



Ask the experts



Peter Butler asks whether he can use more than one estate agent

Estate agents

Can I put my house up for sale with more than one estate agent at the same time?

PETER BUTLER, BOGNOR REGIS

You can have as many estate agents as you like, provided that you have a multi-agency contract. The contract you have with your current estate agent may say that it's acting as the only agent that can sell your home – check for the phrase 'sole selling agent' or 'sole agency'. If you were to engage another agency at the same time, you might owe commission to both if the house was sold.

If you want to use several agencies, you'll probably need to end your current contract (there will be a minimum notice period) and set up a multi-agency contract with several estate agents. In theory, it means they should try harder, as only the agent who sells it will get commission. However, you usually have to pay more commission if you go down this route.

Alcohol labelling

Why is there no information about ingredients or nutrition on most alcoholic drinks?

CHARLES ELLIS, LONDON

There are at present no regulations about this, so manufacturers can make their own decisions on what to include. However, they do have to declare certain allergens, such as sulphites, as well as barley in beer, as it contains gluten. Which? has called for alcoholic drinks to be labelled with their ingredients and the EU is currently reviewing the position. As a rule, alcohol tends to be high in calories.

Flight tax refunds

I was forced to cancel some non-refundable flights. While I appreciate that I have to lose the cost of the flights, I don't know why I didn't receive a refund for tax and airport charges. Why is this?

ANN CARROLL, LEEDS

It's rare for airlines to volunteer to refund taxes and charges if you cancel – you usually need to ask. And it is worth asking: the tax and charges can be up to £150 on some flights to the United States. Many airlines will refund at least the tax, as they pay it only for each passenger who travels. But some charge an admin fee to process the refund, which can be more than the tax itself. Other airlines (for instance, Virgin Atlantic) will refund all taxes and charges without an admin fee – but you still need to put in a request. See our report on p24 for more on your rights if a flight is cancelled.

Travel cheque rates

I recently bought some traveller's cheques in US dollars from a bank. The bank sold them to me at a higher price than it will buy them back at,

Which? focus on Trouble-free

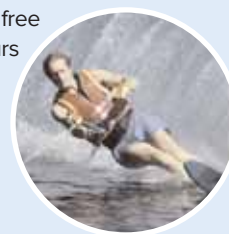
Home thoughts

How can I make sure my house is OK while I am away?

There are basic measures you can take, such as ensuring all doors and windows are locked, as well as gates leading to the back; putting ladders away; cancelling deliveries and asking Royal Mail to hold on to your post. If you can't get friends or family to keep an eye out, professional agencies can provide reliable and trustworthy housesitters. They don't come cheap, so do some ringing around and ask plenty of questions to make sure you know what you're getting – and check that hiring one doesn't affect your insurance.

safety conscious. Ask yourself:

- Has the operator taken your name, ID, proof of age, and details of where you're staying and any relevant medical conditions?
- Are the life-jackets stored out of the sun and free of sand? Does yours fit properly?
- Will you get a full safety briefing before entering the water?
- Is there more than one member of staff? Do they have binoculars, a first-aid kit and a VHF radio for communication?



Deep concerns

What can I do to lessen the risk of deep-vein thrombosis (DVT)?

DVT is relatively rare – it affects only one in 2,000 people in the UK each year. But long journeys, whether by plane, coach or train, do increase your risk due to lengthy periods of sitting still. To reduce the risk:

- move around in your seat and walk up and down as much as possible

Jet-skis and safety

We're off to Spain and would like to try jet-skiing. Is it safe?

The key thing is to spend time observing how a watersports centre is run, and to commit only if you're confident that staff are

SWIMMING POOL SENSE

Do...

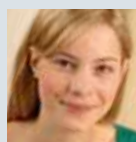
- ✓ Check the water is clean and clear
- ✓ Look for depth and no-diving signs
- ✓ Keep clear of water chutes; check the splash-down area is clear before you slide
- ✓ Watch out for slippery surfaces and trip hazards
- ✓ Make sure there's an effective barrier to separate off the children's pool
- ✓ Shower before and after you swim

Don't...

