

***Roommate Conflicts:
A Three-Pronged Approach***

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Literature Review

Students of the Millennial Generation today are coming to college extremely anxious about their living situation, mostly because they have never shared a room before (Farrell, 2006). Not only do they have to determine how to fit all their worldly belongings in a small room, they must figure out how to leave compatibly with someone they may have never met before. Although some students choose to live with someone they know, most receive random room assignments. Larger universities or ones with limited resources are more likely to make random roommate matches, as compared to smaller colleges and private universities that have more staff and resources to spend the time making more personalized roommate matches (Ingalls, 2000). Although students tend to think that being paired with a roommate based on similar tastes and interests would solve many of their roommate problems, research says otherwise. “Similarities between roommates’ personalities, characteristics, demographic background, and interests have not been shown to have a consistent association with positive roommate relationships, suggesting that matching roommates on these characteristics will not improve relationships” (Waldo, 1989, p. 465).

Having a negative roommate experience can cause a great deal of stress on students. In a study of the personal, health, academic and environmental predictors of stress in residence hall students, Dunn, Dusselier, & Wang (2005) found that frequency of experiencing conflict with a roommate was the twelfth of 22 factors that predicted stress in residence hall students. Also of interest was the fact that women reported greater stress than men. Poor roommate relationships have also led to other negative side effects for students.

In particular, students' roommates have a substantial effect on their university experience. Poor quality relationships among roommates have been shown to be related to students' dissatisfaction with their living situations, poor emotional adjustment, negative perceptions of the university environment, lower GPAs, and lower retention rates (Waldo, 1989, p. 465).

So how do students who experience problems with their roommates overcome these issues so that the roommate relationship does not affect their overall university experience? Assertive, positive, and open communication is crucial. "Positive relationships between roommates have been shown to be associated with a clearer understanding between roommates of each other's expectations, more open communication with each other, and verbalization to each other of their thoughts and feelings about one another..." (Waldo, 1989, p. 465). In addition to open communication, appropriate confrontation of roommates during a conflict is also key. Waldo (1989) reports that this is one of the most critical communications skills a student can have to maintain a positive relationship with their roommate, and that that appropriate confrontation is connected to a student's GPA and retention at the university.

In order to assist students through a roommate conflict, the Residence Life staff needs appropriate training in communication skills, assertiveness, confrontation, and conflict resolution to be able to assist their residents. "RAs need practice in confrontational methods and developing a consultative role in dealing with resident student's problems. Upcraft believes that RAs should discuss conflict resolution, crisis management, interpersonal skill, and disciplinary matters" (Twale & Muse, 1996, ¶ 6). Residence Life staff also need to know how to help students learn to deal with their stress, whether it is from academics, emotional concerns, or interpersonal conflict. Parents and students need to feel comfortable approaching the appropriate residence hall staff

when a negative roommate situation arises and that the staff knows how to be of assistance. “It is a necessity for student affairs professionals, especially those in residence living communities, to be educated and possess a good understanding of how to deal with students and sources of their stress” (Conneely, Good, & Perryman, 2001, ¶ 21).

In addition, parents also need to be informed on how to help their student when they are experiencing roommate conflicts. Whether a parent is considered a “helicopter parent” wherein they hover over their children, or a “Blackhawk parent” wherein they swoop in to rescue their student, they need to be given a sense that their student’s needs are being met and they are getting value for the money they are paying to the university. “Parents are no longer viewed as those individuals who drop students off on the first day of new student orientation and disappear until graduation. Many parents take an active role in their student’s education, especially their living arrangements” (Conneely, Good & Perryman, 2001, ¶ 4). Dealing with the transition from high school to college can be very difficult for parents. They must relinquish some control over their student’s life and trust that they will be taken care of away from home. University faculty and staff must strike a balance with parents who feel the need to remain closely connected to their student’s living environment. This balance must exist between allowing parents to “...have enough input to feel secure leaving their sons and daughters at college...” and helping them realize that “overly controlling parents can stifle students’ ability to develop a sense of independence and personal responsibility” (Conneely, Good & Perryman, 2001, ¶ 10). In the case of roommate conflicts, parents need to know that their son or daughter has the resources and support to be guided through the situation without diving in to solve it for the student.

Project Timeline

January-February 2008: Conduct external research from other universities and organizations.

February-March 2008: Distribute and collect the *Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts* to the entire WSU Resident Assistant/Community Assistant staff and the *Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts* to all Sheehan Hall residents, and record all results.

April-July 2008: Design the parent information piece, the Residence Life staff training module, and the student guide; distribute draft materials for review; make parent information piece available at Freshmen Registration Week in June.

July 2008: Final report and printing of materials for Fall 2008.

August 2008: Present at the ASF membership meeting.

