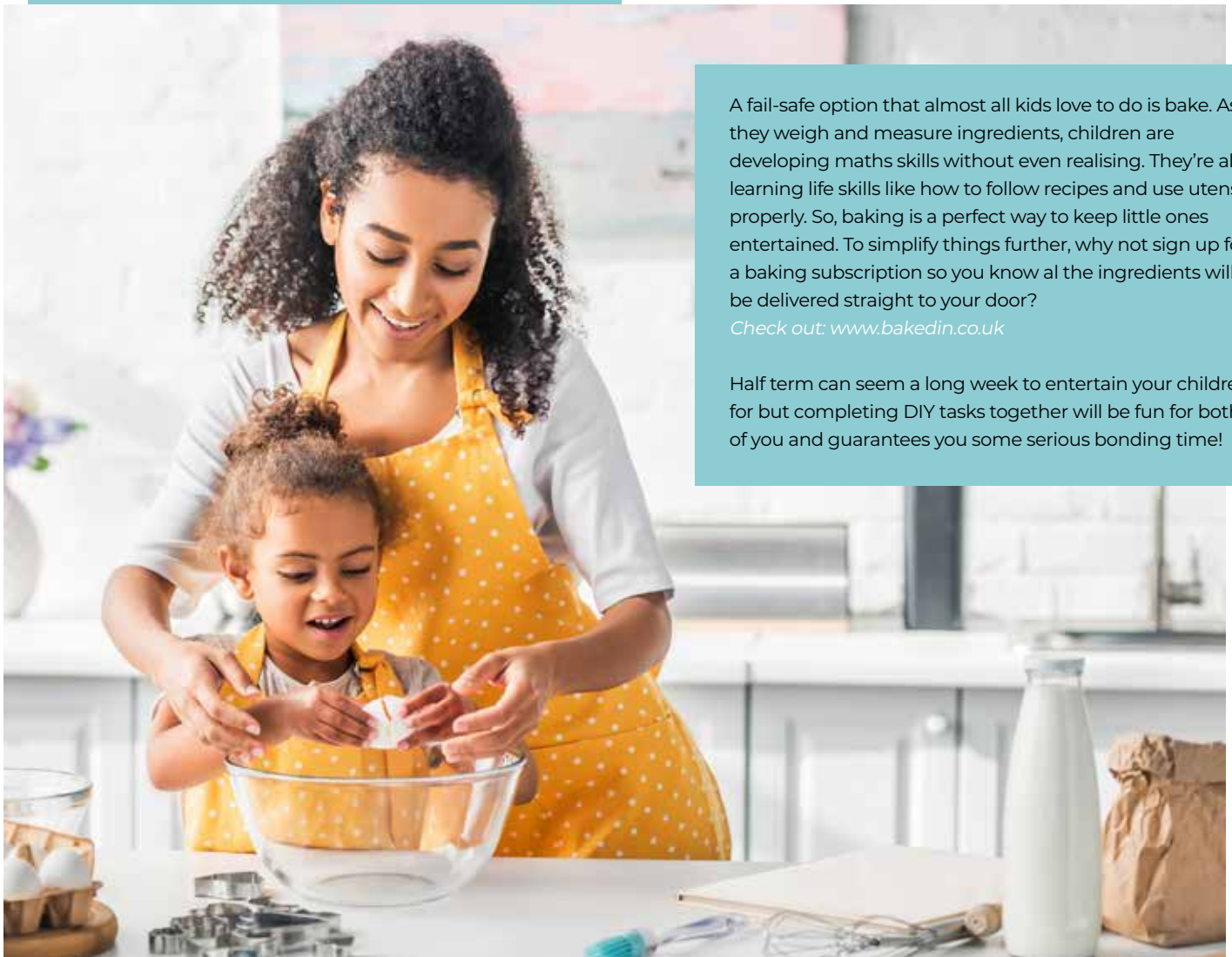
Half term can seem a long week to entertain your children for but completing DIY tasks together will be fun for both of you and guarantees you some serious bonding time!



A fail-safe option that almost all kids love to do is bake. As they weigh and measure ingredients, children are developing maths skills without even realising. They're also learning life skills like how to follow recipes and use utensils properly. So, baking is a perfect way to keep little ones entertained. To simplify things further, why not sign up for a baking subscription so you know all the ingredients will be delivered straight to your door?

