

The Roommate Relationship

One of the most rewarding aspects of residence hall living is the opportunity to establish close friendships with people from a variety of backgrounds. Whether your roommate is a close friend from home or someone you are meeting for the first time, your roommate relationship can work and even be fun. Most people enjoy the company of others, and your roommate can be someone with whom to share ideas, interests, and good times.

However, sharing a room is a new experience and can sometimes result in a few misunderstandings. Getting to know and understand your roommate(s) early is very important! This first step will lead to better communication. Developing a good relationship early on may help you to approach your roommate(s) when you discover an issue on which you do not agree. Also, be aware that your roommate(s) may approach you for similar reasons. Avoiding problems does not work.

Roommates do not need to be best friends, but it helps if they are fair, honest, and considerate towards one another. Every resident needs to take responsibility for his/her own behavior and to share responsibly for the roommate relationship. To have a good roommate, be a good roommate. Getting along usually requires work, but the benefit of establishing good relationships makes the work worthwhile. Even if a lifelong friendship is not established, learning to live with one another's differences is a valuable part of your education.

Starting Off Right

You and Your Roommate

Even if you've shared a room with a sibling, living with a roommate is an exciting and unique experience. By following a few simple guidelines, you can create a mutually beneficial environment and relationship.

Take Time to Adjust

Give your roommate a chance. Don't rely on first impressions. Talk about your hometowns, interests, families, and your impressions of Tulane and New Orleans.

Lay Down the Ground Rules

Discuss how you will keep the room livable for both of you. Determine which furnishings are to be shared and what is personal and off-limits to your roommate. Always ask before borrowing anything.

Studying or Socializing?

The issue of whether your room is a study hall or a place to socialize can become a major point of conflict. Most people like the room to be a balance of the two. Do you and your roommate have compatible study habits? Do you like studying alone or with classmates? Discuss this important topic early in your relationship, and remember, studying should be the priority in most cases.

Talk it Over

When you and your roommate have a conflict, talk about it when it occurs. If you have a complaint, tell your roommate; don't whine to your neighbors. Your roommate may not know you are upset and is probably happy to compromise if informed respectfully.

Roommate Agreements

Communication is essential to a positive, working relationship with any roommate or suitemate. To facilitate this process, it is important to address potential problem areas. By discussing the issues, roommates and suitemates will begin to develop the kind of relationship that is conducive to positive academic, community, and personal growth. This process will also reduce or eliminate the possibility of conflict and increase communication between roommates and suitemates. All residents must complete a Roommate or Suitemate Agreement during the first few weeks of class.

Roommates: Tips & Hints

Ten Tips for Great Roommate Relationships

- 1.** Get to know each one another. You've got your first opportunity to make a new friend. Take the time to ask and answer questions – about family, hobbies, academic interests, etc
- 2.** Talk it out. Communication is the key in building any successful relationship. Sit down and talk about habits, preferences, moods, and values. Even if your roommate is your “best friend,” you will be surprised to find out some things you did not know about him/her. If something is bothering you, the sooner you talk about it, the sooner it can be resolved.
- 3.** Be open and friendly. You and your roommate may not have the same taste in clothing or music, but you likely share some of the same concerns and apprehensions. Be the first to step out of your comfort zone.
- 4.** Be understanding. Everyone has bad days. Remember that you may not always be aware of the issues your roommate is dealing with, but there's most likely a good reason for his or her actions. A sympathetic ear might help a lot.
- 5.** Give each one another space. Togetherness is great, but you and your roommate both need time alone. If that doesn't pop up naturally, talk about it.
- 6.** Ask before you borrow. Suddenly you have twice the wardrobe or twice the music! But everyone has a different comfort level when it comes to lending belongings. Asking first helps avoid misunderstandings.
- 7.** Define “neat.” Whether you are a self-proclaimed “neat-freak” or a slob, you have another person's feelings to consider. With a little give and take, you can each adjust accordingly and make your home comfortable.
- 8.** Discuss visitation. Talk about when it is and is not okay to have guests in the room.
- 9.** Schedule study times. Let your roommate know in advance when you have a big exam or paper coming up. He or she will be aware that you need some quiet time. A roomful of friends when you are stressed may lead to a bad score or grade and hurt feelings.
- 10.** Pick a co-curricular activity to share. There is nothing like having something in common to care or talk about. If you aren't involved in any of the same activities, you are likely to see each other only at bedtime. You may feel like you're sleeping in a room with a stranger!

Other Helpful Hints to Make it Work

Establish Ground Rules: Roommates need to establish ground rules regarding sharing belongings, cleaning the room, using the phone, paying bills, entertaining guests, and studying. Knowing where your roommate stands on these matters prevents future disagreements.

Discuss potential areas of conflict:

- Be open to compromises.
- If your roommate is doing something you don't like, don't repress your feelings. It's usually better to air gripes than to store up a lot of petty grievances, which lead to a major blow up.
- Be considerate of your roommate's privacy. Never assume your roommate is just like you. You are both individuals.
- Always ask permission. Don't just use the iron or eat the cookies, even if you think it might be O.K.
- Appreciate your roommate. Praise, respect, and courtesy are the foundations for any positive relationship.
- Avoid being judgmental. You are not your roommate's keeper.
- Be honest and assertive, and stand up for yourself.
- Ask your Resident Assistant or Resident Director for advice. They are trained to help mediate conflicts.

You and your roommate are individuals with particular interests, goals, likes and dislikes. You may not find it necessary to share every aspect of college life with your roommate. If conflicts do arise, speak with your roommate first; talk through the problem before it becomes a major conflict. If, after talking with your roommate, you still can't resolve the conflict, talk with your Resident Assistant or Resident Director. Your hall staff is experienced in dealing with roommate problems and can give you some sound advice. Remember, though, you owe your roommate the courtesy of speaking with him or her first.