



## Roommates

*Kansas State University Housing & Dining Services*

### THE EXPERIENCE

Whether you have one, two, or three additional roommates and/or suite mates, you are bound to have a great experience living in the K-State residence halls. Residents continually realize after their first semester in the halls how much they appreciate their roommate(s). Although the room might be smaller than what you are used to, each room takes on a unique atmosphere that brings out the personality of each person living in the room. The residence hall experience is what you make it to be!

### LIFETOPIA

If you're in the market for a roommate, Lifetopia is here to help. Through Lifetopia, students answer questions about themselves and specify what they want in roommate. They can then search the database for other students who would make a good fit. Sign up for Lifetopia today at [www.housing.k-state.edu](http://www.housing.k-state.edu) and find the perfect match.



### ROOMMATE MYTHS

Below are some common things believed by many students prior to arriving at college. While each situation is different, please consider the following:

**Myth 1:** My roommate(s) will be my best friend.

**Reality 1:** While this is a definite possibility, it shouldn't be an expectation going into the year. It's important to set up a relationship which is open and has mutual respect.

**Myth 2:** It's best to room with someone you already know.

**Reality 2:** Rooming with someone you don't already know is a great opportunity to meet someone new. Often friendships can be strained if the roommate component is added. Whether you know your roommate(s) or not, there are bound to be many joys and some challenges along the way.

**Myth 3:** My roommate(s) is inconsiderate and irritating.

**Reality 3:** All of us have things we do which might annoy or frustrate other people. Living in a room together can magnify these traits. From day one, be honest with your roommate(s) about what frustrates you so these things can be tackled before they become a bigger issue. Agreeing to compromise may be the solution in some situations.



**Myth 4:** If I don't like my roommate(s), I will make them move out or I'll change rooms.

**Reality 4:** Residence hall staff can assist in roommate mediations to help make the situation an enjoyable one. If you really feel moving could be the best option, hall transfer lists are available at your front desk. While there are some options to move students around, sometimes the occupancy of our buildings is such that you and your roommate(s) will need to work things out. Please note, if you behave in a way hoping your roommate(s) will move out, you may be held accountable through our judicial process.

### MANAGING HABITS

Let's face it, we all have our own way of doing things. From sleeping to studying, cleaning to relaxing, each person knows what works for them. Even when habits are good for one person, they might not work for another. When agreeing on what will be allowed, it's important to be completely honest. If you are not, the little things that may bother you will be magnified later on. Adjusting to the lifestyles of other people is a key factor in residence hall life. Though sometimes a challenge, it doesn't have to be a deal breaker. In fact, many students love that their roommates have different ways of studying or cleaning. After all, exposure to something new and creative is rarely a bad thing. Below are a few things to remember when taking on a relationship that combines different habits.

**H**ear each other; really listen to why your roommate(s) maintains certain habits.

**A**lways be ready to compromise. If your style of sleeping with the radio on is preventing your roommate(s) from resting, consider using your iPod and headphones.

**B**ack off. Remember that it shouldn't be about you changing your roommate(s). Rather, you should be interested in creating the best environment for both of you.

**I**dentify your differences early on. Pushing them aside or trying to ignore them won't help anyone!

**T**ouch base frequently. Even if your habits are okay during the first month of school, the stress of midterms in October might change things. It's good to check back in on a regular basis.

**S**ee the good in others. You and your roommate(s) can learn a lot from one another! Be open and excited for such experiences to take place.

### KEEPING IT CLEAN

"Make your bed. Straighten your desk. Hang up your clothes. Wash your dishes." Sound familiar? You might be expecting to leave such phrases behind as you begin life on your own. You might be planning to throw caution to the wind once you're out of your house and in a residence hall. But before you throw out your cleaning supplies, think about this: How will you feel if your future roommate(s) never washes a dish or vacuums the floor? That's the thing about cleanliness in college, it's a bigger issue than you might anticipate. As you prepare for life in a residence hall, remember that you're not really living on your own. You are moving into a community of students, and your room is a home for both you and your roommate(s). Luckily we have some suggestions that have worked for many students. Although every situation is different, the following recommendations are helpful:

- Take some time during the first week of school to discuss how clean you would each like the room.
- Divide up tasks that might encompass the entire room, for example dusting or vacuuming.
- Create a schedule for cleaning any shared areas like bathrooms in suite-style living.
- Clearly lay out who will clean and when.
- Remember that the word "clean" may mean different things to different people, so be specific.
- Finally, be patient! Some students go to college having never cleaned regularly before. It may take time for some people to adjust.

### 5 WAYS TO SHOW APPRECIATION TO YOUR ROOMMATE

1. Make them a "Good Luck" pack with their favorite treats for a stressful week.
2. Schedule a time to get away from the hall to do something together.
3. Understand their daily schedule and adjust accordingly.
4. Ask them how their day has been.
5. Straighten up the room without being asked.