Check out: [www.bakedin.co.uk](http://www.bakedin.co.uk)

Half term can seem a long week to entertain your children for but completing DIY tasks together will be fun for both of you and guarantees you some serious bonding time!



This is a DIY project you can do together and make it as basic or intricate as you'd like. You may even find you can reuse materials you already have.



Newton, Castle Acre

OIEO £500,000



Situated in a riverside location on the outskirts of the village of Newton near Castle Acre, Longsons are delighted to bring to the market this very well presented detached four bedroom bungalow with sizeable gardens backing onto the River Nar. With open countryside views to the rear across the River Nar, the property offers plenty of opportunity to spot wildlife from the good size rear garden. The bungalow offers a double garage, parking for numerous vehicles, en-suite shower room and four piece bathroom suite, kitchen/dining room and double glazing.



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## Barrows Hole Lane, Little Dunham

£375,000



NO CHAIN! A well presented detached bungalow in a non estate position in a village within the Litcham High School catchment area. The property sits on a good size plot with accommodation comprising an entrance hall, lounge, kitchen/dining room, side lobby, three double bedrooms and bathroom. Other benefits include UPVC double glazing, electric storage heating and detached single garage.

## Mill Street, Necton

OIEO £325,000



Situated in the well serviced popular village of Necton and built in 2015, Longsons are delighted to bring to the market this superb detached three bedroom bungalow with garage. The property boasts kitchen/diner, en suite shower room, under floor heating, enclosed rear garden and UPVC double glazing. Viewing highly recommended.

## Castleacre Road, Swaffham

**£300,000**



Conveniently situated within easy reach of Swaffham town centre, Longsons are delighted to bring to the market this very well presented, modern detached three bedroom house. The property boasts en-suite shower room, kitchen/dining room, solar panels providing reduced heating bills for the hot water, gardens, parking, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing.

## Westfields, Narborough

**OIEO £300,000**



CHAIN FREE! Situated in the popular Norfolk village of Narborough, Longsons are delighted to bring to the market this detached three bedroom bungalow. The property offers huge potential and includes two reception rooms, multi-fuel burning stove, en-suite shower room, garage, carport, parking, gardens, oil fired central heating and UPVC double glazing.

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## Southlands, Swaffham

£270,000



CHAIN FREE!! Situated in the sought after Southlands development of Swaffham, Longsons are delighted to bring to the market this detached two bedroom bungalow. The property offers kitchen/dining room, gardens, garage, parking, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing. Viewing highly recommended. Briefly, the property offers entrance porch, entrance hall, lounge, kitchen/dining room, two bedrooms, bathroom, garage, parking, gardens, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing.

## Heathlands, Swaffham

£250,000



Situated on the popular Heathlands area of Swaffham, within easy reach of the town centre, Longsons are delighted to bring to the market this well presented and fully refurbished, detached three bedroom house. The property boasts kitchen/dining room, garage, gardens, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing. Viewing highly recommended! Briefly, the property offers entrance hall, lounge, kitchen/dining room, cloakroom with WC, three bedrooms, bathroom, gardens, parking, garage, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing.



Litcham Road, Great Dunham

Offers Over £225,000



**CHAIN FREE!** Situated in the popular Norfolk village of Great Dunham, Longsons are delighted to bring to the market this very well presented recently modernised semi-detached three bedroom character cottage. Oozing charm, the property benefits include plenty of original features with the luxury of modern living. The property offers a separate garden with countryside views, single garage and ample parking, UPVC double glazing, central heating, en-suite shower room and two toilets. Viewing is highly recommended.

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## MEET YOUR BROKER DAVID ALLEN



David has many years of experience in the Mortgage & Protection industry.

If you would like more information or to setup an appointment, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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✉ david.allen@rftfsfinancialservices.co.uk

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**YOUR HOME/PROPERTY MAY BE REPOSSESSED IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A MORTGAGE OR ANY OTHER DEBT SECURED ON IT**



