

Moving House: Boxes, Bills & Bunk Beds

B1/B2 • GENERAL ENGLISH

60–75 minutes

Vocabulary

Reading

Listening

Speaking

Use of English



Lesson Objectives

- **Vocabulary:** learn 16 words for furniture, fittings, moving costs and "teething problems" (bunk bed, hinge, deposit, headroom, makeshift...) plus useful phrasal verbs.
- **Reading:** read a real-life story about a family's first month in a new flat and find words in context.
- **Listening:** listen to two people talk about renting a home and pick out key details.
- **Use of English:** describe problems with *too / enough / won't / doesn't fit*, talk about repairs with *have something done*, use prepositions, compare homes, and learn 15 phrasal verbs.
- **Speaking:** role-play a call between a tenant and a landlord about problems in a new home.

1 Warm-Up: The Stress of Moving

SPEAKING

Moving house is often called one of the most stressful events in life. Rank these parts of a move from **1** (most stressful) to **6** (least stressful). Then compare with your tutor and explain your choices.



Finding a new home

viewings, estate agents,
making a decision



Packing

boxes, tape, bubble wrap — and
deciding what to keep



The costs

deposits, removal companies,
new furniture



Moving day

the van, the stairs, the broken
plate...



The first week

nothing works, nothing fits and
you can't find anything



Saying goodbye

to neighbours, friends and your
old street

Think about it: What is the funniest or strangest problem you (or someone you know) have had after moving into a new home?

2A Vocabulary Match: Furniture & Fittings

MIX & MATCH

Match the words (1–8) with their definitions (A–H).

1. bunk bed (<i>noun</i>)	A	a piece of furniture with drawers for keeping clothes in	_____
2. mattress (<i>noun</i>)	B	a tall cupboard where you hang your clothes	_____
3. wardrobe (<i>noun</i>)	C	a bar above a window that curtains hang from	_____
4. chest of drawers (<i>noun</i>)	D	the thick, soft part of a bed that you lie on	_____
5. curtain rail (<i>noun</i>)	E	the metal part that lets a door or lid open and close	_____
6. hinge (<i>noun</i>)	F	furniture sold in pieces in a box, which you build yourself	_____
7. plug socket (<i>noun</i>)	G	a bed with a second bed above it, often used by children	_____
8. flat-pack furniture (<i>noun</i>)	H	the place in a wall where you connect electrical equipment	_____

Match the words and phrases (1–8) with their definitions (A–H).

1. teething problems (noun)	A bills for things like electricity, water and gas	_____
2. removal company (noun)	B small problems at the start of something new, which usually get fixed	_____
3. deposit (noun)	C the space between the top of your head and the ceiling	_____
4. utility bills (noun)	D money you pay when you start renting, which you get back if nothing is damaged	_____
5. headroom (noun)	E to remove things you don't need so that a place is tidier	_____
6. makeshift (adj)	F the person who owns the home you rent	_____
7. declutter (verb)	G a business that moves your furniture and boxes to your new home	_____
8. landlord (noun)	H temporary and made from whatever is available	_____

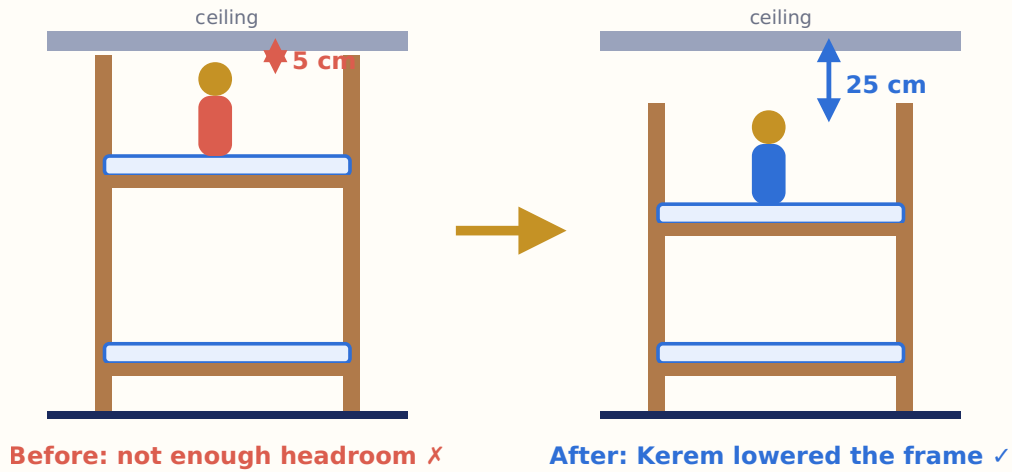
Read about Ayla and Kerem's first month in their new home. Then answer the questions in Part 4.

