Whether you live in a residential neighborhood of freestanding houses, a condo development, or a tall apartment building, it's always to your benefit to get to know your neighbors. Unfortunately, many people fear having young people in their late teens or early twenties living next door—assuming it automatically means noise, late-night parties, and messy lawns. The solution? Get to know your neighbors—and allay their fears about you—through a few simple actions:

1. Introduce yourself as soon as possible after you move in. Instead of viewing your neighbors from afar, never getting close enough to discover who they really are—or to let them know who you are—make it a point to introduce yourself at the first opportunity that presents itself. How hard is it to say hello? "Hi, I'm Lizzie, I just moved in next door."

2. Give your neighbors your phone number. This gesture helps cement a bond. It's a sign of trust, an invitation to communicate, and an implicit promise to stay connected. Wait a minute! You're thinking; I don't want some old coot calling me up night and day. Don't worry, the nutty busybody next door is the exception, not the rule. And if there's ever a problem—say, your party got a bit louder than you realized—your neighbors will be ten times more likely to call you rather than your landlord or, worse yet, the police, if they have your phone number handy. And they won't have it handy unless you give it to them.

3. When you have a loud party (or a band rehearsal, or jam session, or whatever) tell your neighbors in advance. "I wanted to let you know we're having a 'Just Moved In' barbecue on Friday night. You're more than welcome to come over. I thought I'd tell you because we usually stay up pretty late at these things—so if we're too loud, just give us the

word and we'll tone it down. Take care!"

4. Smile at your neighbors. So simple, so easy, and so important. Everyone enjoys a smile—so why not send one your neighbor's way? They may or may not smile back, but don't let that stop you. If they're not into reciprocating, that's their problem, not yours.