



# Installing Ceiling Lamps in Switzerland

PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TENANTS

BONUS REFERENCE · LANDED.CH

📄 ⚠️ **SAFETY WARNING:** Always switch off the power at the fuse box (Sicherungskasten) before touching any wires or performing any electrical work. Never work on live wires.

You've just moved into a rented apartment in Switzerland and found a ceiling connection point with no lamp attached. This guide explains exactly what you can do yourself, when the issue belongs to your landlord, and when to call a licensed electrician — in plain, practical terms.

# What This Guide Is

This guide is written for people who move into a rented apartment in Switzerland and discover that a room has a ceiling connection point but no light fixture installed. It is a common situation — and one that causes more confusion than it should, largely because the rules sit at the intersection of Swiss electrical law and tenancy guidance.

Rather than leaving you to guess, this guide answers four specific, practical questions that come up in the first days after moving in.

## Is this normal?

- 1 Understanding why Switzerland is different from other countries when it comes to light fixtures in rental properties.

## What can you do yourself?

- 2 The specific circumstances under which a tenant may mount a light fixture without hiring an electrician.

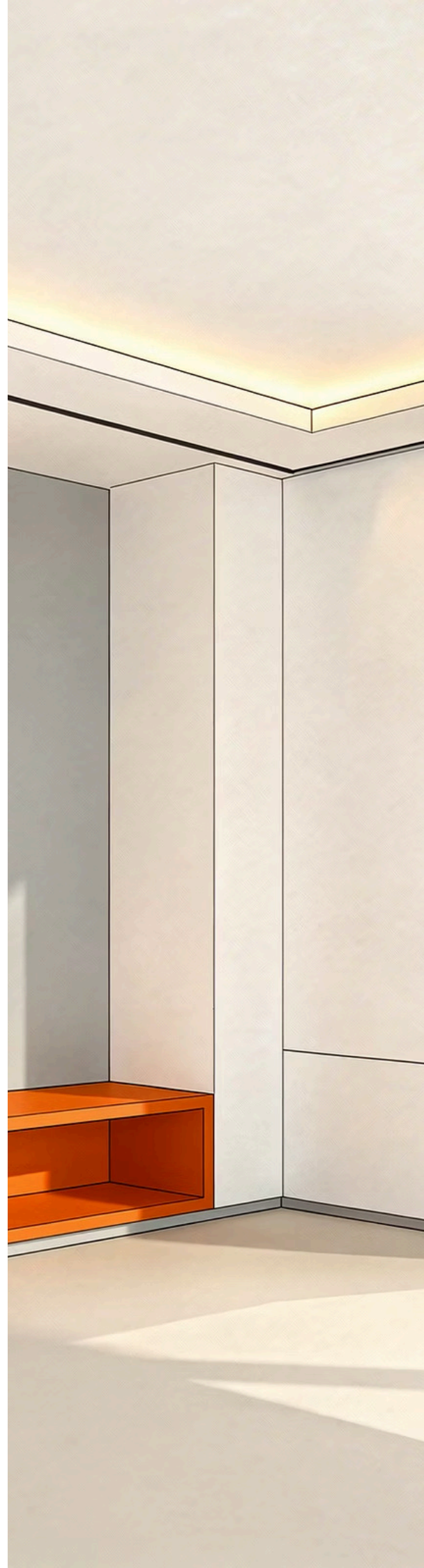
## When is it the landlord's problem?

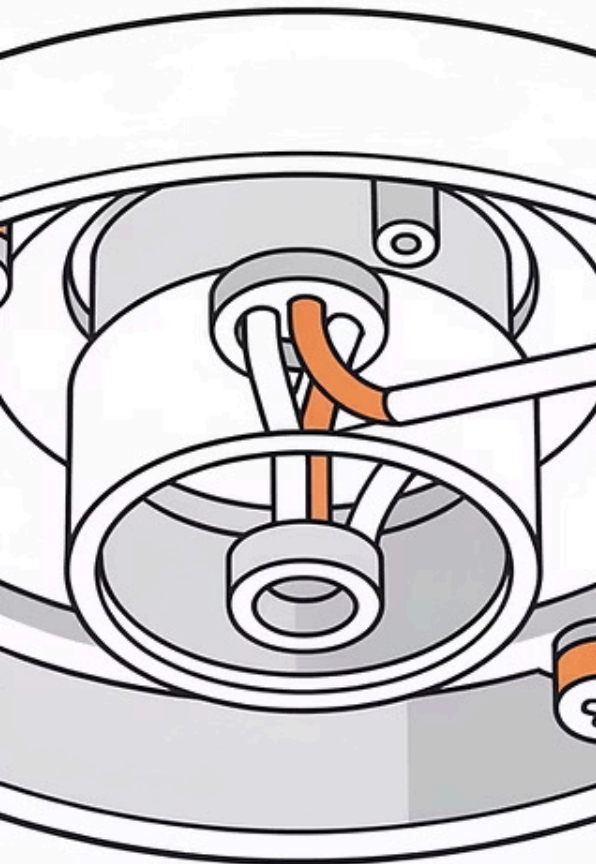
- 3 How to identify a defective electrical installation versus a missing fixture, and what steps to take.