- A** When Ayla and her husband Kerem decided to leave their small flat on the outskirts of the city for a bigger three-bedroom flat near their son's school, they thought the hardest part would be the packing. They were wrong. "We spent two weekends going through cupboards and giving bags of old clothes to charity," Ayla says. "**Decluttering** felt great. But the real adventure started after the removal van drove away."
- B** The first problem appeared on the very first night. Their seven-year-old son, Emir, had a **bunk bed**, and he couldn't wait to sleep on the top. But the ceilings in the new flat were lower than in the old one, and when Emir sat up in bed, his head almost touched the ceiling. "There simply wasn't enough **headroom**," Ayla explains. Kerem, who is an engineer, measured everything carefully, took the bed apart and lowered the whole frame by about twenty centimetres. By Sunday afternoon, Emir could sit up and read comfortably. He now calls it "Dad's project".

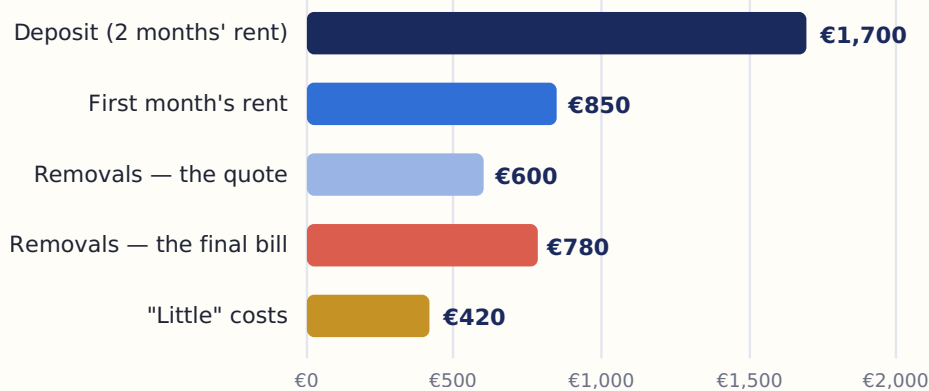
- C** The kitchen caused the next headache. The flat came with an oven that was slightly too big for the space, and every time Ayla tried to open the cupboard next to it, the cupboard door hit the oven handle and got stuck. Calling a kitchen fitter would have been expensive, so Kerem came up with a quick solution: he cut up an empty moving box, folded the cardboard into a thick pad and used it to lift the oven a little, so that the cupboard door could finally open. Ayla is not completely happy. "Cardboard and a hot oven are not best friends," she laughs. "It's a **makeshift** fix. The **landlord** has promised to send someone to sort it out properly."
- D** Then there were the windows. The previous tenants had taken their curtains with them, and two of the **curtain rails** were broken. For the first week, the family woke up at half past five every morning because of the sun. "We hung bedsheets over the windows, like students," Kerem says. In the end, they bought blinds for the bedrooms and put up new curtain rails in the living room — although the curtains from their old flat turned out to be twenty centimetres too short. Other small problems included **plug sockets** in strange places, a **wardrobe** door that came off its **hinge**, and three days without internet.
- E** And, of course, there were the costs. Before they could move in, they had to pay a **deposit** of two months' rent and the first month's rent in advance. The **removal company**'s final bill was higher than its quote because the lift was out of order and the movers had to carry everything up four floors. After that came all the "little" costs: blinds, extension leads, light bulbs, a **flat-pack** chest of drawers and, because the new flat is bigger, higher **utility bills**. "Nobody warns you about the hidden costs," Ayla says. "Everything costs a little more than you expect."
- F** One month later, the family has settled in. The boxes are unpacked, the curtains (almost) fit and Emir loves his "new" bunk bed. "Every move has **teething problems**," says Ayla. "The trick is to stay calm, keep your sense of humour — and marry an engineer."

