My roommate and I had drastically different social lives. She was new to off campus living and was constantly entertaining a swarm of her on-campus pals. I, on the other hand, was in a hermit phase because of a long distance relationship and a what-was-I-thinking course load. We had a long talk about the situation and here are the house rules we came up with and why:

Rule 1: Maximum Occupancy Allowed.

If one of us was planning to have more than three people over to our apartment, we had to talk it over with the other roommate.

Why? Our space was limited—and if, like me, you're planning to settle in for a quiet night at home and seven of your roommate's friends are commandeering the living room, things can get a little overwhelming.

Rule 2: The Right to Study Freely.

If one of us was studying, she shouldn't have to leave the apartment to find peace and quiet. (Some people choose the opposite rule: If you need to study, go to the library.)

Why? We both felt that work came before play and that friends can always hang out anywhere—whereas a place to concentrate and focus can be more difficult to come by.

Rule 3: Communicate About Workload.

If one of us had a test or a big paper due, we should inform the other roommate in advance, so that any socializing could be done outside the apartment.

Why? Making it known ahead of time that you're going to need a night of peace and quiet can

help offset feelings of resentment and avoid a possibly ugly confrontation. No one wants to have to yell at people to pipe down at 1 AM the night before an exam—or be the one getting yelled at, for that matter.

Rule 4: Veto Power.

If one of us was on bad terms with a friend of a roommate, we agreed to inform the roommate of the uncomfortable feelings.

Why? Neither of us wanted to feel uncomfortable with a guest in our home. This didn't mean that the guest wasn't allowed over—just that we would try to have that person over only when our roommate was out.

Rule 5: Cleaning Up.

Whoever had friends over had to clean up the place afterward—before he or she left the house. Sometimes this meant doing dishes; sometimes it meant just getting them into the sink. Always it meant straightening up the living room.

Why? Neither of us felt that it was fair to leave our roommate to deal with our mess while we were out having a good time.