Assessment Activities

Assessments were developed to gather qualitative data regarding roommate conflicts. The first one was distributed to the Resident Assistants/Community Assistants (RA/CA) on their experiences and knowledge/skills handling roommate conflicts (Appendix A-*Resident Assistant Survey on Roommate Conflicts*). The second one was distributed to Sheehan Hall residents regarding their experience with roommate conflicts and how it affected their satisfaction with the residence halls and Winona State University (Appendix B-*Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts*). Results of both assessments were typed verbatim.

The original assessment plan for this project was to produce the training pieces for both staff and students and beta test them for two months to review their effectiveness. However, upon return from Winter Break, the extremely low number of new roommate conflicts was not enough to produce results the author had hoped. Instead, the author chose to assess the prior

experiences and knowledge of the entire RA/CA staff and Sheehan Hall residents to identify gaps and areas where further training and information was needed for the following Fall semester when the number of roommate conflicts is higher.

Assessment Results

Resident Assistant Survey on Roommate Conflicts

This 18-question survey was distributed to all 49 RAs/CAs. Thirty-six were returned for a 73.4% response rate. A majority of the staff felt that the information they had received from their Resident Assistant I class offered the previous Spring semester, the annual Fall training, and a special inservice offered by the WSU Counseling Center staff provided them with good information that was useful. Parts of the Residence Life staff training module that was developed in this project utilized information presented during these three times. Many of the areas where the staff would have liked more training included communication skills, action steps to take, alternative strategies, and assertiveness. There were also more requests for role play activities to practice the new skills. 40% of the RA/CA staff indicated that roommate conflicts affected their own job satisfaction for a variety of reasons including disharmony on their floor, residents unwilling to work toward resolution, increased stress, inability to handle the situation, residents who complain a great deal, and fewer people to attend floor programs. The staff also gave many suggestions on what the Housing & Residence Life Department could do to improve their job satisfaction surrounding roommate conflicts. Ideas included developing a step-by-step action plan, implementing a referral system when they cannot effectively resolve multiple conflicts, revising the Roommate Agreement, offering a roommate conflict/communication workshop for students, and plan an improved training. 72% of the RA/CA staff utilized the Roommate Agreement on a regular basis or as needed. Although this is a very high percentage, more

consistent use across all the residence halls should be implemented to so that roommate conflict resolution begins with the same process (filling out or evaluating the Roommate Agreement).

Most of those who use the Roommate Agreement responded that having the students fill it out at the beginning of the school year was the best practice so it set out expectations from the start of the roommate relationship.

Four questions were also asked regarding the RA/CA's residents who had a roommate conflict. Most were surrounding the areas of value differences, lifestyle differences, and communication breakdowns. The general theme among the RA/CA staff was that their residents were not effectively communicating with their roommates regarding problems or issues. This included talking early about the problem, approaching the situation maturely, and not talking to friends and neighbors about the problems. The main skills they tried to model/teach their residents were effective communication skills, listening, remaining calm and patient, and maintaining respect. Recommendations that the RA/CA staff thought that the Housing & Residence Life Department could to do better address roommate conflicts included providing informational materials and training sessions for residents, requiring roommates to discuss expectations on the Roommate Agreement, and explaining the room change process.

Finally, five questions were also asked regarding parents of the RA/CA's residents. Only eight staff members reported having been contacted by a parent regarding a roommate conflict. Most of the time it was to inform the RA/CA of a conflict situation, although six also noted that the parents wanted action taken. Many of them felt that parents should remember that their students are adults and need to deal with conflict themselves, conflict takes time to work through, parents don't always have the entire story of what is happening, students should talk to

their RA/CA if there are issues, and students need to really talk to their roommate about expectations.

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

This 10-question questionnaire was distributed to all 390 residents of Sheehan Hall. 226 were returned for a 57.9% response rate. Sheehan Hall was targeted for this questionnaire since the majority of roommate conflicts that occurred first semester at WSU included Sheehan Hall residents. 41% of the students reported having a roommate conflict to varying degrees. Most of them tried to talk to their roommate about the problems, while some just avoided the confrontation. 38% of those who tried to resolve the situation were not happy with the outcome.

Only 51% of the students sought help from their RA/CA but most that did thought that the advice the RA/CA gave was worthwhile and helpful. 81% of the students sought assistance or support from their parents. Many of the parents listened or gave moral support, were an ear to vent to, told their student to talk to the roommate or the RA, and offered suggestion on how to improve the situation.

