

# Roommate Relationships

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Living in the residence halls with a roommate is part of college life for nearly every college student. For those who grew up having their own room, sharing a 12 by 16 foot room with another individual can be a strain. Let's face it, even if you grew up having to share your personal space, life in a college dormitory can be an adjustment. Students may find it difficult to escape for some alone time when their only "personal space" is shared with another. Your roommate may have grown up with different values, customs, or family traditions. You may not agree on how best to arrange the room. Whatever the stumbling blocks, roommates CAN overcome their differences and have a great residence hall experience. And who knows...maybe you'll hit it off immediately and feel you've met your long, lost twin!

The single most important factor in building a good roommate relationship has got to be communication. Your roommate might seem like a rocket scientist, but they cannot read your mind! It is also imperative not to make assumptions (such as "it's okay that I just raid her closet," or "he won't mind if I borrow his iPod," or "it's not a big deal if my friends come to hang out in our room three times a week.") about how your roommate feels about certain issues. After all, assumptions aren't always correct and conflict could arise. If conflict is identified early on, an agreement can be reached through compromise before anything major develops. So... **communicate, don't assume, be willing to compromise.**

## Resident Rights

As part of a residence hall community, roommates have some inherent rights that should be upheld and respected at all times. These rights are not confined to the residence hall room, but extend into the residence hall, fostering a healthy community for everyone. A respectful community begins with respecting one's own roommate.

- The right to read, study, and sleep free from undue interference.
- The right to expect reasonable cooperation in the use of shared space and items ( living areas, appliances, technology, etc.)
- The right to personal privacy, including the use of one's belongings.
- The right to live in a clean and orderly room.
- The right to free access to the room and facilities without pressure from roommate(s).
- The right to expect any and all grievances will be discussed in an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect, and the right to involve a residence hall staff member in the discussion if desired.
- The right to be treated with consideration and thoughtfulness.
- The right to be free from intimidation and physical and/or emotional harm.
- The right to host guests who respect the rights of the community members.
- The right to expect that a roommate will not violate a UNI policy in the room and subject others to possible reprimand.

## Working to Create a Positive Roommate Relationship

Small things can go a long way when it comes to lifting someone's spirit. Try some of these ideas to add a little happiness to your roommate's day!

- Clean the whole room
- Offer to help with a project
- Buy your roomie a latte or an ice cream cone
- Give some alone time in the room
- Offer to help them study
- Find a quote and copy it on your message board
- Send a "great day" text
- Remember their birthday
- Take a walk together
- Listen
- Rent a funny movie
- Create a picture collage of the two of you
- Leave notes of gratitude around the room

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## Getting Acquainted with your Roomie

Back to that crazy concept of communication, if you don't talk to your roommate and ask get-to-know-you questions, all you will simply be is roommates...not chums, not buddies, not friends. Be the first to break the ice with some of these questions.

- Where are you from?
- Who does your family consist of?
- Why did you choose UNI?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- What kind of music do you like to listen to?
- What makes you uneasy?
- What has been the highlight of the past year?
- What are you looking forward to?
- What do you hope to get involved with at UNI?
- Tell me about your closest friends.

As you begin to learn about your roommate, you will want to talk about similarities and differences in your preferences for sharing your space together. These questions may help to alleviate some miscommunication and conflict later.

- How often are visitors allowed in our room?
- What are the parameters for overnight guests?
- What is our comfort level in sharing one another's personal belongings?
- How often will the room be cleaned and by whom?
- How do we define a clean room?
- What time does each of us go to bed?
- What is an appropriate level of activity/noise in the room when one of us is sleeping or taking a nap?
- How much privacy does each of us need?
- How much will each of us study in the room?
- How much will each of us socialize in the room?
- How will we know when the other person needs some alone time?
- How will we know when one of us is bothering the other?
- How does each of us react when we are under pressure?
- What makes each of us feel valued?
- How will challenges be communicated?

**To view the UNI Department of Residence Community Standards, go to [uni.edu/dor/housing/community-standards](http://uni.edu/dor/housing/community-standards)**