Look at the pictures from Ayla and Kerem's move and answer the questions.

Picture A — Emir's bunk bed: before and after



Picture B — Ayla and Kerem's moving costs



- 1 **Picture A:** How much headroom did Emir have before and after Kerem lowered the bed? Use *enough* in your answer.

- 2 **Picture B:** Which was the biggest cost of the move? Use a superlative.

- 3 **Picture B:** How much more was the final removals bill than the quote? Why?

- 4 **Picture B:** Add up all the costs. How much did the move cost in total?

Answer the questions in full sentences.

- 1 Why did the family decide to move?

- 2 What was wrong with the bunk bed, and how did Kerem solve the problem?

- 3 Why didn't Kerem call a kitchen fitter, and why isn't Ayla completely happy with his solution?

- 4 Why did the family wake up so early during the first week?

- 5 Why was the removal company's final bill higher than the quote?

- 6 According to Ayla, what is "the trick" when you move house?

Look back at the reading in Part 3. Find a word or short phrase that means the same as each definition. The word class is given to help you.

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------------------|---------|
| 1. | the areas around the edge of a city
(<i>paragraph A</i>) | noun
(plural) | → _____ |
| 2. | separated something into its different pieces
(<i>paragraph B</i>) | verb phrase | → _____ |
| 3. | a problem that causes worry or trouble
(<i>paragraph C</i>) | noun | → _____ |
| 4. | thought of an idea or a plan (<i>paragraph C</i>) | phrasal
verb | → _____ |
| 5. | people who pay rent to live in a home
(<i>paragraph D</i>) | noun
(plural) | → _____ |
| 6. | before something happens; beforehand
(<i>paragraph E</i>) | adverb
phrase | → _____ |
| 7. | the price a company says a job will cost
before it starts (<i>paragraph E</i>) | noun | → _____ |
| 8. | not working (for a machine) (<i>paragraph E</i>) | adjective
phrase | → _____ |

9. extra costs that you don't notice at first
(paragraph E)

noun phrase

→ _____

10. became comfortable in a new home
(paragraph F)

phrasal
verb

→ _____

5B Listen & Reflect: Renting a Home

LISTENING



SCAN TO WATCH

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Renting a house

Listen to **Speaker A** (a flat that turned into a sauna in summer) and **Speaker D** (a landlord who wouldn't stay away). Together they last about 3 minutes.

▶ Click to listen

learnenglish.britishcouncil.org > Listening > Renting a house

Tutor's note: Speaker A is the **first** speaker and Speaker D is the **last**. Skip Speakers B and C. The page is labelled C1, but these two speakers are clear and natural. Play each speaker twice — once for Task 1, once for Task 2.

Before you listen

- 1 Would you prefer to rent or buy a home? Why?

- 2 What problems can tenants have with a landlord?

- 3 What can make a home uncomfortable in summer or in winter?

5B Listening Tasks

LISTENING

Task 1 — Speaker A or Speaker D? Write A or D.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. ...saw the advert months before going to see the home. | ☐ A ☐ D |
| 2. ...had a landlord who redecorated the whole house. | ☐ A ☐ D |
| 3. ...found their home far too hot in summer. | ☐ A ☐ D |
| 4. ...tried to avoid someone by pretending to go out. | ☐ A ☐ D |
| 5. ...chose the home partly because of the bigger garden. | ☐ A ☐ D |

6. ...gave notice and left a home they loved.

A D

Task 2 — Listen again and answer.

- 1 When did Speaker A first see the flat advertised, and when did they actually go to see it?

- 2 What made Speaker A's flat so hot in summer? Give two reasons.

- 3 Name two helpful things Speaker D's landlord did at the start.

- 4 How did the landlord's visits change over time?

- 5 Why did Speaker D finally move out?

6

Language Focus: Describing Problems & Getting Things Fixed

GRAMMAR

Describing the problem

too + adjective: The oven is *too big* for the space.
not + adjective + *enough*: The space *isn't big enough*.
enough + noun: There *isn't enough headroom*.

When things don't work

won't (= refuses to work): The cupboard door *won't open*.
doesn't fit: The sofa *doesn't fit* in the lift.