## RIGHT FIRST TIME FINANCIAL SERVICES

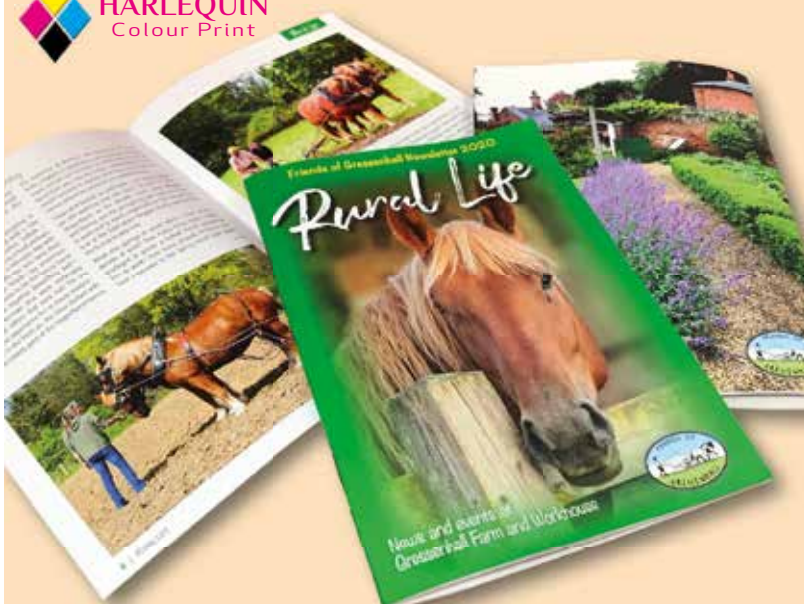
### Right First Time Financial Services

is a company designed from the ground up to simplify your mortgage and protection needs.

Our aim is to take what can be a challenging and complicated time and make it an understandable and enjoyable process by removing the stress whilst offering clear and unbiased advice.

Right First Time Financial Services Ltd is an appointed representative of Openwork Ltd, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

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# Present your house for sale by de-cluttering...

Maximise your home's potential and create spacious rooms enticing potential buyers – simply by de-cluttering!

“ De-cluttering allows you to... maximise your space, emotionally prepare you to move, and will allow you to focus your buyers on what is important ”

If you are looking to sell your house, or have had your home on the market for a while now, then you probably want to get the maximum sale price in the quickest time. There are a few things you can't control – but the one thing that is in your control, is the look and feel of the interior and exterior.

While it's worth spending time fixing and cleaning your house before potential buyers come and view, it's also important to de-clutter. This creates spacious rooms and also allows you to decrease and organise your personal items before you move yourself. Of course it's understandable that you don't to want spend money, time and energy on a home you are about to leave, however, a lot of people are looking for a house in which they can move straight into. Maintaining your

property might even save you thousands of pounds; it could even reduce added expenses of living in your home whilst waiting for a sale. And it might even help avoid possible reductions in the asking price.

The main reason in which people move house tends to be because they lack space in their current home. They want a home that is spacious and in which they can grow into. If a potential viewer comes to your home and sees that there is lack of space, then this will turn them away.

De-cluttering allows you to remove any unnecessary items in an untidy or overcrowded place. It will help maximise your space, emotionally prepare you to move, and will allow you to focus your buyers on what is important.





So where should you start?

You need to create a great first impression and focus on the rooms themselves. You will notice that the first things you see in each room are personal items. Where possible you want to create the look of a

them into things you want to keep and things you want to get rid of. You may even find that you have collected a cupboard full of paper work. Get yourself organised! Don't just throw it all away, but file it and go through it thoroughly. This will also make it easier when you move.

De-personalising can also be a great way to de-clutter. Too many personal effects can be distracting to buyers. They want to see a house in which they can make their own memories rather than seeing yours. Again, personal items can be stored away. Remember

“ Where possible you want to create the look of a lifestyle that the potential buyers want ”

lifestyle that the potential buyer want. This usually has a 'show home' feel, rather than a 'lived in' feel. Minimising your things is the quickest way to do this: you want to ensure that potential buyers can do simple things, like, open any doors easily, ensuring that there are no obstacles.

So, what do we mean by clutter? There are two types: genuine clutter, and items that you want to keep but don't work for the sale of your property.

Genuine Clutter:

You need to go through the space and sort out each item, categorising

You also want to focus on little things like DVDs, books and trinkets. These items may have some small value so sell them or donate them to charity. Get rid of any old shoes and coats that are lying about in your porch or hallway. You might want to hide away the coats and shoes you do currently wear. Store them in your wardrobe, while you have viewings.

Items that you want to keep but don't work for the sale of your property:

You may want to consider putting some items in storage while you sell your home. Sometimes items are too large or even too small for some spaces and can make the room look odd. If you want to keep these particular items, then store them until you move into your new home.

that this is only a temporary way of living and hopefully it won't be for long! If you find you are keeping more things than you are throwing out, then think about whether or not it's in the right room or do you even need it now?

