

CONVERSATION

Even if you already know your roommate from home, it is important to take some time together to examine each other's personal styles and preferences for living. Following are some possible topics/questions to begin a conversation with your roommate:

- My home life is...
- I plan to major in...
- My friends would describe me as ...
- What I would like to tell you about myself is...
- What I would like to tell you about my family is...
- The grades I hope to get this semester are...
- Something that is very important to me is...
- I feel that having men/women in the room is...
- I feel that overnight guests are... weekend guests are...
- You can tell I'm in a good mood because... bad mood because...
- Things that really annoy me are...
- When I'm angry I...
- I usually let people know I'm angry by...
- I usually deal with conflict in the following way...
- My idea of relaxing is...
- One thing I really enjoy doing is...
- The activities/clubs I plan to be involved in are...
- I feel that drinking alcohol is...
- I feel that taking drugs is...
- I need to have lights out by...
- How important is it for the room to be neat?
- What is okay to borrow? What isn't? Do you need to ask first?
- It appears to me that an important similarity between us may be...
- I think an important difference between us is...
- I think we might have to compromise on...
- One thing I believe that I can learn from living with you is...
- I think something I came to realize more clearly about myself in this discussion is...

More formal roommate contracts are available to help you in your living situation. Please contact your RA or CA or any one of the Residence Life Offices listed on the front of this brochure for more information and resources.

Top Ten Ways to Get Along With Your Roommate

10. Be honest
9. Deal with conflicts in a timely fashion
8. When something is bothering you, deal with it up front
7. Avoid backstabbing and gossiping
6. Try at first to resolve the issue by involving as few people as possible
5. Remember that it's not always WHAT you say, but HOW you say it
4. Assume nothing...ASK
3. When help is needed, go to your RA or CA or Residence Life office for assistance
2. Remember that you are dealing with human beings with feelings, rights, and responsibilities
1. Remember that YOU are one of those human beings!!

Office of Residence Life

The Pennsylvania State University
Office of Residence Life
135 Boucke Building
University Park, PA 16802
Phone: 814-863-1710
Fax: 814-863-2463

Office of Residence Life

The Pennsylvania State University

How to Live with your Roommate



East Halls
134 Johnston Commons...865-5375

Pollock Halls
127 Pollock Commons...865-6503

South Halls
23 Redifer Commons...865-8322

West Halls
113 Waring Commons...865-5951

North Halls
105 Warnock Commons...865-2890

University Apartments and Suites
White Course Community Center...865-6025
120 B Nittany Hall...865-0633

Eastview Terrace
114 Brill Hall...865-5490

<http://www.sa.psu.edu/rl/>

On Campus Living: A Different Dynamic

Growing up, most of us lived with people very much like us: *our families*. After many years of living together, we adapted to habits of our family members, even if they were different than our own habits. After all, these people were our families. We *had* to get along with each other.

Living on campus offers a different social dynamic. The people you live with now are, most likely, not the people you will be living with for the rest of your life. While some students do develop lifelong relationships with their college roommates, others live with the same person or persons for years, and barely know them.

Although college living experiences are temporary, they offer students many different avenues for personal growth and understanding, and for building interpersonal skills which will help them build relationships after their college years have passed.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TIPS

Use Assertive “I” Messages

Share feelings
“I feel...”

Request specific behaviors
“I would like...”

Practice Active Listening

Use clarifying questions
“What do you mean by...”
“How can I help in...”

Paraphrase thoughts
“What I think I hear you saying is...”
“So you would prefer that...”

- *Different perceptions are O.K. — agree to disagree*
- *Be honest, open and direct*
- *Address concerns in a timely manner*

How can you enhance the positive influence you and your roommate have on each other?

1. At the very beginning of your relationship, inventory your habits and preferences: tidy or casual, stay up late or get up early, smoking or non-smoking, punk rock, classical jazz or hip hop, study alone or with others, etc.
2. Work out strategies of compromise for your differences.



Communication is key to any relationship. Communicate with your Roommate!

3. When you are irritated (or pleased) with your roommate, express it directly and immediately. Don't store up resentments and explode when he or she commits a minor offense. Don't discuss your roommate problems with others when you haven't discussed them with your roommate.

4. Recognize that there are at least two sides to every story. Hear your roommate out. Try to see things from his/her perspective rather than jumping to conclusions.
5. Most problems can be resolved or alleviated. If you can't work out the situation with your roommate—and you've actually tried doing so instead of assuming that it can't be done—ask for assistance from someone who will be objective, such as a mutual friend who is not directly affected by the situation, a resident assistant or community assistant, or coordinator of your building. This person can meet with you and your roommate to help you resolve the problem.

Living with a roommate can be an excellent experience in learning more about yourself and about how to communicate and relate effectively to others. Knowing how to assert yourself and how to empathize with others are valuable skills in all relationships—family, social, romantic, school and work.

* Implementing a Student Development Model in Residence Halls, M. Lee Upcraft (Ed.). Pennsylvania State University, 1976.

4^C's of ROOMMATING

- ▶ Collaboration ▶ Compromise
- ▶ Cooperation ▶ Communication

THE INFLUENCE OF ROOMMATES ON ONE ANOTHER IS GREAT

Your roommate will likely:

- Challenge your confidence
- Encourage you to become more tolerant
- Facilitate changes in your attitude
- Affect your study habits. If you enter a room and your roommate is studying, chances are 3 in 4 that you will also sit down and study. If he/she is not studying, chances are only 1 in 3 that you will sit and study.*
- Affect your grade point average:

Roommate conflict and incompatibility are correlated positively with academic difficulty and low achievement.

*Likewise, roommate compatibility is associated with high achievement.**

High achievers bring up low achievers, the reverse is generally not true.

If you are struggling with a roommate issue, have questions, or need further assistance, please contact your RA or CA or any one of the Residence Life offices listed on the front of this brochure.