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HOW NOT TO KILL YOUR NEW COLLEGE ROOMMATE

By dan the roommate man

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Getting to Know You.....

10:00 p.m.: You've finished your schoolwork for the evening. You neatly stack your books on your desk, fold and put away clothing, shut off the lights, slip into your neatly made bed, and drift off to sleep.

11:30 p.m.: You're jolted out of your peaceful dream by loud heavy metal and bright lights. Could it be morning already? No such luck. Rather, it seems your party-loving roommate has just arrived home from — surprise, surprise — a party (for the sixth night in a row) and is just now starting her homework. You watch in amazement (and frustration) as she simultaneously powers up her computer, dances to the music filling your small room, and discards her clothes and books on the floor. "Hey!" she yells over the music, noticing you for the first time. "What's up?" she asks, seemingly unaware that you were fast asleep.

You flop back onto your bed, put your pillow over your head and groan. "How am I ever going to get through the year?" you wonder.

Scenes like this are not unusual. Getting along with a roommate is a real concern, and one you may be facing for the first time. If you're a bookworm who goes to bed early and your roomie is a party animal who just gets going at midnight, sharing the same quarters may not be easy. But that doesn't mean the two of you can't get along.

The Good News Perhaps the most important lessons you'll learn in college are the ones you learn outside the classroom. Figuring out how to live with someone involves respecting differences, sharing, being courteous, accepting others for who they are, and much more. You'll find that sharing space builds character.

While most freshmen do miss the privacy of their homes, they also find comfort in sharing company with others who are experiencing the same issues — difficult courses, living away from home, balancing

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school work and social life, and a whole lot more. In fact, while there are many alternatives for roommates who don't get along, most do stick it out, and solve their problems by talking it out.

The Talking Cure Keeping lines of communication open is essential. Before you even step foot in your dorm, give your roommate a call and find out who you'll be living with for the next year. Here are some tips for getting off to a good start:

Discuss important issues and establish rules. If you can't study with music on, then come to an agreement about quiet hours. If she likes to have lots of friends in the room all the time, and you don't, make a schedule so that you can both enjoy the room at different times. If your roommate would rather you didn't study with the light on when she's trying to sleep, she should tell you. If you make house rules, and communicate openly and often, you can avoid unpleasant surprises down the road.

Be respectful. Successful roommate relationships are based on mutual respect. If your roommate doesn't like anyone borrowing her clothes, respect her wishes. If you don't like music on while you're studying, she should respect your needs, too.

Be willing to compromise. You and your roommate may not agree on everything, but you both have to be willing to compromise a little bit. If you're a slob and she's a neat freak, you should start cleaning up, at least in the parts of the room you share. And she should try to be flexible and realize your unmade bed doesn't affect her.

Be courteous. Courtesy is contagious. If you behave politely to your roommate, she will likely follow your lead. Take messages when people call for her. Wish her luck on an exam. Ask if you can pick up something for her while you're running errands. And, don't borrow anything without asking.

Good friendships often begin by sharing space with strangers. So, who knows... maybe that loud, partying roommate you thought you'd never last with will become your good friend.

dan the roommate man www.roommateexpress.com

COLLEGE ROOMMATES 101

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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

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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

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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!

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