## When should you stop?

- 4 Clear safety boundaries that tell you when to put down the tools and call a professional instead.

- 📌 This is a practical tenant guide, not a step-by-step electrical manual. If the wiring or connection point looks unsafe, unclear, damaged, or incomplete, do not improvise.





# The Short Answer

In Switzerland, the important distinction is between **bringing and mounting your own light fixture at an existing connection point** and **altering or repairing the apartment's fixed electrical installation**. That distinction matters enormously, because Swiss electrical rules become significantly stricter the moment a job goes beyond a simple fixture mount.

## ✓ Generally Allowed for Tenants

If there is an existing, usable ceiling connection point and the task is simply to mount a normal light fixture, this is generally something a tenant may handle in the rooms they personally occupy. You choose the lamp, you buy it, and you fit it to the existing point.

## ✗ Outside the Tenant's Remit

If the fixed installation is defective, unclear, damaged, or needs to be changed in any way, the job is no longer a simple tenant fixture install. If the connection point, hook, switch, or wiring is faulty, this becomes a landlord maintenance issue — and often an electrician issue as well.

The line between these two situations is what the rest of this guide helps you navigate with confidence.

# The Legal and Practical Framework

Knowing the rules helps you separate tenant tasks from landlord or electrician issues.

## Swiss Electrical Rules (ESTI)

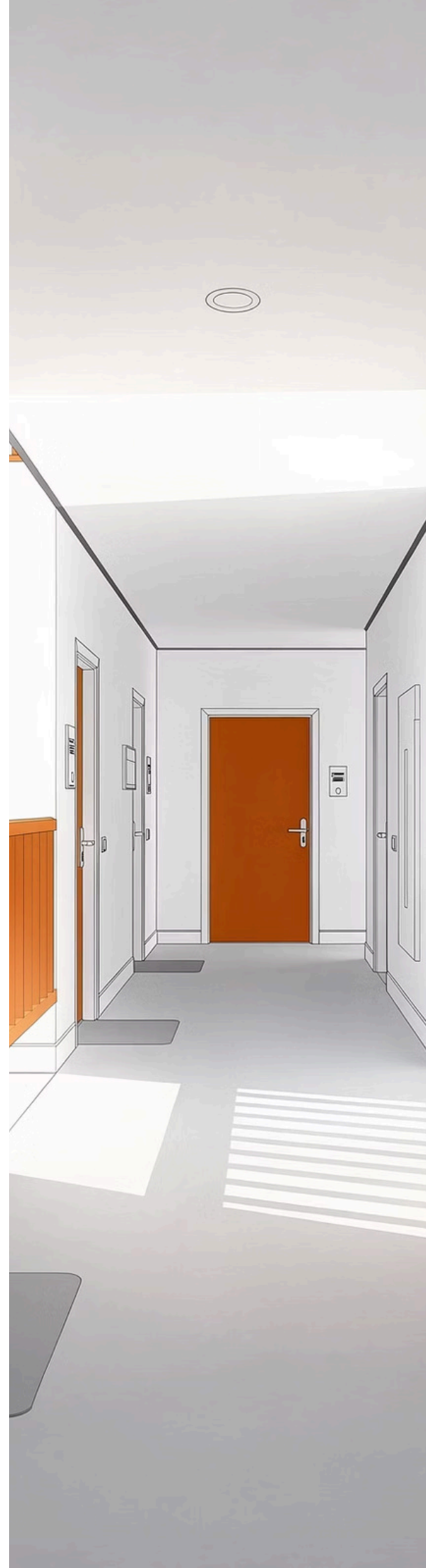
ESTI allows people without an installation permit to mount and remove light fixtures in the rooms they occupy. Once you need to repair, reconfigure, extend, or replace fixed wiring, you are outside that simple tenant-use case.

