

Roommate Combinations That Do Not Work

Even close friends find that they cannot live together. It is better to save a friendship than force a living arrangement. If you and your roommates have made an honest but unsuccessful effort, you may decide that you cannot live together. It may be better to part company than to continue living in an uncomfortable situation. An uncomfortable living situation can lead to a decrease in school attendance, homework completion, and health. Before coming to a finite conclusion, consider consulting outside help, especially if there are any legal matters.

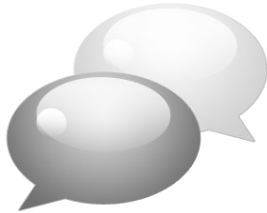
Remember...

The majority of leases bind roommates to JOINT and SEVERAL liability. Under this clause, if a roommate moves out, the others assume responsibility for his/her payment and damages. If need be, roommates have recourse by encouraging the landlord to hold the security deposit or by a suit in a Small Claims Court. Using the provided Roommate Agreement form as a guideline, write down roommate agreements. A written agreement insures that all parties accept the living situation and possible solutions.

Concerns about the new Roommate

Questions to keep in mind:

- ⇒ How do you feel about overnight guests?
- ⇒ How often may guests stay and for how long?
- ⇒ Where may the guests sleep?
- ⇒ Are there rules about guests and food? Who will clean up?
- ⇒ Who is responsible for the guest when no one is home?
- ⇒ Is there a difference between guests and boyfriends/girlfriends?
 - How often can they stay?
 - Are there ground rules?
- ⇒ When do guests become classified as additional roommates who must share in the rent and household duties?
- ⇒ Is permission needed from the other roommates or the landlord before additional roommates move in?



Can We Talk?

Communication is key to having a successful roommate relationship. Here are some suggested questions that, if discussed up front, may help to minimize roommate conflicts down the road.

Music

What kind of music do you listen to? How loudly? What time of day/night?

Pets

Do you have any pets? If yes, what kind? Can I play with your pets while you're out?

Cleanliness

Do you consider yourself to be very clean, tidy, a little messy, or a total slob? Is there anything I can do to make you feel more respected and appreciated?

Mobility

How do you get around town? By car, foot, bicycle, motorcycle, or bus?

Sleep Habits

What kind of hours do you keep? Are you an early riser, or do you like to sleep as late as possible? Do you stay up late or go to bed early? Are you a deep sleeper, or do you prefer quiet?

School

Do you study a lot? Do you study with music or do you prefer a quiet atmosphere?

Social Activities

Do parties and noise bother you? Do you drink alcohol? Do you smoke cigarettes or marijuana? If so, how often and how much do you "party?"

Eating

What kind of foods do you like? Are you a vegetarian? Do you like to make your own food, or do you like to eat out often? Do you like to eat together at a table, eat in front of the TV, or elsewhere?

A Little Insight!

What are some of your pet peeves about previous roommates? Do you like to stay home or do you have an active social life? Do you enjoy going out: shopping, dancing, bar hopping, cruising, or other activities?

What's Mine is Yours?!

Do you like to share? If so, what (i.e. food, clothes, movies, etc.)? Is there something I can do, leave a message/note, to let you know that I've borrowed an item of yours?

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The Art of Roommating

The selection of your roommate(s) should not be taken for granted or treated lightly. There are legal, financial, and personal implications that affect people living together. The following information explains the rights and the responsibilities of having and being a good roommate.

Take the initiative. It is always a smart idea to become acquainted your roommate(s) as to provide an open and honest environment. This means becoming comfortable enough with your roommate(s) to be assertive about your needs, as well as respecting their needs. When you appreciate and understand each other's needs (which includes an understanding of backgrounds, attitudes, habits, and moods), you will be ready to talk about roommate expectations.

This process involves actively talking and listening to each other. As hard as it can be, listening is a very important aspect. Remember, the listener is just as responsible for communication as the speaker is. Just as you want to be understood and appreciated, it is your responsibility to listen and clarify certain points. This way you can understand and appreciate your roommates' needs just as they do yours. Understanding what you both expect early on can minimize or eliminate problems later.