As previously mentioned, you can attempt to sell some of the things you have acquired over the years. Use sites like eBay, Gumtree and social networking sites to try and sell items. You may want to even hold a house sale for the remaining items that you can't sell. Failing that, why not donate to charity.

The end goal is still the same and it's important to help potential buyers envision your house as theirs. So remember, de-cluttering will make your home more spacious and entice potential buyers!

# Top Tips!



If you are throwing away paperwork, shred anything that is confidential



De-clutter before agents come and take photos of your property. This will help attract more potential viewers online and get that first good impression



Don't spend too long on certain items and don't get distracted. Keep yourself motivated and race against the clock!



Make it fun! Play some music or watch TV while you de-clutter





## Your step-by-step guide to the conveyancing process

Once a sale has been agreed and is in the hands of your solicitor, it will go through the following stages. Sometimes additional work will be needed – for example, if the property is leasehold or is yet to be registered with the Land Registry. It is also important for buyers to discuss the availability of their deposit with their solicitor early in the transaction, and we strongly recommend that you contact your solicitor regularly so that they can keep you fully up-to-date with the progress and the latest timescales.

### Seller's solicitor's steps

- Obtain a copy of the Title Deeds (or office copies if the title is registered)
- Obtain a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) (if applicable)
- The seller(s) will return a completed Property Information Form and a Fixtures, Fittings and Contents Form to the solicitors
- Copies of the above documents, plus a draft contract – this is known as an 'Information Pack' – will be sent to the buyer's solicitor
- Answer the buyer's solicitor's additional enquiries (for example, specific questions about fixtures and fittings) and obtain copies of any planning consent documents
- Agree the contract and arrange for the sellers to sign it in readiness of the exchange (below)
- All parties agree completion dates and the contracts are exchanged

### Between exchange and completion

- Obtain redemption figures from the mortgage lender and reply to requisitions on title
- Approve the transfer and arrange for the seller(s) and buyer(s) to sign
- Receive the agent's fee account and seek the seller's consent to settle this out of completion funds

### Completion date

This is the date the ownership of the property passes from the seller to the buyer, and it follows the successful transfer of funds. It's the date that the whole process works towards.

### Upon completion

- Receive completion funds and (only when this has been completed) instruct your estate agent to release the keys to buyers. Redeem mortgage and forward the financial statement. Forward any surplus funds (unless these are being used to fund an onward purchase). Ensure all outstanding bills are paid
- Forward transfer documents and deeds to the buyer's solicitors
- Forward evidence of 'discharge of mortgage' to the buyer's solicitors

## Buyer's solicitor's steps

- Obtain the Information Pack, including a copy of the EPC (if applicable) from the sellers' solicitor and raise any additional queries
- Initiate any specialist searches (for example: a coal search). Submit local, environmental and water searches and a chancel check. This takes about 10 working days in total, and enquiries are then usually raised from the results
- Approve the contract when all enquiries are satisfactory and complete. (At this stage, a mortgage transfer deed will need to be signed and witnessed)
- Receive a mortgage offer and instructions from the lender and deal with any conditions set out by them. Make sure that life cover and buildings insurance is being arranged
- Request the deposit, report back to the buyer, and arrange for the contract to be signed. Place buildings insurance and life cover in force
- All parties agree completion dates and the contracts are exchanged

## Between exchange and completion

- Raise 'requisitions on title' and prepare the draft transfer deed
- Report on title to mortgage lender and obtain funds for completion, including Stamp Duty (if appropriate)
- Prepare accounts, obtain signature to mortgage deed and undertake final Land Registry and Land Charges searches

## Completion date

This is the date the ownership of the property passes from the seller to the buyer, and it follows the successful transfer of funds. It's the date that the whole process works towards.

## Upon Completion

- Forward to the seller's solicitors the balance of funds - it is only then that they can authorise the release of the keys. Receive from the seller's solicitors, the transfer document deeds
- Stamp the Transfer Deed, register the buyer's ownership with the Land Registry and forward the deeds to the lender or client (where appropriate)

**Contract** - The agreement that sets out the main terms that have been agreed - for example: price, address, names, etc. Two copies are drawn up, and each party signs one in readiness for the exchange of contracts.

**Deposit** - The part of the purchase price (usually 10%) which the buyer pays on exchange of contracts.

**Exchange of contracts** - The swapping of signed contracts by the solicitors (together with the buyer's deposit). After this, the contract is binding.