## Swiss Tenancy Guidance

Tenants usually handle minor issues themselves, but defects in the rented property should be reported to the landlord immediately. If a defect appears shortly after move-in, report it in writing and keep photos plus a clear description.

## Why This Matters for Ceiling Lights

A complete, usable ceiling point usually means the fixture is your responsibility. Broken hooks, damaged outlets, sparking switches, or exposed insulation are defects or safety issues to report.



# What Tenants Can Usually Do Themselves

The simple case — where a tenant may reasonably handle the job — is quite specifically defined. All of the following conditions need to be true before you proceed. Think of this as a checklist, not a suggestion: if any single item cannot be confirmed, the situation changes.

## 1 Existing connection point

There is an existing ceiling light connection point that was clearly intended for a fixture. It is not a bare wire tucked behind plaster or a makeshift arrangement.

## 2 Intact and sound installation

The installation appears mechanically intact and visually sound — no scorching, no cracks, no loose components, no unusual smells.

## 3 Fitting only — no modifications

The task is limited to fitting a normal light fixture to that existing point. No permanent changes to the apartment wiring are required under any circumstances.

## 4 Circuit can be safely isolated

You can identify the correct circuit breaker, switch it off, and verify the circuit is dead before touching anything. This step is non-negotiable.

📌 **A useful rule:** If the task stops being "attach my fixture to the existing point" and starts becoming "repair or modify the apartment's electrical installation" — stop. Moving a light point, adding a switch or outlet, replacing permanent wiring, or guessing through an old or confusing connection are all outside the tenant's permitted scope.

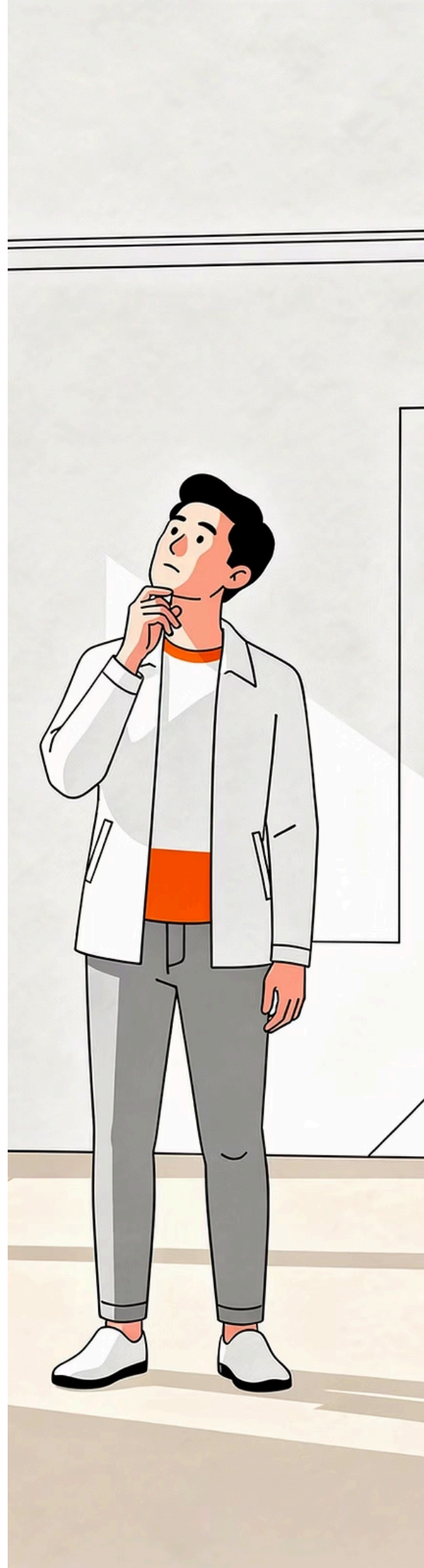


# Decision Table: Proceed, Report, or Get Help

Use this table to quickly judge whether a ceiling-light situation is usually yours to handle or needs landlord/electrician help under Swiss rules.