In terms of satisfaction, 39% of the students said their roommate conflict negatively affected their satisfaction of living in the residence halls, 16% said that their roommate conflict negatively affected their satisfaction of both living in the residence halls and attending Winona State University, and 4% said that their roommate conflict negatively affected their satisfaction of attending Winona State University. The central theme for dissatisfaction of the residence halls circled around needing a private space and their roommate's personality and lifestyle. There were not many details provided regarding their dissatisfaction in attending WSU besides just not liking the experience overall and compounding their stress levels. Some of them did not want to be at WSU at all.

If the students had their own way, they would like to see faster room switches, fewer build-up rooms, and a better roommate matching system. Finally, the students thought that asking more questions on the housing application to try and match roommates better was the best thing that could be done to address roommate conflicts in the future. Other ideas included mandatory meetings with the RAs/CAs if there were problems and providing workshops on how to deal with roommate conflicts.

Proposed & Actual Outcomes

Parent Information Piece “My Student is in a Roommate Conflict...Now What?”

A two-page parent information piece was written and designed after conducting research on what several other institutions and organizations were providing the parents of their students. Research was conducted from the websites of Ohio State University, University of Mississippi, University of Texas-Austin, Indiana University Southeast, University of Indianapolis, Purdue University, and Colorado University as well as from www.reslife.net. Anecdotal tips and information reported in the *Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts* and the *Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts* conducted in February-March 2008 were supported by this research. Also, Nancy Dumke was consulted for additional information/resources she gained from preparing the WSU Parent Handbook. The premise for this piece was to provide valuable tips and information to help parents assist their student through a roommate conflict from afar. Too often, parents try to step into the conflict as they think this is a help. However, it can create more ill-will between the roommates and can make the residence life staff's job harder in the end.

The first side provides parents with general information about roommate conflicts and what they can do to support their student. The second side describes the general conflict

resolution process that occurs in the residence halls at Winona State University. It is important for parents to know how the Resident Assistants and Hall Directors handle roommate conflicts when they are reported as well as what the expectations of the students are. In addition, a brief introduction to FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) is provided to inform parents of what can and cannot be shared if they choose to call the Hall Director if their student has not signed a waiver. Parents, justifiably, want to know that their student is being taken care of and sometimes don't understand why they cannot have all the details regarding their student's roommate conflict.

This parent information piece was disbursed during the June 2008 Freshmen Registration week at the Housing & Residence Life table and during the parent presentation by Paula Scheevel (Director of Residence Life) and Pat Ferden (Counseling Center). It will also be placed on the Housing & Residence Life website and will be available during Move-In/Orientation Week in August 2008. Finally, a link will be made to the WSU Parent Handbook found on the Winona State University homepage.

The primary goal for this information piece is to show parents that Winona State University takes roommate conflicts seriously and that there is a process in place for addressing them. Also, by providing information to parents on how they can effectively support their student who is learning to deal with their conflict in an adult, mature manner, parents will have satisfaction in knowing that Winona State University is teaching lifelong skills (i.e., conflict management, communication, listening) in and out of the classroom.

Residence Life Staff Training Module “My Residents Are in a Conflict...Now What?”

With the exception of a presentation by the WSU Counseling Center in Fall 2007, Winona State University Residence Life staff in the past has received very minimal training on how to effectively handle roommate conflicts. They have been trained on active listening and confrontation techniques, but nothing from roommate conflict reference point. Based on results from the *Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts* conducted in February-March 2008, the following gaps were identified for future training:

- Steps of action to take in roommate conflicts
- Listening and communication skills
- Practice exercises—experiential learning
- Alternative strategies to use
- Using Roommate Agreements
- Assertiveness

A training module was written for Winona State University Residence Life staff which will be presented in August 2008. Research was conducted on LeHigh University and Illinois State University websites. Additional information was also used from a presentation by Dr. Lynda Brzezinski and Kelly Kirby of the Winona State University Counseling Center in October 2007 “When Duct Tape Doesn’t Work: Effective Conflict Resolution.” The information received from web research, the author’s own counseling skills texts, and presentation materials formulated the basis for this new training module. Draft documents were shared with student staff members for review.

The training will combine lecture, role play exercises based on the information presented, and multimedia. Each Residence Life staff member will have a copy of the training module in their manual for future reference. They will also receive a copy of the *I'm in a Roommate Conflict...Now What?* Student Guide during the training. Finally, new Residence Life staff members will have an opportunity to practice their roommate conflict resolution skills during the annual "Behind Closed Doors" training held at the end of the Residence Life staff training. The decision to add this scenario was also based on results from the *Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts*.

The goal for this training is to provide Residence Life staff members with more skills and techniques to address roommate conflicts on their floors/in their buildings. Although each conflict has its own uniqueness, having a core set of skills and an action plan to follow will hopefully provide a better sense of success and accomplishment for the staff, as well as improved job satisfaction for staff in buildings that have high numbers of roommate conflicts.