**Energy Performance Certificate** - This contains information on energy use, energy performance, carbon dioxide emissions, and fuel bills.

**Land Registry** - The Government department that records who owns what land, and under what conditions.

**Local Authority Search** - A list of questions that are specific to the property and intended, for example, to discover if there have been any planning applications on the property, if the road to the house is maintained by the council, etc.

**Mortgage Redemption Figure** - The amount required to repay the outstanding capital/ interest of a mortgage.

**Property information form/fixtures, fittings and contents form** - Standard forms about the property that the seller answers for their solicitor (for example: what will be left behind, details of guarantees, etc.)

**Title Deeds** - Legal documents that prove ownership of land/buildings, and the terms on which they are owned.

**Transfer of Title** - The document that passes the ownership from the seller to the buyer.

**Stamp Duty for buy to let investors and second home owners** - An additional tax, paid by the buyer purchasing an additional property that is not their main residence. It includes buy to let landlords and those buying second homes and holiday homes. The higher rates will be 3 percentage points above the current rates of duty shown below.

**Requisition on title** - An enquiry relating to the completion arrangements.

**Seller's Pack** - This comprises a Property Information Form, a Fixtures, Fittings and Contents Form, a copy of the title deeds and the draft contract.

**Stamp Duty** - A tax paid by the buyer purchasing their main residence.

The current Stamp Duty Holiday runs until the 30th June and as such you won't pay stamp duty on purchases up to £500,000.

After this date the nil-rate band will be set at £250k until the end of September.



# Moving house?

From meter readings to removal companies, there's so much to remember when moving house. Here's our checklist of what to do and when

**F**irst of all, congratulations on your new home! The excitement has probably now kicked in but moving home can also be one of the most stressful and emotionally draining things you can do. However, careful organisation and planning can help decrease the stress and anxiety of moving. This comprehensive and essential checklist will help you do just that.

## Eight weeks - Research

Ideally, you want to start packing away any non-essential items as early as possible. This includes any items stored away in the loft, garage and shed. If you are not using it, pack it. Looking into your new area is also important, try to do this around eight weeks before you move. You might need to think about transferring your children to different schools and ordering new uniforms too. At this point, ensure you are also documenting all your important information away: that includes contact details, dates, contracts and information regarding your solicitor.

## Six weeks - Removal companies or do it yourself?

Now would be the perfect time to decide on a local removal company. Or if you don't have too much to move, you may want to do it yourself. You could even look into different van hire companies. At this point you've probably started packing away some bits, but if there is anything you decide not to take, then look into selling these items or donating them to charity. This will also give you an idea on the volume of items you have to move.

## Four weeks - Notify utility companies

This would be a good time for you to notify utility companies and inform them about your move to switch over. This includes gas and electricity, council tax, internet, phone rental and TV. You should also consider changing any car insurance, tax, memberships, phone contracts and inform your bank about the move. Now's the time to also arrange a date to have your new house cleaned before you move



“ It will be worth packing a night bag each to help everyone settle in, which means you won't have to rummage through everything to find your toothbrush! ”

in, and start ordering any new furnishings for your new property. Start packing away more items, that being, out of season clothes, books, dvd's and even bulky items, like TV's that aren't used often.

#### Two weeks - Confirm all details

Confirm your move with your removal company or van hire, estate agents and schools. If possible, try to organise someone to look after your pets and children for the day of your move, as this can also be a stressful time for them too. If your removal company doesn't disassemble any furniture or sort out the un-plumbing for the washing machine, then now would be the ideal time to organise these. Remember to also cancel any local services you receive: this could be window cleaners, gardeners and newspaper deliveries. You should now also think about re-registering to vote and getting your post re-directed after your moving date. Continue packing away more furnishings, kitchen appliances and crockery that you won't be using for the next couple of weeks.

#### 24 hours - Final check and walk round

You now have only 24 hours before you move, so double check that everything is packed away and ready for transit. It will be worth packing a night bag each to help everyone settle in, which means you won't have to rummage through everything to find your toothbrush! You may want to create an inventory of your boxes and

furniture to help you keep track of what you have and to help you ensure it doesn't go missing.

#### Moving day

Today is the day! You need to be ready for when your removal company comes. Ensure that you let them know if there are any fragile boxes that need extra care when handling. If you're moving yourself, then pack up your car or van and work out how many trips it may take. Before you leave, also take note of your final meter readings and send these off to your provider. Don't forget to leave your keys for the new owners!