Situation	Usually your responsibility	Usually landlord / electrician territory
Complete, sound ceiling point; no lamp installed	✓ Yes	—
Mount your own fixture at the point	✓ Yes	—
Point is damaged, scorched, or unsafe	—	✓ Yes
Switch fails or breaker trips	—	✓ Yes
Need to change wiring or move point	—	✓ Yes
Can't confidently tell if it's safe	—	✓ Yes
Need temporary light on move-in day	Buy or use a floor lamp first	No immediate landlord task unless the ceiling point is defective

When in doubt, default to caution: a floor lamp costs far less than a mishandled electrical job.



# Safety Boundaries

Even if the simple fixture case is generally permitted under Swiss rules, this is still electrical work. The fact that it sits within what tenants may do does not make it without risk. There are circumstances where you should stop immediately, regardless of how straightforward the task appeared when you started.



## Stop and do not continue if:

- The insulation looks cracked, brittle, or perished
- You see scorching, discolouration, melted plastic, or loose metal parts
- The point is unstable and cannot safely carry a fixture's weight
- Moisture, bathroom conditions, or unusual transformer systems are involved
- The building is older and the connection type is unclear to you
- You do not know how to isolate and verify the circuit safely

## The Practical First Rule

If you are tired from moving, still unpacking boxes, rushing, or working by phone flashlight on move-in night — do not turn this into an emergency DIY job. Use a temporary lamp that evening and inspect the ceiling point properly in daylight when you are rested and thinking clearly.

## What This Guide Deliberately Does Not Do

This guide does not give wire-by-wire instructions, and that is intentional. The value here is in helping tenants make the right decision about which category their situation falls into: a straightforward fitting task, a landlord defect to report, or a job that requires a licensed electrician. The decision comes first. The technical steps, if appropriate, come afterwards.

# When It Is the Landlord's Problem

The landlord is responsible for maintaining the rented property in a usable and safe condition. If the apartment's fixed electrical installation is defective in any way, the landlord must be informed promptly — and in writing. Verbal reports are easily forgotten or disputed; written ones with photos are not.

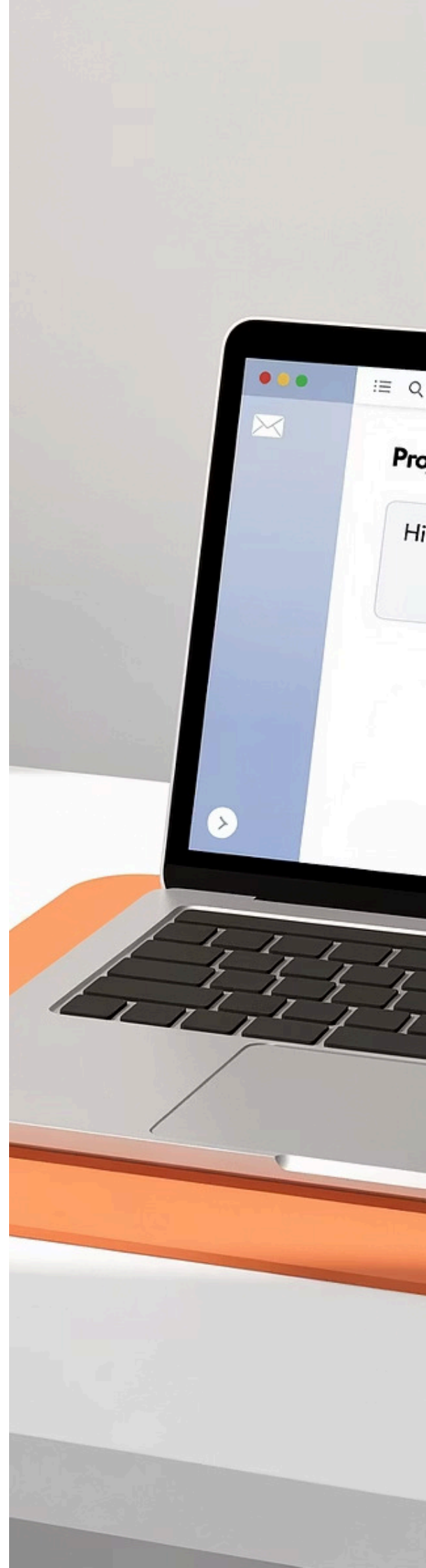
## Report immediately if:

- The ceiling connection point is broken, incomplete, or unsafe
- The room's switch does not function correctly
- The bracket, hook, or cover is missing where one should reasonably be present
- The breaker trips when the connection point is used
- The defect was visible at handover or discovered shortly after move-in

## Best practice after move-in

1. Photograph the connection point clearly, in good light
2. Photograph the room and switch if they are part of the issue
3. Email the landlord or property management the same day or as soon as possible
4. Keep the message factual and specific — describe what you see, not what you feel about it
5. If there is no response and the issue is more than minor inconvenience, follow up in writing again

Timing matters particularly if the defect was present at handover. Swiss tenancy rules set time limits on when defects discovered at move-in must be reported. Acting on the same day you notice something is always better than waiting — even if it feels like a small issue at the time.



