

Managing Roommate Relationships

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Living with one or more roommates can be challenging, especially if you've never had to share a living space with someone. Whether your roommates are randoms or they're people you know, living with other people can be a blast... and it can be rough.

Connect before coming to campus. If possible, reach out to your future roommate(s) via social media and start planning your future room. Decide who's bringing what. If you don't know your roommate(s), get to know each other a bit. Knowing a little about the person/people you're going to live with lowers everyone's anxiety.

Establish room norms. When it comes to living with others, it's important to have some agreed-upon norms. For instance, talk about when each of you will usually be up in the morning and when you typically go to bed. How do you feel about your roommate having people stay over? How clean or dirty do you prefer the room to be, and who will be in charge of which cleaning tasks? Will you share food? Are there certain activities that you would prefer your roommate not do in your shared room? If these conversations feel intimidating, that's because they definitely can be, especially if you aren't used to advocating for your needs. Involving your RA can be helpful in establishing a roommate agreement or mediating disagreements.

Conflict is inevitable. When you share a living space with someone, there are bound to be disagreements. It's impossible for two people to have exactly the same habits, preferences, and values. Whether you and your roommate(s) talk about your differences, you are guaranteed to have conflict. Coming to accept conflict as a normal part of living with others can actually relieve some of the pressure of trying to have the perfect roommate experience.

Learn about each other's culture. When roommates come from different cultures, the differences in values, experiences, and traditions may cause misunderstandings or even conflict. Learning about how your roommate(s) grew up might help you understand some of these differences. Even if you share cultural identities like race, sexual orientation, spirituality/religion, etc., you may differ in how closely you adhere to cultural norms and how closely your experiences align.

You don't have to hang out all the time. Because the college experience is often romanticized, many people expect to be best friends with their roommate(s). But even if you and your roommate are good friends, it's normal to not spend ALL of your time together. In fact, it's healthy to develop relationships with people in a variety of social circles.

Sharing is caring. Be conscious of how you use shared items like the T.V., refrigerator, game systems. For instance, it's not fair to binge watch your favorite shows constantly- your roommate(s) may want to watch something else. Make room in the fridge for other's food. If you decide to share food/drink, make sure that you're not the one who always eats the last slice, drinks the last sip, etc.. Share the air and don't blast your music all the time- let your roommate choose what gets played. Keeping in mind your roommates' needs makes living together way more pleasant!