#### You have arrived at your new home!

Give your removal company instructions of which boxes go in which rooms and make sure you are happy with everything that has arrived. Ensure you check for any damage before the movers leave. Read your new utility meters and send your readings of to your supplier. Taking photos of them will also ensure you have the correct reading if you need them again in the future. Unpack your essentials such as bed linen and clean towels. Don't worry about the rest, it isn't going anywhere! Order a takeaway, have a cup of tea and enjoy your first night with your family.

Right, so now you're all moved in, it's time to settle down, unpack and enjoy your new place. Remember, planning is essential to ensure your move runs stress free.

## Checklist

### Eight weeks

- Pack non-essential items
- Research your new area (transfer schools and order new uniform)
- Keep all important documents

### Six weeks

- Decide on a local removal company
- Clear out any unwanted items
- Keep packing

### Four weeks

- Notify utility companies
- Start preparation for your new house
- Keep packing

### Two weeks

- Finalise all details
- Organise pet and child care
- Cancel local services
- Keep packing

### 24 hours

- Check every room and ensure everything is packed
- Pack a night bag so everything is to hand
- Collect your new keys
- Make sure your phone is fully charged so you can get in touch with the estate agents or removal company

### Moving in

- Prepare for the arrival of the removal company and give them directions/your contact details
- Ensure everything is ready to move
- Record meter readings

### On arrival

- Give removal company instructions of what goes where
- Check for any damage before they leave
- Read your new utility meters and send them off to your supplier
- Check if the previous owners have left anything behind
- Unpack essentials
- Order a takeaway and sit back and relax!



Want to treat yourself to a proper removal company for your next move or are you prepared to do it yourself

# Removal company or brave it yourself?

**Y**ou're excited about your new home and location but the process of packing, organising and actually moving all of your items is something no-one really ever looks forward to. Not only that but you also have to contact utility companies, maintain a job, keep your children happy and clean your entire house. You do have super powers, right?

## Removal companies

Unless you live in a small property or flat, it could be worth hiring a professional removal company to help relieve some of the stress on the day. They have many skills and experience and some of the services they can provide include packing and

unpacking, dismantling and assembling furniture, loading your belongings quickly and securely, including those fragile and specialist items. They can even supply you with packing materials.

Hiring a removal company will also allow you the time to collect the keys to your new home. You also won't have to worry about the exhausting physical side of things, that being carrying boxes back and forth. Some services are great if you don't have much time to plan and get these done yourself; however these do often come at a premium and may not be suitable for those on a budget. When choosing a removal company

You also won't have to worry about the exhausting physical side of things, that being carrying boxes back and forth



its key to look at those which have good recommendations and reviews, as you need a company you can rely on. You can use comparison sites, such as [comparemymove.com](http://comparemymove.com) and [reallymoving.com](http://reallymoving.com), to help find you the best deals.

### Getting quotes

You should aim to get at least three quotes from removal companies, preferably from firms which will come out to your property rather than those who just estimate the cost over the phone, as you don't want any nasty charges later on. Plus it will give the company an accurate idea of any restricted areas in your home, if they can park a van or lorry, and how many

items you have. You should also ask for the price to be broken down so you can see just how much you are paying for when it comes to certain aspects like insurance, packing, an hourly rate, mileage and any storage costs.

Once you have found a removal company, it can be useful to send them a briefing sheet that includes information about any items which need to be specially packed, any difficult or large items, plus any carpets and curtains which need moving. Finally, it can also be helpful to send them a floor plan of the new property so they can unload efficiently.

## Top tips for packing

When packing, ensure you don't overload your boxes with heavy items, as these will be difficult to lift and could cause a back injury.

Fill any empty gaps using old newspaper, clothing, socks or even tea towels. This will help secure any items when they are being moved.

Create an inventory and label all your boxes and write the contents on each box with a marker. That way you will know which room each box is to go in. And if you are super organised, you could even colour code each room!

Pack heavier boxes on the bottom. This might seem like common sense but it will ensure that any of your fragile items won't break.

Pack a survival box. These are the things that you will need first and should include paper towels, bin bags, cutlery, the kettle, some mugs, tea, coffee, milk, sugar and finally, some toilet paper!



HAVE A  
*relaxing move*



Relax this February knowing all your property needs are taken care of with **Longsons**.  
With our excellent customer service and innovative marketing, we'll do all  
the work while you relax...

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