Getting it fixed

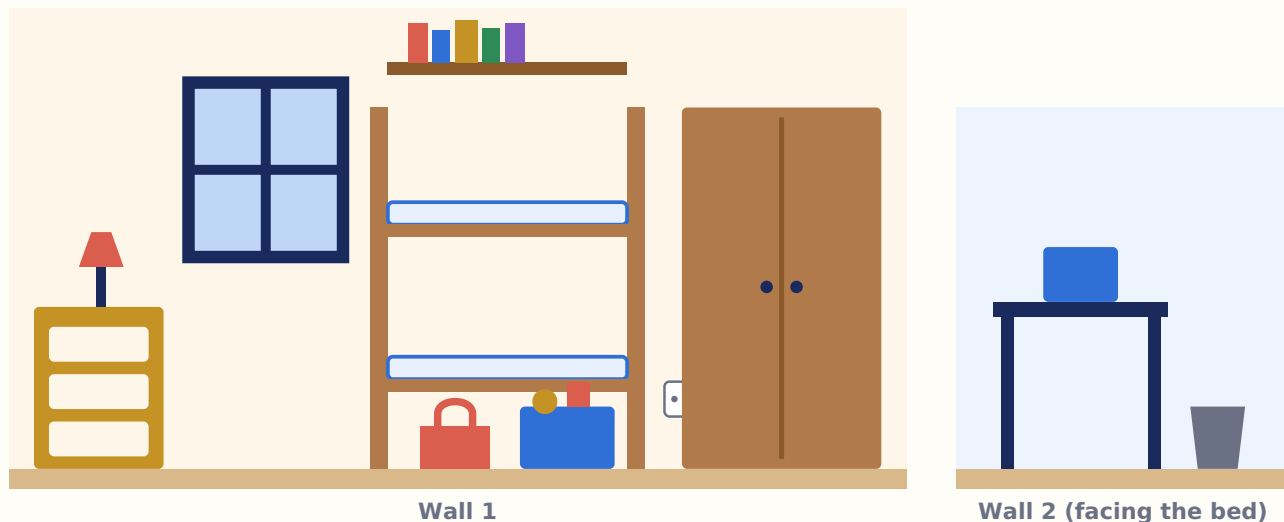
have / get + object + past participle:
We're *having the oven fixed* next week.
We *got the locks changed*.

Complete the sentences with **too**, **enough**, **won't**, **doesn't fit** or the **have something done** structure.

1. The sofa is _____ wide to go through the front door.
2. The second bedroom isn't big _____ for a double bed.
3. The washing machine _____ start. I think it's broken.
4. This rug _____ the living room — it's far too small.
5. We're going to _____ the locks _____ before we move in. (**have / change**)
6. There aren't _____ plug sockets in the kitchen, so we need extension leads.

A. Read the description of Emir's bedroom and complete it with prepositions from the box. There are **two extra prepositions** you don't need.

Emir's bedroom — use the picture to help you



in	on	under	between	behind
opposite	above	next to	below	among

- The bunk bed is _____ the window and the wardrobe, right in the middle of the wall.
- Emir's school bag is always on the floor _____ the bottom bunk.
- A small lamp stands _____ the chest of drawers.
- _____ the top bunk, there's a shelf on the wall for his books.
- His toys are _____ a big blue storage box.
- His desk is _____ the bunk bed, on the other side of the room, so he can see it from bed.
- The only plug socket is hidden _____ the wardrobe — a real problem!
- The bin is _____ the desk, on the right.

Verb + preposition: move **into** · move **out of** · pay **for** · complain **about** / **to** someone · worry **about** · depend **on** · belong **to**

B. Complete each sentence with the correct preposition.

- We're moving _____ our new flat on Saturday.

2. Who is going to pay _____ the broken curtain rail?
3. The neighbours complained _____ the noise on moving day.
4. Don't worry _____ the boxes — the movers will carry them.
5. The final price depends _____ how many floors the movers have to climb.
6. The washing machine belongs _____ the landlord, not to us.

6C

Comparatives & Superlatives: Which Flat Is Best?

GRAMMAR

Short adjectives

cheap → cheaper → the cheapest
big → bigger → the biggest

-y and long adjectives

noisy → noisier → the noisiest
modern → more modern → the most modern

Irregular & (not) as ... as

good → better → the best · bad → worse → the worst · far → further → the furthest
The new flat *isn't as cheap as* the old one.

