

# The Roommate Debate: Living in Harmony

Several months before you embark on your college adventure, you are instructed to fill out a questionnaire which is meant to help the university or college place you with a compatible roommate. There are questions about what time you go to bed, how messy or neat you are, and what type of atmosphere you like to live in. No problem, you think, this is no SAT and as long as there are no analogies, I'm set. As you begin to look at the questionnaire, however, a wave of panic washes over you. You begin to fear that if you check off the neat box in question number one you will wind up cohabitating with an obsessive compulsive neat freak who rises at 6 am to iron their underwear & socks. Then again, you wonder to yourself, if I check off the messy box, will I wake up to find a family of gerbils living in a moldy pizza box in my roommate's hamper? Indeed, it appears to be quite a dilemma, and can be the source of oodles of anxiety. Before you know it, you receive your room and roommate assignment in the mail. By this point, you have completely convinced yourself that John Doe has a vast array of obnoxious characteristics and will inevitably expect you to make accommodations for his extensive collection of troll dolls. Great . . .

When you finally meet this roommate, however, you will see that most of these fears are unfounded, and that the likelihood of receiving a roommate who legitimately believes she is a cat, or who has philosophical debates with his pet termite on a regular basis, is slim to none.

Preparing to live with a roommate is not about envisioning the biggest freak ever, and plotting ways to get them to move out, but instead it's about thinking about your own habits and how they will affect a person living four feet away. Many of the issues you have about living with a roommate will most likely be over normal, simple issues, and can easily be avoided by communicating with him or her.

I mean, sure you think you've got a great setup at home. Your pile of dirty gym shorts in the corner never seems to cause a problem, you never get sick of that wet dog scented air freshener, and your cat never complains about you singing into your hairbrush for hours on end. You will obviously make a great roommate; the problems are clearly going to be caused by this mystery co-resident. Though these habits seem harmless to you, however, they could be a source of contention with your roommate. Before you go to school try to think about these things. Make a list of habits and preferences you have and then discuss them with your roommate when you get there. Ask your roommate about their habits as well. Let them know right from the start that their Nine Inch Nails bedtime play list might keep you up, or that you don't need them to dustbust your desk or better yet, use your fuzzy slippers to mop up the soda they spilled.

The best way to avoid altercations and to develop a mutual respect with your roommate is to focus on saying how you feel as well as encouraging your roommate to say how they are feeling. In doing so you can let your roommate know that you are trying to consider their feelings, and that you are really trying to make it so you are both comfortable and at ease in the room. This way it is likely that if you ask him or her to kindly turn down their music or turn off the TV, they will be more likely to honor your requests. With a combination of communicating and compromising, you will find that living with a roommate can be fun and easy. Whether you have a lot in common or not, it is not hard to learn to live together and develop a healthy relationship. After all, we live in a day and age where through the technological innovations of iPods, even a Ashlee Simpson fan and a Phish fanatic can live in harmony.

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*Cara Devins, Boston College graduate*

