

Musty-Smell Self-Check — Dubai Apartment

Six checks, in order, before you buy anything. A musty smell is almost always a moisture problem before it is a mould problem — the fix starts with finding where the moisture comes from.

	CHECK	WHAT THE RESULT POINTS TO	DONE
1	Is the smell strongest in the first minutes after the AC starts?	AC service first: coils, condensate drain pan, ducts.	☐
2	Is the bathroom extractor actually pulling air? Hold a sheet of paper to the grille.	If it does not stick, moist air has nowhere to go — start with ventilation.	☐
3	Is laundry drying indoors daily?	That alone can hold a bedroom above 60% relative humidity — the ceiling Dubai Municipality sets.	☐
4	Any water stains, bubbling paint or soft gypsum board?	Find the leak before anything else — damp gypsum smells musty long before it stains.	☐
5	Is the smell in one wardrobe or corner only?	Check whether it backs onto an exterior wall: cool surface + still air = condensation point. Leave the doors ajar.	☐
6	Just back after weeks away?	Air the place out fully. If the smell returns within days, it is active moisture, not stale air.	☐

The number Dubai actually sets: DM-HSD-GU142-MRC2 (12 May 2025), section 10-1 — keep indoor relative humidity below 60%, ideally between 30 and 50%. Sustained time above 60% is what feeds mould; a single reading cannot show it. If the smell keeps coming back, the useful next step is a continuous humidity record from the spots where it starts.

Primary source: DM-HSD-GU142-MRC2 — Technical Guidelines for Mould Remediation and Control (dm.gov.ae/documents/hsd-gu142/). Sensors do not detect mould — they measure the conditions that permit it. Nothing in this document is medical or legal advice.
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