Roommate Rights and Responsibilities

The following issues represent areas where conflict has been known to occur amongst roommates. The list below contains discussion points that we suggest you discuss with your new roommate(s). As the discussion progresses, consider developing a list of mutual roommate expectations.

Finances

How will the rent be paid? Will one person collect the money and write a check, or does everyone write a check for his/her share of the rent? What is the opinion of the Landlord on this subject? What are the consequences when the rent is late?

Do Not Disturb

What are your needs concerning privacy? How do the needs of your roommate(s) differ?

Quiet Please!

What is your definition of noise? What time should noise be minimized for study or sleep? Should there be study hours? How loud is too loud?

Pets

Are pets allowed? In what areas are they permitted? Who is responsible? Are they registered? Does anyone have allergies?

The smoker's match

How do you feel about smoking? Is it permitted? If so, in what areas?

Cleaning

What are your standards of cleanliness? Who is responsible and for what areas? How should the workload be divided? Will a rotating weekly schedule work or will individual duties work better?

Messages

How should telephone/general messages be kept? How do you respond to a roommate's calls?

All for one, or one for all?

If a roommate should move out early, should he/she be responsible for costs? If a deposit was paid, when and how will it be returned? Should the leaving roommate find a replacement renter? How much notice should be given? Who will be responsible for the rent?

Alcohol & Marijuana

How do you feel about drinking and smoking marijuana? When is it acceptable? Weekends vs. week days? Are any roommates underage?

Safety Measures

What about security? When should the doors be locked? Should there be an extra key and if so, where should it be kept? What about the neighbors?

Bills/Deposits

How much and who will pay for deposits, telephone, and other utilities? In whose name should they be listed? Who is responsible for collecting/paying the bills?

Groceries

How and who will buy groceries? Will it be collective or individual? If collectively, how much money will be budgeted for food? Will there be a system? If individually, how will you identify who bought what items? Will meals be eaten together or separately? May roommates borrow food from one another? Who will replace what items?

Personal belongings

What rules will there be concerning personal items? Will sharing or borrowing be allowed? Are certain items off limits? Will the television/stereo be shared? Will permission be allowed for all items or just certain ones?



If the Boat Springs a Leak

No matter how hard we try, communication sometimes breaks down. Here are some clues that you have a breakdown of communication on your hands:

- Your roommates are not speaking.
- They leave when you enter.
- They complain to friends about you.
- They get angry over trivial matters.

These are just a few of the signs that trouble is brewing. Take the initiative by confronting your roommates to try and understand what the problem may be. It could just be a small issue that could easily be resolved, or it could be a larger matter that everyone must work together to solve.

9 Steps in Resolving a Conflict

1. Everyone involved in the conflict should find a time to convene together.
2. Each roommate should take a turn in describing his/her perception of the situation- how each person feels individually and what each person needs.
3. Work together to come to an agreement about the situation.
4. Everyone should agree to compromise to assist in developing a solution.
5. Devise a solution that is acceptable to everyone. If an agreement cannot be reached amongst yourselves, call in an unbiased third party for suggestions. (Conflict Resolution through CSU is an option)
6. Talk about the changes that need to take place in order to resolve the problem.
7. Devise a plan of action and set a timetable.
8. Make sure everyone is committed to the plan, including implementing whatever personal changes necessary. Set a future date to evaluate the situation and renegotiate if necessary.

Rules for Fair Fighting

1. **Start Smart.** Set a time to discuss the conflict that is convenient for everyone. A good friendly approach could be, "I feel like we need to talk about what is going on. When do you have time to work things out?"
2. **Everyone involved has equal rights to be heard.**
3. **Set aside your desire to "win."** Winning an argument is not the same as succeeding. Success in conflict management is where you and everyone involved all find an agreeable solution.
4. **Create an open environment so everyone has the ability to speak freely.**
5. **Avoid playing the blame game.**
6. **Be task oriented and stick to the topic.**
7. **Avoid generalizations or blanket remarks.** Avoid such statements as, "You never do this or that." A more constructive approach would be, "you have not managed to do your share of this or that during the past weeks."
8. **Talk about possible action changes and avoid personal attacks.** Personal attacks will lead to hostility and destroy communication of productive ideas.
9. **Do not team up against roommates.**