# Sample Email to Landlord or Property Management

Use a factual, neutral message so the issue gets inspected and repaired quickly.

**Subject:** Defective ceiling light connection point in apartment at [address]

Hello,

I moved into the apartment at [address] on [date]. In the [room name], the ceiling light connection point appears to be [damaged / incomplete / unsafe / not usable].

I have attached photos.

Please arrange inspection and repair as soon as possible. If you need access times, I can make myself available on [days / times].

- **If the defect was present at handover**  
Say this clearly in the first paragraph. It helps establish the timeline for any later dispute.
- **If the situation is urgent or potentially dangerous**  
State the safety concern in the first sentence. Keep it direct if the switch sparks, smells burnt, or trips the breaker.
- **Maintain a neutral tone throughout**  
Ask for action, not a debate. Calm, factual wording with photos is usually more effective.



# Useful Swiss Vocabulary

Knowing the correct German terms helps when reading leases, speaking to a Hausverwaltung, or describing electrical issues.

German Term	English Meaning	Why It Helps
<i>Leuchte / Beleuchtungskörper</i>	Light fixture	Used in Swiss electrical regulations.
<i>Hausverwaltung</i>	Property management	Your main contact for defects.
<i>Hauswart</i>	Building caretaker / superintendent	Helpful for building-specific issues.
<i>Sicherung / Leitungsschutzschalter</i>	Fuse / circuit breaker	Safety vocabulary before any work.
<i>Mangel</i>	Defect	Key term in tenancy complaints.
<i>Wohnungsübergabe / Abnahmeprotokoll</i>	Handover / handover report	Evidence the defect pre-dated tenancy.

If your German is limited, these terms still help you recognise them in documents and correspondence.



# Sources

This guide draws on three primary sources of Swiss authority on the relevant rules. Each covers a distinct but overlapping aspect of the situation tenants face with ceiling light connection points.

## ESTI

The Swiss Federal Inspectorate for Heavy Current Installations. Provides guidance on the revised NIV (Niederspannungs-Installationsverordnung) and specifically on what people without an installation permit may do regarding light fixtures in rooms they occupy themselves. The primary source for what is and is not permitted under Swiss electrical rules.

## ch.ch

The official Swiss government information portal. Covers defects in rented property, landlord notification obligations, and the steps tenants should take when a defect appears at or after move-in. The authoritative source for the tenancy side of this guide's framework.

## Mieterverband

The Swiss Tenants' Association. Provides practical guidance aimed directly at renters on reporting defects, documenting problems correctly, and understanding their rights and obligations when something goes wrong in a rented property.

These sources were current as of early 2026. When the situation is unclear or the installation appears unsafe, the guidance of a licensed electrician supersedes everything written here.

# Final Practical Recommendation

Most of the confusion around ceiling lamps in Swiss rental apartments comes from not knowing which of two quite different situations you are in. Once you know which one applies, the right next step is usually obvious.

## Missing fixture — normal setup task

If your apartment is simply missing a light fixture but the ceiling connection point is complete, intact, and safe, treat this as a normal part of settling in. Choose a lamp, buy it, isolate the circuit, and fit it. This is within what Swiss rules permit tenants to do in their own rooms.

## Damaged or unclear point — report it

If the electrical point itself is damaged, incomplete, or unsafe in any way, treat it as a defect and report it to your landlord or property management in writing, with photos, as soon as possible. Do not attempt to use or work around a defective installation.

## Not sure which category? — Don't guess

If you genuinely cannot tell which situation you are in, the right answer is not to proceed on instinct. It is daylight, a proper look at the connection point, and either a message to your landlord or a call to a licensed electrician. That is not overcaution — it is the sensible choice.

📄 *This guide reflects Swiss federal rules and public tenancy guidance current as of early 2026. Building conditions and tenancy arrangements vary. If the installation is unsafe or unclear, use a licensed electrician.*