Student Guide "I'm in a Roommate Conflict...Now What?"

Residence hall students at Winona State University have never received any formal form of training or information regarding roommate conflicts and conflict resolution until they are in the throes of a roommate conflict. Since many of the students who live in the residence halls and have a roommate have never shared a bedroom before, the number of roommate conflicts has dramatically increased in the last few years. The three most common causes of roommate conflicts are value differences, lifestyle differences and communication breakdowns. This information was supported by the results of the *Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts* conducted in February-March 2008.

This student guide was developed to provide students with an assortment of information:

- How to be a good roommate
- How to talk to their roommate when there is a problem and how to effectively listen
- The conflict resolution process
- Room change request information
- Tips and strategies to avoid, handle, and resolve roommate conflicts

Besides there being good information to read, students have an opportunity to apply what they have learned to their own personal experiences through journaling. This provides them with a way to pinpoint what the issues are and how they wish to address them with their roommate.

Research was conducted from many different universities and organization websites including Canisius College, University of Missouri, New Mexico State University, DePaul University, University of Delaware, Georgetown University and www.residentassistant.com. Additional information was also used from a presentation by Dr. Lynda Brzezinski and Kelly Kirby of the Winona State University Counseling Center in October 2007 “When Duct Tape Doesn’t Work: Effective Conflict Resolution.” Draft documents were shared with student staff members for review.

The goal for this student guide is to provide students with an educational and constructive way of teaching students living in the residence halls how to be good roommates and how to effectively communicate when problems arise. As long as roommates can respect one another and can live together harmoniously, they do not need to be best friends. By teaching them early on how to handle conflicts, students will develop lifelong skills that will be useful in a variety of relationships and encounters they will have. In addition, it also informs students of how the conflict resolution process works at Winona State University in the case that they need assistance in resolving their roommate conflict.

This guide will be available to students from the Residence Life staff members in their buildings, at the Winona State University Housing & Residence Life Department Office, and on the Housing & Residence Life Department website. In addition, it will be distributed during Fall Move-In/Orientation. Plans are also underway to conduct a “Roommate Relationship & Communication” workshop in partnership with Winona State University Health Services in Fall 2008 utilizing this student guide.

References

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Appendix A:
Resident Assistant Survey on
Roommate Conflicts

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

Dear RAs:

I have recently received a grant to develop some educational materials regarding roommate conflicts. I really want to provide information that will be beneficial to RAs, residents, and parents. Your experiences and thoughts will have a huge impact on how I develop these materials. Please complete this survey and return it to your hall director by Thursday, Feb. 28. I really appreciate your honest opinions and suggestions in order to provide better service and training for future RAs, residents and parents. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at trahim@winona.edu or 457-5323.

Thanks for your help!

*Tracy Rahim
Sheehan Hall Director*

Demographic Information

Male: 15

Female: 31

Type of floor you have:

Male: 10

Female: 23

Co-Ed: 13

Year of most students on your floor (check all that apply):

Freshmen: 39

Sophomore: 12

Junior: 4

Senior: 4

How many years have you been an RA:

One: 25

Two: 18

Three: 3

RA Training & Experience

1-How do you feel about the training you have received regarding roommate conflicts? What did you find the most helpful among information gained from RA Class, Fall Training, and the Fall Inservice Training?

- I have been lucky and not had to deal with many roommate issues-but the listening skills I was taught helped me the most, as the girls liked that they could come to me.
- I think the fall training is great: The inservices are a great boost of knowledge
- I did not go through the RA class or fall training. I did go to the fall inservice and I feel like it helped very much.
- I feel that for a guys floor, there was enough training and information. I think that if this were a girls floor, then I wouldn't have because of drama. I learned the most from the FERPA training.
- Brainstorming lists of solutions before judging the suggestions. Don't pick sides and believe them.
- I feel we didn't get enough information. The inservice provided some more information but we didn't learn how to do a room switch when needed what are problems to address with roommates.
- I feel I am informed enough, best way to learn is role play and real experience.
- Great all were helpful- the books were taught in RAI and learned in Fall Training. The Inservice gave a chance to practice that.