## VISITATION

One of the many privileges that college provides is the opportunity to be independent. Most residents are excited to have their own room and space where they can make their own choices about how they live. Remember that your decisions will impact your roommate(s) and by coming to certain decisions together, you will be more successful. How often would you like to have friends or significant others visit? How long should they be allowed to stay? Something as small as one or two friends in your room every day for hours on end can cause a strain on you or your roommate(s), especially when that is your only private space. Discuss ways that you and your roommate(s) can achieve balance so you each have private time in the room and a sense of ownership over your space.

“The relationships you build with your roommates are some of the best while you’re in college. My roommates always provided me with someone to chat and hang out with. Roommates really help to cut the loneliness you feel when you first arrive at an entirely new place. Finally, not only do you meet your roommate, but you meet their friends and acquaintances and thereby encounter a vast quantity of new people and experiences.” — Lauren

## BOUNDARIES

As you prepare for the ultimate roommate experience, consider how you feel about boundaries and sharing your belongings. Determine your comfort level with sharing food, appliances (television, microwave and refrigerator), toiletries, clothing, computer, and other belongings. What will you do if you both need to use appliances at the same time? How will you decide to share without feeling that the other person has monopolized those things? How can you determine equal contribution to the costs of those things? Be clear about how much television you each watch and whether or not you both want cable TV and whether or not you want to share in that expense. Discuss what’s okay and what’s not okay. How late or early will you go to bed or get up? How often do you hit snooze on your alarm? Can your roommate’s friends sit on your bed and use your belongings? Clearly outlining these things and other details will make a big difference.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Disagreements between people are to be expected, especially in a roommate situation where people live together and interact on a daily basis. Conflicts usually occur when changes are needed and when behaviors, thoughts and feelings need to be reexamined. Don’t be afraid to confront your roommate(s) about what is bothering you. If you know how to deal with conflict positively and productively, all involved can benefit from the situation.

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## 7 STEPS TO RESOLVING CONFLICT

Step 1: Identify the problem.

- Know what is specifically bothering you so that you can effectively communicate the issue to your roommate(s).
- Look at your own behavior. Are you doing anything that could be causing the conflict?
- Make sure everyone that is part of the problem is involved.

Step 2: Explore how the problem impacts everyone involved.

- Roommates should take a turn describing their perception of the situation, how they feel about it and what they want.
- Use “I” statements as it makes you take ownership of your feelings and reduces blame and in turn the defensiveness of your roommate(s).

Step 3: Brainstorm changes that can be made to resolve the problem

- Be assertive when you think your roommate(s) is making demands that are unreasonable. If you don’t, you could build resentment towards your roommate(s).
- Make sure all parties are willing to make the necessary changes.

Step 4: Evaluate how the changes will impact the parties involved.

- What will you expect of your roommate(s)?
- What will they expect of you?

Step 5: Compromise on a mutually agreed plan.

- Everyone should agree to be willing to compromise something to come up with a solution.

Step 6: Plan for who will do what and when.

- Hold one another accountable and make sure you are following through as well.



- If you have requested the roommate(s) to change their behavior, give them a chance to change. Thank them for making attempts to change. This will be more effective than continually complaining.

Step 7: Set a future date to evaluate the situation.

- Do you need to renegotiate any differences?

Some of the most important tips when resolving conflict with a roommate(s) are to be honest and straightforward. Do not let things build up. Address problems as they arise, doing so can help resolve and prevent problems. Be empathetic and understanding when listening to your roommate's side of the situation and put yourself in their shoes. Even the best relationships may have some difficult times. When there are points of disagreement in the roommate relationship, sometimes you have to agree to disagree. This is okay. The most important thing in resolving a conflict with a roommate is to effectively communicate. To resolve conflict, communicate with each other on a regular basis, one-on-one and avoid behavior that will break down communication. Hopefully all of this information will increase your excitement about having a roommate(s). Yes, at times it can be challenging, but by using the resources at hand, good communication skills and respect, the experience can help make your college experience a fun and successful one. Remember, conflict is normal in any relationship. It's how you handle it that defines success or failure. Don't be afraid to seek assistance from residence hall staff in your building. These staff members have extensive training and experience in helping students start their roommate relationships off successfully. And remember, be sure to fill out a roommate agreement to get off to a great start!

“Having a roommate can be one of the greatest experiences of your life as you make that transition into college. Living with someone and sharing your daily life with them can not only help you emotionally, but a roommate can be a positive individual to be part of your network of friends later on in life. Roommates have been known to be lifelong friends sharing family memories, laughing until 3:00 a.m., or even having a shoulder to cry on when things aren't going so well. A roommate can be a lifesaver.”


— Tessa



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