

Living with a Roommate

Talking to your Roommate(s) ...

We would all like to be best friends with our roommates. Even if you don't end up being best of friends, you can create a positive environment where you can live together. Sometimes it's hard to talk about differences. Roommates need to recognize and resolve personal differences early in the relationship.

Talk about your values and your lifestyle so that you can find out where your differences exist.

Talk to your roommates to learn more about each other's background. Things like:

- My birthday is...
- I describe my neighborhood and the people who live there as...
- The reasons I came to IU South Bend are...
- A funny thing that happened to me is...
- What I'll miss about home is...

Preferences and Habits...

Once you feel more comfortable with your roommate, you can talk about more sensitive topics. Spend some time talking about your likes and dislikes. Take time to talk about these items, one by one. Be sure to listen to your roommate just like you hope he/she listens to you.

- The kind of music I enjoy is...
- The amount of sleep I like to get is...
- The foods I like best are...
- How I feel about drugs and drinking...
- What I like to do when I need some exercise is...
- The things I like to do in my spare time are...
- Some things I like to spend money on are...
- The way I feel about religion is...
- The way I feel about loaning things is...

How I React...

It is important to learn how your roommate feels about certain situations. Roommates who enjoy living together understand each others' feelings and can respond appropriately. By sharing your feelings about some of the following situations, you'll be able to understand and empathize with your roommate.

- The way I react when I'm happy is...
- The way I react when working under pressure is...
- When I'm down or upset I act like...
- When I'd rather be alone I...
- The way I react when I meet people for the first time is...
- Something that will usually cheer me up when I'm down is...
- I usually let people know I'm angry by...

- Some things that make me tense or uptight are...
- I become easily annoyed by...
- The way I let people know what I'm feeling or what I need is...

Apartment Cleaning...

A common conflict between roommates is who cleans the space, when it is cleaned and how it is cleaned. It might be helpful to develop a written agreement stating the cleaning duties for each week. If your roommates aren't doing their part, talk to them! Don't demand or write notes complaining. These things make for hard feelings. You can expect your roommates to do the same thing if you are not living up to your part of the bargain. Some of the areas you need to discuss now are:

- Vacuuming/dusting
- Making beds (probably a pact to do it individually)
- Bathroom cleaning
- Dishes
- Cleaning out the refrigerator
- Taking out the trash

What about friends...

It is important to come to some agreement concerning visitors. If you have roommates with friends who party all the time, you may be in a bad situation. You may also have a roommate whose girlfriend or boyfriend visits often.

Talk to your roommates and find out their feelings about when visitation is best. Work to get things out in the open. Spend some time honestly discussing the following items:

- I would like to avoid having friends in the apartment during these times...
- If I feel that your visitor(s) have overstayed their welcome, we will handle it like this...
- The way I feel about getting dressed with members of the opposite sex in the apartment is...

Great Roommates...

Communication is the key to successful residential living. Chances are that if something is bothering you, it's bothering your roommates, too. After all, your roommate is human too.

If you're spending the time with your roommates, it will be much easier to understand what you're both going through. We all need room to breathe, so don't depend on your roommate to supply your every emotional and social need.

If you have talked your way through these areas, you and your roommate should be on the way to a good relationship. If problems develop that you can't seem to solve, go see your Resident Assistant or Senior Resident Assistant.