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- Counseling Dept.'s training they do for us – Lynda Brzezinski's program "When duct tape doesn't work" was fabulous!
- Training was good. The closest to the actual situations are best. Its hard to know just what to do in every situation.
- I think we're pretty well trained to handle actually going through series of conflicts.
- Training was most helpful, in-services have not been much help
- The training was good, the pretend situations really helped a lot.
- The most helpful was probably just how to approach students who are very heated. Also I think it was great to be reminded we are mediators and that we cannot get them out of the disagreement without their help.
- Training was adequate, most helpful=how to approach the situation
- I felt very well prepared. It's one of those things you need to go though to really feel confident, but I knew what to do before the year started
- It's ok. I don't really think much more info can be received. The most helpful was probably the "when duct doesn't work in service"
- I think it was helpful but nothing is better than real life experiences
- I felt the training in regards to roommate conflicts was ok. I have almost all singles, so I can honestly say that I really have not used any of the information
- Good, I rather like the information on how to defuse conflicts
- It is nice to know there is someone to pull back on, and someone you can talk to about in other RA's that went through this. A good way to get prepared for inevitable conflicts. Sometimes it seems like the info is watered down, and we a just blowing over it for the sake of doing it
- The training was good but I don't have many doubles so roommate conflicts aren't a problem
- I really thought the fall in service with Linda and Kelly was most effective on how I approach roommate conflicts. I only have 4-6 rooms on my floor that have roommates so I was not too worried about conflicts as a whole.
- I don't remember the roommate conflict training from the RA class or the fall training. I felt the in service training did the best job.
- The fall in service training was the most helpful. The info given in the RA class was brief and we went through so much it was hard to remember everything
- The training in general was good and helpful but the most helpful was from fall in service. This is because at this point I knew what some of the roommate conflicts were about so I could actually bring them up for discussion
- I don't believe we received enough info during training. When we did "behind closed doors" we dealt with other issues, but not the simple issues. The most helpful was that in "behind closed doors" it helped a lot
- How to think about different perspectives and cultural background, how to mediate
- RA class gave a good overview of how to handle roommate conflict and got me thinking about it. What stands out most about roommate conflict training is from the fall In service, which is the rights in the ind, and I statements
- I felt that I was very prepared for roommate conflicts. What help the most was giving us ways to have good effective communication with and amongst roommates.

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- I felt fine and confident about the training I had about roommate conflicts. The most helpful training I had about mediating roommate conflicts was from fall training and the fall in service training
- I found that the training I received was adequate. I found behind closed doors particularly helpful. I also enjoyed having the counselors come in during in service and talk about how to listen and mediate
- I think the fall in service helped the most just because fall training has too much information and it's hard to apply and fully understand prior to being an RA
- I like how they told us about all of the different types of roommate conflicts, but I think we need more how to handle the situation training
- I believe I was adequately trained to handle room conflicts. I think that the behind closed doors really helped me understand roommate conflicts and helped me deal with conflicts that have arisen.
- I think that they didn't prepare us as much as they could have, but they prepares for some stuff. I found just talking about how to approach it was the most helpful
- The best for me was the behind the doors experience. I didn't do the roommate conflict for behind closed doors but it made me more comfortable
- I feel prepared to handle roommate conflicts. Learning how to set up my floor initially with respect and rules was most useful. It was very helpful to hear tips from returning RAs
- I felt that the training helped but sometimes situations arisen that I didn't know how to handle. I think during RA class the role playing of different situations help the most
- I think my training was alright. Training gives you a idea of what to do or say. However, the training we did received seemed limited. We went so quickly though everything
- The training was very well done. Behind closed doors was beneficial for practicing the strategies learned
- I feel the training was adequate. There were some really good points and insights provided during fall in service. I also thank my hall director for being there and giving concrete and useful ideas when I need advice
- I feel that the most helpful info given was during fall training. Particularly going though scenarios and giving feedback
- I feel like the training was pretty similar to everything we learned the first time

2-Where do you feel that more training could still be provided (i.e., where are the holes) when training RAs in the fall with roommate conflicts?

- I don't believe I can comment because I have all single s and I didn't receive all of the training.
- I think more training should take go into different versions of mediations.
- I think more training should go into different versions of mediations.
- Scenarios and device, communication methods, steps of action to take questions to ask and responses.
- There is no training-we aren't taught how to handle /confront any of these situations
- More role play an incorporate this into behind closed doors?