Ayla and Kerem looked at three flats. Read the table, then complete the sentences with the correct form of the adjective in capitals.

	OLD FLAT	NEW FLAT (chosen) ★	FLAT C
Bedrooms	2	3	4
Size	75 m ²	110 m ²	140 m ²
Rent per month	€650	€850	€1,100
Distance to school	12 km	1 km	5 km
Floor	ground floor	4th floor	10th floor
Year built	2005	1990	2022

1. The new flat is _____ than the old flat. **BIG**
2. Flat C is the _____ of the three flats. **EXPENSIVE**
3. The old flat was the _____ from Emir's school. **FAR**
4. The new flat's building is _____ than Flat C's. **OLD**
5. The ceilings in the new flat are _____ than in the old flat. **LOW**
6. Flat C is in the _____ building of the three. **MODERN**
7. The new flat isn't as _____ as the old flat. **CHEAP**
8. For Ayla, the new flat was the _____ choice because it's so close to the school. **GOOD**

Your turn: write two sentences comparing your home now with a home you lived in before. Use one comparative and one *(not) as ... as*.

7 Gap Fill: Moving Day Vocabulary

USE OF ENGLISH

Complete the sentences with words from the box. There are **two extra terms** you don't need.

removal company	deposit	utility bills	hinge	curtain rail
mattress	flat-pack	landlord	makeshift	wardrobe

1. We got three quotes before we chose a _____ to move our furniture.
2. If you leave the flat clean and undamaged, you'll get your _____ back.
3. Our _____ are much higher in winter because we use the heating all the time.
4. The kitchen door makes a terrible noise — I think the _____ needs some oil.
5. The _____ fell down when I hung the heavy curtains on it.
6. It took us four hours to build the _____ desk — the instructions were terrible!
7. Call the _____ — the broken boiler is his responsibility, not ours.
8. We used a big box as a _____ table until our furniture arrived.

8 Word Formation

WORD FORMS

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the word in capitals.

1. Moving house can be very _____, especially with young children. **STRESS**
2. The landlord was very _____ when we told him about the problems. **HELP**
3. The removal company gave us a _____ quote before the move. **WRITE**
4. Our new flat is much more _____ than the old one — it has three bedrooms. **SPACE**
5. The movers were very _____ with our glasses and plates. **CARE**
6. Some _____ costs, like new curtains and blinds, surprised us. **EXPECT**
7. Kerem made a few _____ to the bunk bed so that it was safe. **ADJUST**
8. The _____ of the flat is perfect — it's close to the school and the shops. **LOCATE**

Complete the second sentence so it means the same as the first, using the word given. Do not change the word given. Use **between three and eight words**, including the given word.

1. The oven is too big for the space.

ENOUGH

The space _____ for the oven.

2. Someone is going to fix our oven next week.

HAVING

We are _____ next week.

3. Emir couldn't sit up because the bed was too close to the ceiling.

ENOUGH

There _____ for Emir to sit up.

4. They paid the first month's rent before they moved in.

ADVANCE

They paid _____.

5. Kerem thought of a quick solution to the problem.

CAME

Kerem _____ a quick solution to the problem.

6. After a month, the family felt at home in the new flat.

SETTLED

After a month, the family _____ the new flat.

7. The curtains are too short for the new windows.

LONG

The curtains _____ for the new windows.

8. The final removals bill was higher than the quote.

MORE

The removal company _____ the quote.

11

Phrasal Verbs: Moving In & Settling Down

VOCABULARY

These phrasal verbs come up in almost every conversation about moving house.

move in / move out

to start living in / to leave a home

"We move in on Saturday."

settle in

to become comfortable in a new place

"The kids settled in quickly."

put up

to fix something to a wall or ceiling

"We put up the curtains at last."

sort out

to deal with a problem and fix it

"Can you sort out the boiler?"

pack up

to put all your things into boxes

"We packed up the kitchen last."

throw away

to put something in the bin

"I threw away ten bags of rubbish!"

get used to

to become familiar with something new

"I'm getting used to the noise."

Complete the sentences with a phrasal verb from the cards in the correct form.

1. We finally _____ the curtains yesterday — the room looks much cosier now.
2. We can't _____ until the previous tenants have left.
3. It took Emir a few weeks to _____ his new school.
4. Could you call the landlord and _____ the problem with the shower?
5. We _____ lots of old toys before the move.
6. It's going to take us the whole weekend to _____ the kitchen.

