

### Communicate



Other than a spouse, there is probably no other person in the world you will get to know as well as your roommate. Even if you bond instantly, there may be moments when your roomie's little quirks get on your nerves. Letting things fester (in that tiny little space) can turn an annoyance into a misery. Communication—both talking **and** listening will be the key to a great relationship.

**Stuff: Less is more**

By the time you've managed to fit in 2 beds, the mini fridge, microwave, computer, CD-changer, and TV—will there be any room for clothes (not to mention a few books)?? There is no way you are going to duplicate all the comforts of home. The less you bring, the less you have to keep track of and maintain.

### Borrowing

#### Rule #1

Don't.

#### Rule #2

If you absolutely must borrow something, always ask permission first. Return it in

Nothing causes more strife between roommates and friends than borrowing—money, food, clothes, CDs, sports equipment.

### Neatness

If the law of averages works, one of you will be extremely neat and the other extremely messy. Here is where you learn the great art of communication and compromise. Mom doesn't live here, but you do. The neatnik will have to learn to tolerate life's imperfections. The slob, well, it's time to start picking up after yourself.

### Lights Out

It's inevitable. One of you will have an 8 AM class and the other will want to study until 2 AM. Work out routines for late night studying (is there a lounge?) late night returns (tiptoe and use a flashlight?), early morning classes (tiptoe out and dress in the bathroom?). Everyone needs their zzz's.

### Quiet Time

Most dorms have quiet hours. Loud music, parties, or socializing in the hall will not be appreciated by your fellow dorm-mates and are a one-way ticket to unpopularity.

### Irreconcilable Differences

When the course of rooming does not run smooth, seek counsel. Your hall or dorm will have an RA (Resident Advisor) who is usually an older student or grad student—young enough to remember what it was like to be a freshman, but old enough to give good advice. Chances are you and your roomie are together for better or worse until June.

## Top Five Potential War Zones at Home

Every home has land mines just waiting to blow.

We tip-toe around them: the dirty socks, the disheveled living room, the dishes, the food, the globs of toothpaste stuck in the sink like stalagmites, the late-night noise, the borrowed shirt that's now ruined! It all becomes too much, until you just...

can't...  
take it...  
anymore.

Then BOOM!—there you are, standing in the living room, fists clenched, breathing heavily, eyes shifting from roommate to roommate as they look at you watchfully, trying not to make any sudden movements. Ohh-kaay, you sense each of them thinking, she's finally cracked.

The potential for problems to arise in your home is stealthier than you might think. In particular, there are five potential war zones that you'll need to watch out for:

1. The kitchen
2. The bathroom
3. The living room
4. Noise
5. Other people's stuff

The kitchen, the bathroom, and the living room make up the common spaces in your home. And in any common space (especially if you live with several other people) things can get a bit messy. This can result in one or two problems: Either you're making the mess and leaving it for your roommates to clean up or you find you're constantly cleaning up both your messes and theirs- in which case I say, stop!- you're not a maid.

Tensions can also mount when you create noise at a time when your roommates need quiet, or vice versa. Borrowing other people's stuff is another action that can really touch a nerve. You and your roommate may start out with one happy, communal closet; but the first time an item goes missing or gets ruined, the closets separate and distrust settles in.

This may sound a bit grim, I know, but don't worry. The whole idea here is to identify potential problems before they can turn into crises. Once you do, you can then use your skills of communication, compromise, and commitment to work out a solution for living harmoniously and happily together.