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- We got good connections with the resources on campus but the challenge is getting the residents to take advantage of them. We all know they're there, how do we get students to use them.
- An emphasis on listening- have the RA know the story clearly from both sides and provide ways for the roommates to communicate effectively.
- How RAs should communicate to the residents involved.
- Cover more specific conflicts
- On the topic of following up
- I'm not sure if necessary, but more scenario readings. I think that RAs can be surprised by the array of things that can bring conflict
- I think it would be good to have a way to approach residents before they really get into their living situations and let them know what to expect. So we can both be trained and ready to work through our problems together.
- How to keep conversations from getting hostile
- Focus on teaching us better body language
- More chances to practice dealing with roommate conflict before actually having to do the real thing
- How to not get emotionally involved, and how to ask the right questions
- Besides a roommate contract, what would be some steps or info that we could go through with the ones with problems
- Dealing with the conflicts and how to do it in a comfortable environment. We know a lot about what we may have to deal with and what might be brought up to make it easy but we don't do a lot with how to approach roommate conflicts
- When dealing with conflicts personalities
- I think there should be periodic training preferably a few weeks in, because that is when conflicts start to arise. Maybe small training geared towards specific halls. Lourdes doesn't have many roommate situations so it should have different trainings maybe.
- Right away! Move in day is a tough day and students already come to school with jaded feelings about living situations
- More training on preventative measures (open communication)
- No, I think it is a good amount
- More alternative solutions
- Situations could be expanded. Ask an RA who has had many roommate conflicts and see what the conflicts were about. We could then be better trained for more types of conflicts
- I think it would be really hard to get training in this area, because most roommate conflicts revolve around people not having any chemistry, having different schedules or simply not talking about their issues
- I think going through a roommate contract would be beneficial. That way everyone would know what was on it and older RAs could be advice to other RAs.
- Different ways to deal with conflicts (not just to sitting them down and "working" it out)
- More scenarios needed, perhaps a question and answer session and former RAs experiences
- More in depth training with respective hall directors
- Given the 2nd year RAs more direction when performing situations during behind closed doors. Some were goofing around and giving unrealistic situations (others did a great job)

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- Playing both sides of the conflict. Helping one person isn't bad, but then having to confront the other roommate is extremely difficult
- Maybe more practice can be added on bringing up the issue with the other roommate. Sometimes it is awkward if the other roommate knows nothing about the other roommate's concern or issues
- How to create fun programs, balancing stress, and being able to see issues on the floor before they happen. Saying no
- It would be nice if we would let more cases with conflicts
- More training could be provided on the issues that people don't seem to think will happen. Like suicide and stealing
- I think that there should be a specific scenario session dealing with roommate issues. It should be facilitated by returning RAs and should focus on the do's and don'ts of roommate conflicts
- How to handle the situations
- Assertiveness
- One thing I ran into multiple times that was not covered had to do with one roommate "turning" the other in for alcohol/drugs
- I feel that more training could be done in behind closed doors, I think that actual experience dealing with the situations is worth more than just being trained on situations and ideas

3-What information/techniques have you used while working through roommate conflicts with your residents?

- Roommate agreement forms
- I haven't had to deal with any serious neighbor/ roommate conflicts.
- I typically hear them out and then urge them to confront their roommate before I step in.
- Mediation, New Roommate contact, and having them talk to each other
- How to address the second roommate about the issue.
- Hearing both side of the story via email first, then go in with an open mind.
- I have gone over the polite ways for them to communicate and emphasized no to "get at the small stuff."
- Listen actively, ask questions, make sure they are confronted it first
- Allowing each to speak (to each other) @ distinct, separate times so they are forced to listen and explain themselves. Hold them to what they decide on their roommate contracts I have them do.
- Have used mediation techniques such as sitting both parties down to discuss, giving each person their own chance to talk.
- Letting one person speak at a time. Referring them to the roommate contract.
- Talking to each, then both at the same time.
- Mediation. I think being a mediator is extremely important. Otherwise, just making sure you can see both sides.
- Trying to meet with both at the same time and have them communicate their issues. I also used the roommate contract.

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- I have tried making new/updated roommate contracts, I have tried sitting down with both roommates at the same time.
- I have honestly not had any roommate conflicts this year.
- Haven't had any
- Patience and a lot of insight and help from my hall director
- Roommate "therapy" sessions all together gives everyone a chance to say their piece then as a group generate solutions.
- Roommate contracts
- Most of the time we just have open rooms so we move the girls out.
- I haven't really had any. I have mostly singles.
- I haven't had any roommate conflicts!
- I have not really used any. The one roommate conflicts I did have, the only roommate ended up moving out.
- I haven't had any roommate conflicts this year.
- Talking with each resident independently, and try to get them to understand, talk, resolve. Residents have never wanted me to talk to both at the same time.
- I used mediation, roommate contracts, and in severe situations, my HD.
- I think separating the residents helps cool off and diffuse situations very quickly. It also allowed for me to think about what to say. I also think constant communication is key, especially between the two residents.
- open honest conversations hearing them out, trying to understand their side.
- Staying calm and being persistent in tackling issues directly
- I have not had many, if any RCs, as such I have no distinct styles.
- I get both sides of the story individually
- Referencing the roommate contracts is very helpful and the idea of having them add onto their roommate contracts. Some girls really need that extra ground work.
- One on one conversations first, then sit down with both
- Have not experienced roommate conflicts
- Giving the roommate who is annoyed with certain behaviors way to bring it up with the roommate without making her roommate feel awkward. Offering a roommate contract
- Getting both sides, encouraging honesty because that is the only opportunity to give it
- Tell them to talk to their roommate and using a roommate contract
- I try to work out roommate conflicts with both roommates together helping them see each others sides of the story. Sometimes silence works well because it forces them to want to talk
- Keeping an open mind and being able to see both sides
- I have used a lot of the information they filled out on their contracts
- I didn't really have any conflicts we just did the contracts in the beginning. Most of my doubles became singles not really due to conflicts have not had to many but at my first meeting on move in day I always tell my girls to be honest about their items and how they feel about certain things. This is not the time to be overly nice
- I have not had to deal with roommate conflicts with my residents, so I don't have any valuable input with this question.
- Having both people tell their side of the situation, trying to work it out and then working on improving it (moving out or stay)