Match the phrasal verbs (1-8) with their meanings (A-H).

1. set up	A	to give something to someone officially (e.g. keys)	_____
2. pick up	B	to visit a place to see what it is like	_____
3. fill in	C	to build something from its separate parts	_____
4. hand over	D	to have none of something left	_____
5. carry up	E	to collect something or someone	_____
6. run out of	F	to take something up the stairs	_____
7. put together	G	to arrange or connect something so that it works (e.g. the internet)	_____
8. look round	H	to complete a form with information	_____

Now complete the sentences with a phrasal verb from the match in the correct form.

- The landlord will _____ the keys on Friday morning.
- We _____ boxes halfway through packing and had to buy more.
- It took Kerem two hours to _____ the flat-pack chest of drawers.
- Before you rent a flat, always _____ it in daylight.
- You need to _____ this form before you can get the keys.
- The internet company is coming on Monday to _____ our Wi-Fi.

12 Discussion Points

SPEAKING

1. Your Moves: Have you ever moved house? What was the hardest part — the packing, the costs or the first few weeks?

2. DIY or Professional?: Kerem fixed the problems himself. Are you a DIY person, or do you prefer to call a professional? Why?

3. Clever or Risky?: Was the cardboard-box fix a clever idea or a dangerous one? What would you have done?

4. Who Pays?: In a rented home, who should pay for small repairs — the tenant or the landlord? Where is the line?

5. Hidden Costs: What hidden costs of moving are common in your country (e.g. agency fees, connecting the internet, new furniture)?

6. Rent or Buy?: Is it better to rent or buy a home where you live? Why?

Scenario: a tenant moved into a rented flat last week. There are four teething problems: (1) a kitchen cupboard won't open because the oven is in the way, (2) a curtain rail in the bedroom is broken, (3) a wardrobe door has come off its hinge, and (4) one plug socket in the kitchen doesn't work. The tenant phones the landlord.

Student A • Tenant

- Describe each problem clearly (use *too* / *enough* / *won't* / *doesn't fit*).
- Ask when each problem can be fixed.
- Ask who will pay — you don't want to lose your deposit!
- Mention any makeshift fixes you have tried.

Student B • Landlord

- Agree to fix some problems and give dates (*I'll have it fixed by...*).
- Say that one problem is the tenant's responsibility.
- Be polite but careful with money.
- Ask the tenant not to use cardboard near the oven!

Reporting a problem

I'm afraid there's a problem with... / The ... won't open. / The ... isn't working.

Asking for action

Could you send someone to look at...? / Would it be possible to... this week?

Responding

I'll have it fixed by Friday. / I'm afraid that's the tenant's responsibility. / Leave it with me.

"Hi, it's Ayla from the fourth-floor flat. I'm sorry to bother you, but we've found a few teething problems..."

FURNITURE & FITTINGS

bunk bed
mattress
wardrobe
chest of drawers
curtain rail
hinge
plug socket
flat-pack furniture

MOVING, MONEY & PROBLEMS

teething problems
removal company
deposit
utility bills
headroom
makeshift
declutter
landlord

PHRASAL VERBS

move in / move out · settle in
· put up · sort out · pack up ·
throw away · get used to ·
set up · pick up · fill in · hand
over · carry up · run out of ·
put together · look round

Homework: prepare a **2-minute presentation** for your tutor next lesson. Tell the story of a real (or imaginary!) move — finding the home, the costs, moving day and the teething problems. Try to use all of the words and phrasal verbs from this lesson.

Moving House: Boxes, Bills & Bunk Beds

ANSWER KEY

B1/B2 · GENERAL ENGLISH

For teacher / tutor use

Part 1 — Warm-Up

✓ *Answers will vary. Encourage reasons: "For me, ___ is the most stressful because..."*

Part 2A — Furniture & Fittings

- | | | | |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 1. G | bunk bed | 5. C | curtain rail |
| 2. D | mattress | 6. E | hinge |
| 3. B | wardrobe | 7. H | plug socket |
| 4. A | chest of drawers | 8. F | flat-pack furniture |

Part 2B — Moving, Money & Teething Problems

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------|
| 1. B | teething problems | 5. C | headroom |
| 2. G | removal company | 6. H | makeshift |
| 3. D | deposit | 7. E | declutter |
| 4. A | utility bills | 8. F | landlord |

Part 3B — Picture the Story

- Before, he had only 5 cm, which wasn't enough headroom to sit up. After Kerem lowered the frame, he had 25 cm — enough to sit up and read.
- The deposit was the biggest / most expensive cost (€1,700 — two months' rent).
- €180 more (€780 instead of €600), because the lift was out of order and the movers had to carry everything up four floors.
- €3,750 (1,700 + 850 + 780 + 420). The €600 quote is not included because the final bill replaced it.

