

Roommates 101

For new students, having a roommate may be a major lifestyle shift that is as exciting as it is nerve-racking, but be encouraged! Some of your lifelong friends may come through your college roommates. Here are some things that may help you to live in harmony with your roommates and turn your room into a haven away from home.

The First Week

- **Introduce Yourself:** Nothing can be more awkward than sharing a living and sleeping space with someone you've never spoken to. So, get to know each other! The more you know each other and find points in common, the easier it's going to be to learn to share your space. Bonus: Lifelong friendships are built on common ground.
- **Share Expectations:** Schedule a get-to-know-you discussion and begin to share expectations for the room. This is necessary even if you selected your own roommate and already know them well. Knowing someone well and living with them are two very different things. Here are some topics you will want to solidify:
 - **Schedules:** Compare class and work schedules with your roommates. Your first class may not start until noon each day, but your roommate may need to be up by 6. Knowing each other's schedules will help you to know how to schedule your own time so you are not disturbing each other's sleep or study.
 - **Cleaning:** Set up a room job schedule. Whether you rotate room responsibilities, or keep them the same for the whole semester, stick with it. If you have agreed to a schedule, it's your responsibility to get it done. You also need to discuss each other's expectations of cleanliness. Some people can't focus on homework if the room is a mess; others don't mind if the dishes haven't been done for two weeks. Agree on your room's definition of cleanliness and abide by it.
 - **Guests:** Establish when are good, and not so good times for having friends in your room. You may need to reevaluate during busier times of the semester. If possible, give your roommates a little notice before having guests come over—even if it's just a text message.
 - **Sharing:** Although you might not have a problem sharing your fruit snacks and shampoo, some people might. Establish those things that you and your roommates are willing to share, and always get permission before using something that isn't yours.

- **Organization:** Establish where you will keep your things and divide your room and bathroom spaces evenly.

When There is a Disagreement

- **Pray:** Prayer is often overlooked when stresses are high, but it's one of the best things you can do. Pray that God will give you the right words to effectively communicate your expectations and needs.
- **Communicate:** One thing that can complicate any living situation is lack of communication. If you're upset or become frustrated by something, speak with your roommates regarding your concerns. Your roommates can't read your mind, so you have to tell them what's bothering you. Communicating is being respectful to one another, not criticizing one another. Choose your words carefully and make sure that when you do have concerns, you voice them in a way that won't seem as if you are attacking them. Communication includes praise and compliments; so be sure to give each other positive feedback as well. Here are some steps that may help as you confront and restore:
 - Stay calm.
 - Schedule a face-to-face meeting. Don't text or leave notes.
 - List what you want to talk about prior to the meeting.
 - Stay in the present as much as possible. Avoid talking about things that have already been resolved.
 - Talk to one another and work towards a compromise or agreement.
 - Look at what you can **all** do differently next time.
 - Don't yell or accuse.
 - When you are discussing a problem, do not interrupt each other. Discuss things in a respectful tone, but communicate what your wants or needs are.
 - Remember that if you don't confront issues that are bothering you, the fault ultimately lies with you.
- **Compromise:** Compromising is essential whenever two or more people live together. Everyone has different likes and dislikes and it takes work to blend lifestyles toward the goal of a comfortable living situation. Inevitably, you will need to come to a compromise about certain issues such as chores, lights out time, noise, music, etc. Compromise does not mean giving in to someone, or arguing about a situation, but rather coming to an agreement together in which you both agree to the terms.
- **Keep it to yourself:** Social media should not be used to vent about a roommate issue. This will cause more hurt between you and your roommate. If you need help, go to your Residence Assistant, your Residence Manager, or someone you know will give you godly advice.
- **Be kind:** Be sensitive to your roommates and their moods. You never know what may be going on in their life, so be kind even if they are being unkind to you.
- **Set aside your pride:** If something annoys you, take a breath and ask yourself if it's worth getting into a huge fight. Petty little arguments add up and resentment builds; learn to let go of the little things that aren't worth it.

All the Time

- **Be Respectful:** Remember that you're not the only one on a schedule, so be considerate, respectful, and courteous of your roommates.
 - Use headphones when you listen to music or talking on the phone.
 - Be conscious of others' privacy when FaceTiming.
 - Respect personal space—both physical and emotional.
 - Clean up after yourself.
 - Be quiet when they are sleeping.
- **Take Care of Yourself:**
 - Sleep deprivation is a major contributor to anxiety and depression. Make sure you are setting a good schedule for yourself and keep to it!
 - Maintain good personal hygiene to fight sickness and smell. 😊
 - You should shower, brush your teeth, and apply deodorant every day.
 - Laundry (including towels and bed sheets) should be washed at least once a week.
 - Always wash your hands after using the bathroom.
 - Keep your belongings picked up and organized. This will save you a LOT of time and trouble—it's easier to focus on your life when you aren't stressed about cleaning up or looking for your things!

Remember: When you are at work and school, you are constantly "on." But when you are in your room, that's when you want to relax and be able to put your guard down. Most people, when they come home, they want to be able to switch "off." Remember that there are going to be times when your roommate will not want to "entertain" you. Don't read anything into it if your roommate is quiet.