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

4-Is there anything that you have tried but hasn't worked for you?

- No
- Suggesting roommate dinners didn't work because someone always couldn't make it.
- Not really
- Um...moving works
- Sitting them down together
- Asking roommates to try and resolve conflicts themselves
- No
- I haven't had any students have problems with their roommates; however, my guys know just to leave each other alone. You respect them, they will respect you.
- I have tried having both girls talk to each other about issues. Sometimes this causes more issues because they didn't feel comfortable saying everything before.
- The roommate contract wasn't that effective.
- Nope!
- Nope
- No
- I think that sometimes conferences don't always work because some residents are so upset they refuse to open up. I think they can be effective but sometimes they don't cut it.
- I find that if I treat a situation/conflict very seriously, residents will in turn treat the conflict in like manner.
- Talking to both of them at the same time.
- No-most of my gins had success after talking it out and realizing they need to choose their battles.
- Interfering a lot of times they are venting when there really isn't that big of a problem.
- no
- no
- When they are unwilling to try a solution
- Letting them "work it out" on their own. Having them come to you individually (then they don't talk to each other)
- Anything not personal, if you aren't there with them, it doesn't work get one on one with them.
- Not really, being calm and still tackling the problem head on has worked for me.
- No not really. I think that the ABC's are a good background for starting.
- Yes, I have had 2 roommate conflicts where I even had my HD come in and the girls just ended up moving out when they could, it was very stressful.
- Email
- Sometimes it is hard to get one roommate to understand what they are doing is bothering the other so flat out asking how one is feeling. So the other one knows what is going through their head doesn't always work
- Expecting that they have talked to each other when they really haven't addressed the issue to the other person
- Encouraged residents not to talk it on the floor, that is not my fault it doesn't work but they really shouldn't
- I haven't had any residents go through with the roommate contract when I offered it. They thought it was a little extreme and solved it by talking it out before needing one

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- Getting them together before I've heard both sides
- Yes, I have tried to have them talk it out but one of them wouldn't speak to the other

5-Do roommate conflicts on your floor(s) affect your job satisfaction? If yes, how?

- Yes, when finished and all is well, I feel great about the interaction.
- No - I have only had 2.
- No Thank God!
- They do. Because roommates are unwilling to change so then I hear about it from everyone on the floor.
- NO, not many roommate conflicts here.
- No- I still love my job!
- I enjoy it when the gals agree to try but I do not enjoy the conflicts!
- No- its expected
- Yes, no one wants things to be going poorly between two roommates, but resolving the problem give satisfaction.
- Sure, I like my residents , I don't like it when they argue and can't work it out themselves.
- No
- No, I expect myself to be able to resolve situations that usually come up in roommate conflicts.
- Yes, because it is hard to see the girls under such stress and it makes their attitude really poor. Usually it's a case where both the girls are really great but their personalities clash and so you have a hard time negotiating between them and they look to you for answers and sometimes you've done all you can.
- Yes I want ,e residents to be happy, but room switches are difficult
- NO. I believe it is just like any other situation encountered with the job. When conflicts are resolved it makes me feel good that it helped
- Yes, I feel I don't know how to handle situations. It affect me personally if I know someone better than the other
- No
- Sometimes because with a couple situations I always had the roommates coming to me and it was so hard to find a compromise that both could agree on and would up hold. Especially in one situation where the roommate with a rude roommate would always come to my room but I felt bad because there wasn't' anything I could do
- Not really, I expect it was apart of my job
- No
- No
- Sometimes when one roommate wants to get out and they come to me and complain everyday
- No, I don't think roommate conflicts would have affected my job satisfaction
- I find that I enjoy my job more if there is no drama going on; however, I find that there is almost always something happening.
- I think sometimes it is hard to do your job effectively when you have to settle roommate issues constantly. It is very frustrating and infuriating at times and sometimes I feel like quitting; however, I want to help people so I generally stick with it.