- ✗ Swim if the water is cloudy and you can't see the bottom of the pool
- ✗ Swim on a full stomach or under the influence of alcohol
- ✗ Leave children unattended



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Alice Judd
Services research assistant
Answers this month's questions



Louise Hodgson
Editorial assistant
Holiday Which?
Puts trouble-free holidays in focus

holidays

- flex calf muscles regularly to help keep blood flowing well
- drink plenty of (non-alcoholic) fluids to prevent dehydration.

Wearing compression stockings and loose-fitting clothes can also help. You should always contact your GP before you travel if you're pregnant or are taking any hormone medication or you have heart disease.

Hiring a car

I'm hiring a car. What should I check when I pick it up?

Ensure the agent's emergency number is on the paperwork, and key it into your mobile. Always check the car thoroughly (tyres, brakes, wipers, lights, petrol level and emergency equipment) before you drive off. Your contract should include details of any scratches, dents or damage, but be sure to check this corresponds with the reality and question anything that's different. Reporting all faults at this stage will prevent you from paying a hefty price on your return for something that wasn't down to you.



Tony Canning wants to know why he has to pay for a passport, even though he will be older than 77 when he travels

which means I'll make a loss. What's the difference between the 'bank sells at' and the 'bank buys at' rates and why is there a shortfall?

HAYDN EVANS, HESWALL

The difference between the rates is profit for the bank. It also covers the cost of providing the service. Some places offer a buyback guarantee for an extra fee – for instance, if with Travelex you pay £3.50 when it sells you the currency, it will buy it back at the same rate, provided it's within 31 days. But you need to check whether this is worthwhile, based on how much you're taking and expect to bring back. Shop around for the best exchange rate and try to take only as much as you think you'll need. If you travel a lot, consider an account and debit card such as Nationwide's, the only one that doesn't charge if you withdraw money abroad.

This month's *Which? Money* contains a report on holiday money – see p43 for how to subscribe.

No free passport

I'm off to Australia in October and need to renew my passport. Currently if you're 77 or over, you're eligible for a free

passport. As I was born in June 1930 and will be over 77 when I travel, I thought I wouldn't have to pay. But the Identity & Passport Office told me the exemption applies only to those born on or before 2 September 1929. Will passports ever be granted free to anyone not born before September 1929?

TONY CANNING, KENT

No. The entitlement depends solely on whether you were born on or before that date, not on your age, and there are no plans to change this. The date includes anyone who was 16 or over at the end of World War II. The government introduced the exemption in 2004, in the run-up to the 60th anniversary of the end of the war, as a thank you to those who had been involved. Sixteen was chosen as the cut-off as it includes anyone who could have played a role of some kind.

SHARE YOUR QUESTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

You can contact us by email or post

- letters@which.co.uk
- Letters, PO Box 44, Hertford X, SG14 1SH

Your say

Share your stories with fellow members

Finding a dentist

Dentists taking new NHS patients are few and far between, but some of you did manage to root one out

What you told us

'In our first week of moving here, we managed to find an NHS dentist after only three calls, made our first check-up appointment, and further appointments for six months' time. So we are happy!'

ROGER AND EILEEN, TORQUAY

'I searched NHS Direct for a new dentist when mine left the NHS. Of the ten it came up with, most were not taking on new NHS patients.'

PAUL, FAVERSHAM

'I saw a poster on the wall of my GP's surgery about NHS dentists. I called the helpline and was given the numbers of three local surgeries. I called the one closest to my home and got an appointment within a couple of months.'

REBECCA, GUILDFORD

'I was accepted three years ago by a practice, and have so far seen three different dentists. This means I am getting treatment, and it's probably good treatment, but I never know who I am going to see and I miss the continuity.'

ELEANOR, BY EMAIL

'There is only one practice in the whole of the Leeds Health Authority area taking new NHS patients – and it's miles away. There are no dentists in the neighbouring authority areas taking new NHS patients.'

DAVID, GUISELEY

Next month

Premium-rate numbers

- letters@which.co.uk
- Letters, PO Box 44, Hertford X SG14 1SH