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LIVING WITH A PERSON IN THE DORMS–WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

By dan the roommate man

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Living in the halls is an important and exciting part of college life. Whether you know your roommate or are meeting for the first time, living with another person is difficult at times. Open, honest and constant communication is the key to successful roommate relationships. Often it is difficult to talk about differences when you and your roommate are first trying to get to know each other. If you intend to live together happily, you need to realize and resolve your personal difference early in the fall semester. The first step is to begin talking about the things you value and about your lifestyles, so that you can find out where differences exist.

After sharing some background information, you and your roommate should begin to get to know each other and feel more comfortable about discussing more sensitive subjects. Take some time to talk about the things you like and dislike, and those things about you that he or she needs to know. Be sure to listen to you roommate carefully.

The way I feel about dating is...

When it comes to smoking, I'd rather...

The kinds of grades I would like to get this semester are...

The amount of sleep I like to get each night is...

The types of foods I like to eat are...

The things I do for fun are...

Can I sleep with the lights on or do I need total darkness?...

LIVING WITH A PERSON IN THE DORMS–WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Do I study with music playing in the background or do I need complete silence?...

What I like to do when I need some exercise is...

The things I like to do in my spare time are...

The way I feel about religion is...

The way I feel about loaning things is...

The way I would like to decorate our room is...

An important part of understanding your roommate is learning how he or she feels in certain situations.

Roommates who enjoy living with each other typically "read" each other's feeling fairly accurately, and are able to respond to one another accordingly. If you can share your feelings and reactions in some of the following situations, you will be ahead of the game in understanding and empathizing with your roommate during the ups and downs of college life.

The way I react when I'm happy is...

The way I react when working under pressure is...

When I'm depressed I act like...

When I'd rather be alone I...

The way I react when I meet people for the first time is...

Something that will usually cheer me up when I'm down is...

I usually let people know I'm angry by...

Some things that make me tense or uptight are...

I become easily annoyed by...

The way I let people know what I'm feeling or what I need is...

Quite often roommates have different ideas of just how clean and neat the place should be. Let your feelings be known early, and take the time to find out the attitudes and preferences of your roommate. Some of the duties you need to discuss are:

Vacuuming

Making beds (probably a pact to do it individually)

LIVING WITH A PERSON IN THE DORMS–WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Dusting

Washing dirty dishes

Taking out the trash

Watch out for becoming too dependent on your roommate for friendship. Doing so may result in hurt feelings on your part and resentment on his/hers. As the school year gets underway, remember that it is natural for good friendships to develop between students who are not roommates.

Perhaps the most sensitive issue that can arise conflict is also the one that can be the most uncomfortable to discuss. When a roommate brings home an intimate guest, it may create an awkward situation. Feelings about this situation are difficult to discuss. We encourage you to be honest with your roommate about your feelings and expectations in this area. Anything you or your roommate do that might affect the other should be discussed and agreed upon beforehand. You both have a right to privacy and room use, but you each have a responsibility to the other, as well.

If you talk your way through these areas you and your roommate should be well on the way to a good relationship. Remember that none of us are perfect. If problems develop between you and your roommate that you can't seem to solve, see your Resident Advisor or House Director. These students

have training and experience dealing with such situations. They will be glad to work with you and your roommate on a solution.

DAN THE ROOMMATE MAN www.roommateexpress.com

A true roommate story–psyco surfer

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My worst roommate (and I've had some bad ones) was on my semester at Tel–Aviv University. It started on the group flight there, with this obnoxious surfer looking guy who was seated next to me (I was on an aisle, he was in the middle). On the ten hour flight, he had me put something in or take something out of the overhead for him at least fifteen or twenty times. He just wouldn't leave me alone, and was constantly begging me to change seats with him, and grab a pen, and put this card in his bag... When we got to the dorms and had our orientation meeting, it turned out that I was in the same apartment as him, though thank god not the same room (each apt was 2 double rooms with a common kitchen and bath).

This guy was unreal. He was a bleach–blond surfer, rowed crew, was well over 6' and very muscular (I'm 5'7" and thin), and just a total jerk. He constantly ate the food belonging to the rest of us, claiming that he had no money, nevermind the \$100 packages full of crap he'd send back to his girlfriend in CA. After two weeks or so of his constantly disrespecting the other three of us, things got a bit tense. The first turning point was when he used an entire pack of my roommate's razors to shave part of his head,

LIVING WITH A PERSON IN THE DORMS–WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

and from then on he seemed to be in ever–lessening contact with reality.

About a month into his stay, he decided to adopt a stray dog that he found near the beach while surfing. This, of course, couldn't happen, because you can't have dogs in the dorms, and the rest of us weren't too keen on having a stray dog around. Jason, the psycho, completely lost it when he was told he couldn't keep the dog ("if he goes, I go, because he's the only one who understands me"). He got right in my face and threatened to kill me if I turned him in (remember our size and strength disparities...), since I was the only one who was home when he came charging in with this poor mutt. Later that day, after the security guards and the program people told him the dog had to go, he took off, and wasn't heard from for a couple of days.

A few days later, he showed up and was hanging out in a room down the hall, when someone called security, as we had been instructed to do should he return. From what I'm told of the incident, he went out onto the balcony (4th floor) and threatened to jump when the police arrived on the scene. After a tense confrontation, they charged him and were able to subdue him after he punched at least one officer. He was then carried – literally kicking and screaming – off the University's property and was taken into custody. He spent about a month or so in a mental facility in Israel before he was deported back to America.

When my roommate got back to the apartment, he discovered that Jason had left us a final message. Using a razor, he had cut open his finger and painted a message in his own blood on our bathroom mirror ("you all lied to me, blah, blah, blah"), then tied the bloody razor to a rose and left it on the kitchen table.

Now that is a roommate from hell.

Since 1989 i have helped 1000's of people find good rooms or roommates. Need help? Contact me at www.roommateexpress.com



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