

## Benefits of Living with a Roommate

Sharing a room is a new experience. It has its challenges. Yet, your roommate relationship can work, even be a fun and rewarding experience. Living with a roommate can give you an opportunity to:

- **Learn about yourself**  
Living with a roommate 24/7, may give you an opportunity to really see yourself; you may be stronger than you think or perhaps you have a tendency toward selfishness. The way you treat your roommate sets the standard for others. It also reflects a great deal about your personality. This experience may help you take a look at yourself and identify your strengths and weaknesses.
- **Learn how to share space and possessions**  
Living with a roommate is an excellent practice to develop skills that you may need in other relationships in future, most notably marriage or cohabitation.
- **Experience how to run a house**  
Learning how to balance school and other responsibilities (e.g. maintaining tidiness and cleanliness of the room, doing shopping, etc.) will help you develop life-long skills.
- **Learn how to ask for help and give help**  
Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, as it is often assumed today. Taking responsibility of yourself in a new living situation is certainly good. However, do not put pressure on yourself to be entirely self-sufficient. Asking for help when you are in need, and providing your roommate with help whenever possible is more praiseworthy.
- **Learn how to be flexible**  
The experience of living with people from a variety of backgrounds helps us develop the ability to respect differences, accept things the way they are, and see the world from a different perspective.

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# RELATIONSHIPS WITH ROOMMATES

Student Development  
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The transition from high school to university is one of the biggest changes one will ever experience. It is exciting, and also has its challenges. You leave your home, family and friends behind, to live in a new environment, and at the same time, you are expected to learn how to live in the same room with a complete stranger or strangers. When people like each other they assume that they are more likely to be compatible. This is not a wise assertion because just liking each other will not suffice. Living together involves such virtues as tolerance, respect and empathy, as well as the ability to compromise with others. At its heart, there must be a sense of courtesy. In other words, sharing a room necessitates attributes that go far beyond that mutual sympathy; the attributes that, in the long term, may help one develop a sort of social competence, which usually requires time and effort. Your experience of living with a roommate may help you develop your social competence, therefore, the benefits of establishing good relationships make the work and time devoted worthwhile. This social competence not only involves the ability to get along with a roommate; it benefits you tremendously when you need to share a living space with someone else, including your lover, spouse, and colleagues; and helps you learn how to cooperate, negotiate and compromise with people from all walks of life. How you get on with your roommate, moreover, can have a great impact on your quality of life at university. Given the importance of this relationship, we have compiled tips for keeping your roommate bonds strong. Here are some clues to facilitate this process.

### Helpful Hints for Successful Roommate Relationships

- **Get to know each other**

You will probably spend a lot of your time with your roommate. This can be your first opportunity to make a new friend. A good way to get to know one another is to simply ask non-intrusive questions: talk about birthdays, favorite dishes, taste in music, habits, interests, and families.

- **Communicate**

The key to any successful living situation is to maintain open communication. Negotiating issues that you consider important, and potential problem areas, in the very beginning can help you and your roommate avoid misunderstandings in the future and thus eliminate the possibility of conflict.

Some examples of concerns:

- **Tidiness, hygiene and cleanliness of the room:** Talk about the division of work/labor, joint responsibilities, and come to an agreement on a few basic rules to keep the room clean and tidy.
- **Personal habits and attributes:** What are the most annoying actions and behaviors which upset you? How do you respond to conflicts? Do you take an aggressive response or keep silent? Do you communicate your thoughts once you have calmed down?

- **Study schedule and study habits:** When and where do you like to study? Do you want your room or the library to be your preferred study area? If both of you prefer to study in the room, it's probably best to let your roommate know in advance when you have an exam, assignment, project, or paper coming up.
- **Visitation rules:** Talk about visiting days and hours, rules to be observed by visitors, or other concerns.
- **Sharing and borrowing/lending belongings:** Are you prepared to share items such as TV, USB, stereo, computer, food, etc.? How do you feel about borrowing or lending clothes? It is useful to set up a few basic rules both of you agree to observe.
- Decide on your sleeping schedules.
- Set up rules for using the air-conditioning.

- **Respect personal space**

Togetherness is great, but you and your roommate both need time and space away from one another. If that doesn't pop up naturally, talk about it.

### Additional Tips

- Don't leave the toilets and bathroom for someone else to clean up after you!
- Avoid occupying the bathroom for a long time!
- Keep your personal belongings in your part of the room!
- Don't invite strangers into your room!
- Don't store up a lot of grievances! Bring the problems to your roommate's attention instead. Let your roommate know that you appreciate the small things s/he does.
- Avoid relying on indirect methods of communication like upsetting hand-written notes, yielding, or sarcasm when you have a complaint. Tell your roommate about the problem in person!
- Don't go into discussion when you feel tired or angry!
- If you are wrong, admit it!
- Make an effort to be tolerant, respectful, and considerate!
- Don't give advice unless you are asked! Even if you are asked try not to give advice especially on important matters.
- Make an effort to get to know one another!
- To maintain peace in a shared room, roommates do not need to be best friends. Form realistic expectations!
- You and your roommate may have different cultures, different lifestyles, or different belief systems. Respect your roommate's differences!
- If conflicts arise, speak with your roommate first! If you still cannot resolve the conflict, ask someone who can act as a mediator to help you (e.g. dorm manager).