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COLLEGE ROOMMATES 101

By dan the roommate man

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"Don't expect to be best friends with your roommate, just settle for not killing each other..."

"You would not believe how weird my roommate is..."

"My roommate from hell did it again..."

Yes, I heard all the roommate stories before I started college. The majority of them were about how awful roommates were and how it was impossible to get along. I had a major case of roommate phobia before I started college and I was convinced that I would get a psychopath for a roommate and everything would go downhill from there. To my surprise, my roommate and I became best friends and we decided to live together again this year.

I know it is definitely rare that my roommate and I ended up best friends, but the truth is, everyone can learn to get along with their roommates. It doesn't require that the two of you become best friends, or even friends at all. You just need to practice common courtesy. Here are a few helpful tips and guidelines:

Dan's Roommate Survival Guide

1. The first thing you and your roommate should do is to sit down and write a living contract together. List rules for the room that the both of you agree to follow. For example, quiet hours, telephone calls, borrowing each other's things, having friends sleep over, etc. Writing the contract together ensures that both of you understand what is agreed upon. Also, when one of you breaks one of the rules, there is written proof that the contract was violated, as opposed to the two of you arguing day in and day out about what the rules were in the first place.

2. After the contract is written, try your best to follow it. When you break one of the rules, apologize and acknowledge that you broke a rule. Don't pretend it didn't happen or hope that your roommate didn't notice. They probably did, and they will get upset with you if you pretend it didn't happen. Also, when

your roommate breaks one of the rules, be forgiving, especially if you've broken a few rules yourself. Don't hold grudges and keep tabs of when your roommate broke the rules and bring it up every time the two of you have a fight. This is extremely annoying and your roommate will end up doing the same. Then the two of you will have hour-long fights as both of you bring up everything that the other person did wrong since the beginning.

3. Be considerate. If you spilled something, clean it up. Wash the dishes after you use them, especially if the dishes aren't yours. Don't take things without permission. If you see your roommate studying, even if it isn't quiet hours, turn down the volume. Being considerate is contagious and your roommate will do the same for you.

4. And the most important tip of all, communicate with your roommate. If something is bothering you,

don't expect your roommate to figure it out. Just tell him or her what it is and try to work out something so that it isn't bothering you anymore. It is so easy to just stop speaking to each other when something goes wrong, but it won't get resolved that way. Communication is the key!

I know that there are some really bad roommates out there and these guidelines won't help everyone. For those people, I recommend that you talk to your Resident Advisor as soon as possible and tell him/her your situation. Your RA's are paid to help you, so don't hesitate to go to them for support. They will let you know if it is possible to change rooms and/or roommates and what the proper procedure is.

Roommates are really nothing to be afraid of. They are people just like you. Chances are, even if you and your roommate are extremely different, you can still end up being friends. They are going to be a big part of your school experience, so make an effort to get along. And who knows? Maybe you will get lucky and you and your roommate will have a best friend for life—bridesmaid/ best man at your wedding—name your children after each other kind of relationship. Good luck!

dan the roommate man www.roommateexpress.com

Consider A Roommate

By Kyle Thomas Haley

If living expenses are eating up your budget, one of the most popular solutions is to find one or more roommates to share them. Rent for a multiple-bedroom apartment is usually not significantly higher than that of a single bedroom or studio unit. So actually, with a roommate to share the expenses, you're able to live much more cheaply.

There are many places where you can find people who are also looking for roommates. Check the classified section of your newspaper and with acquaintances. Post a notice at your church, at work, or, if you're a college student, on a bulletin board at school. There are also several websites which focus on finding roommates and living accommodations.

Choose Your Roommate Wisely . . .

You must keep in mind that you'll be living closely with this person (or persons) so there are several things you should consider when choosing your roommate:

- Make sure that your schedules and interests will compliment each other. If you like a quiet life and your roommate loves to invite people in for impromptu parties, it's probably not a good mix. · How you live is another issue that should be considered. If you're a neat freak and your prospective roommate is a slob, there will be problems.
- If you're a pet owner it's important to find someone who shares your love for animals.
- Be sure and specify whether you wish to room with a smoker or non-smoker.
- If you plan to share shopping and cooking responsibilities choose a person who likes the same types of foods you do.

These are just a few of the issues that must be resolved if you intend to live in harmony with other people. Take the time to get to know a little about the person with whom you intend to share a home. It will prevent a lot of difficulty later.

Agree On the Rules From the Start . . .

1. Choosing a location:

If you have already chosen a roommate, or roommates, and are looking for an apartment, be sure you only consider locations that are convenient for all of you.

2. All roommates should be included on the lease.

This will prevent anyone being left "holding the bag" if one of the roommates decides to make other living arrangements. 3. Decide how the bills will be divided.

How the rent, utilities, phone bills, etc., will be divided is extremely important. While heat, water and electricity are usually divided equally, other bills can be divided according to usage.

For example, if one roommate has a larger bedroom and a private bath, while the others share a communal bath and have smaller rooms, this should be taken into account when determining what percentage each pays for rent.

And, while the basic cost of the phone bill should be shared by all who use it, personal toll calls should be the responsibility of whoever made them.

If there are Internet and cable bills, you can hardly expect someone who doesn't use a computer at

home to share the Internet charges.

Be sure and put all of these arrangements in writing so there is no question or dispute later.

It's a very good idea for each roommate to set up one of the utility accounts (electricity, gas, etc.) in his/her name.

4. Decide how housekeeping chores will be divided and put it in writing.

While this may seem like a lot to worry about, you and your roommates will get along better if everyone knows what's expected from the start. Take the time to iron these things out at the beginning to prevent later dissension and hard feelings ~ you'll have a much greater chance of living together happily and harmoniously if you do.

Kyle Thomas Haley has been helping people relocate on the Internet since 1999 with Apartment and Relocation Websites:

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