Part 4 — Reading Comprehension

1. They wanted a bigger (three-bedroom) flat near their son's school.
2. The ceiling was too low, so Emir's head almost touched it when he sat up (not enough headroom). Kerem measured everything, took the bed apart and lowered the frame by about 20 cm.
3. A kitchen fitter would have been expensive. Ayla isn't happy because cardboard near a hot oven isn't safe — it's only a makeshift fix, and the landlord will send someone to fix it properly.
4. The previous tenants had taken the curtains and some curtain rails were broken, so the sun woke them up at 5:30.
5. The lift was out of order, so the movers had to carry everything up four floors.
6. Stay calm, keep your sense of humour — and marry an engineer.

Part 5 — Find the Word

1. outskirts	noun	6. in advance	adverb phrase
2. took (the bed) apart	verb phrase	7. quote	noun
3. headache	noun	8. out of order	adjective phrase
4. came up with	phrasal verb	9. hidden costs	noun phrase
5. tenants	noun	10. settled in	phrasal verb

Part 5B — Listening — Speakers A & D

Before you listen: answers will vary.

Task 1

1. A	4. D
2. D	5. A
3. A	6. D

Task 2

1. Around July — but they didn't go to see it until November, when it was advertised again (at a lower price).
2. A heatwave in July; the large windows trapped the heat (like a greenhouse); there was no air conditioning.
3. Any two: he redecorated the whole house; he put the utility bills in his name; he offered to do the gardening.
4. They became more and more frequent: from once a month, to twice a month, to every week (usually with an excuse).
5. The landlord kept visiting, so they had no privacy or peace — they gave notice and moved, even though they loved the house.

Part 6 — Language Focus

1. too	4. doesn't fit
2. enough	5. have ... changed
3. won't	6. enough

Part 6B — Prepositions

A.		
1. between		5. in
2. under		6. opposite
3. on		7. behind
4. Above		8. next to

Not used: **below**, **among**. Item 3: "on top of" is also acceptable.

B.		
1. into		4. about
2. for		5. on
3. about		6. to

Part 6C — Comparatives & Superlatives

1. bigger	5. lower
2. most expensive	6. most modern
3. furthest / farthest	7. cheap
4. older	8. best

✓ Your turn: answers will vary.

Part 7 — Gap Fill

1. removal company	5. curtain rail
2. deposit	6. flat-pack
3. utility bills	7. landlord
4. hinge	8. makeshift

Not used: **mattress**, **wardrobe**

Part 8 — Word Formation

1. stressful	5. careful
2. helpful	6. unexpected
3. written	7. adjustments
4. spacious	8. location

Part 9 — Key-Word Transformation

1. isn't (is not) big enough
2. having our oven fixed
3. wasn't (was not) enough headroom / room / space
4. the first month's rent in advance
5. came up with
6. had settled into / had settled in
7. aren't (are not) long enough
8. charged (us) more than

Part 11 — Phrasal Verbs

1. put up	4. sort out
2. move in	5. threw away
3. get used to / settle in at	6. pack up

Part 11B — More Phrasal Verbs

1. G set up	5. F carry up
2. E pick up	6. D run out of
3. H fill in	7. C put together
4. A hand over	8. B look round

Sentences:

1. hand over	4. look round
2. ran out of	5. fill in
3. put together	6. set up

Parts 12–14 — Discussion, Role-Play & Wrap-Up

✓ *Answers will vary. In the role-play, listen for too / enough / won't / doesn't fit, have something fixed, and at least four target words (e.g. hinge, curtain rail, deposit, landlord, makeshift, teething problems). Give feedback on politeness phrases (I'm afraid..., Would it be possible...?).*

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