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- No
- No – I don't think so , things just happen, so that can't affect me.
- Yes and no. there are more than I thought, but they haven't been completely out of control. Everyone was pretty level headed about them.
- Yes. I had a really long roommate conflict and when everything was solved, I felt really good. And the girl that stayed on my floor was very grateful.
- Not really, I realized that it comes along with the job.
- No
- No
- It does because then floor unity is hard to achieve.
- The less, the merrier! The more there are the more times taken away from other things.
- No, they are bound to happen.
- Not really
- They would, because its not a good situation
- No, I haven't had any.
- They could. If everyone seems to be fighting and nothing is getting resolved, you could potentially feel like a failure.
- No - I know its part of my job
- A tiny bit. I guess it is a little uncomfortable when roommates don't get along at all, because then an awkward situation is created between me and them when they are both around.
- Yes, angry residents are difficult to please. They are also less likely to attend programs.

6-What else can Housing & Residence Life do to help you regarding your job satisfaction surrounding roommate conflicts?

- It might be nice to have a step by step plan on general plan of attack to follow when presented with roommate conflict.
- I thought you did great!
- Be flexible in moving residents out of conflict situations.
- I think the best way would be to give a very detailed survey to students when they apply for housing, so they can be matched with people that have similar schedules and have common interests.
- Make sure you are well trained and give RAs a source to refer the roommates to if it can't be resolved.
- Nothing else
- I think they should try to identify who may be a problem roommate and give the RAs a heads up. They could use information they received in advance through surveys to look for red flags.
- Smile?
- Give us more tools to deal with them.
- Revised and required roommate contracts. If possible, more in depth questionnaire about what you would like in a roommate then pair people together.
- Nothing more can be done. All the needed help I ever needed was given.
- More situations in Behind – Closed – Doors

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- Better screening? Have a form to match students together.
- I think they are doing a good job as it is.
- My hall director was really helpful, so I don't think there is anything better than that. I think every roommate conflict is different, so it would be very hard to say something specific.
- They should make a complaint sheet if they are looking to move out, and get a detailed description.
- I really liked the in service training! With the "I" statements, and listening practice.
- During orientation week have the residents go through a roommate conflict workshop.
- I think the best way is to maybe offer some form of mandated roommate counseling, a forum where residents go to and work out, ie. Talk out, their problems. This would save the RAs a few headaches.
- Don't put residents with an international student if they checked no on the housing form!
- Require all roommates to fill out roommate agreement
- More resources on how to work with roommate conflicts
- HD get involved more?
- It is already well covered.
- More suggestions would be nice a write -up for RAs to hang in their closets of reminders before talking with the gals.
- Get everyone on the same page as to what the RAs are responsible for doing with the conflicts.
- Support us in them, which they do!
- Not much, I don't think there's anything else that could've been added during RA training that would've helped. We're taught ideas and able to practice via scenarios not much else can be added.
- Nothing, there seems to be a full array of support and services.
- Basically I think the only step left to take is prepare them before they come because obviously we have been given a lot of info and put fourth a lot of work but I think girls get shocked about sharing a room.
- Do a better roommate match, maybe an online survey, then match most appropriate people together
- Possibly do more of an in depth roommate or housing application for freshmen. It seems that some people need more pairing up then whether or not their roommate smokes or is an international resident
- Having HD be willing to speak with resident when things get out of hand
- More standardized step by step
- Give us more information regarding handling them we didn't get very much info
- More training?
- Not have build-ups
- More money??

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

Roommate Agreement

7-Do you currently use the Roommate Agreement with your residents?

- I did at the beginning of the year but have not recently as most girls have new roommates.
- No
- Yes, the beginning of the year I have them fill it out so that everyone is on the same page.
- I have never had to use one so far. I usually try for a verbal agreement between the residents first and then if things get worse, resort to an agreement.
- Yes – all the time.
- Yes I pull it out every time there is a conflict.
- Yes. All of my residents have one! I think that it helps to have one to refer back to.
- Only with some.
- Yes!
- No
- No
- No
- Only when necessary
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- No
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- Only when there are already problems occurring.
- Yes
- No
- Yes
- Yes I do
- No, not unless needed
- Only when needed
- Yes I love it!
- Yes
- No, have not used but yet this year but have suggested it.
- I offer it as an option, but do not require it.
- It has been offered but no one has used it.
- I haven't had to use it, I almost go to that point but never had to
- Yes, I make sure they have it up when they are having problems
- Yes
- I offer them when problems arise, but I don't make them have one
- When needed, I encourage things to be talked about first then I fill one out
- Sometimes
- Yes, but not for everyone

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- Yes
- Yes
- Yes, but none have ever had to come and talk to me where we would have had to use it
- Yes
- I do currently use the roommate contract with all of my residents and I believe that has helped because it forces them to think about all sorts of ideas on the first day, and made them come up with solutions.

8-If yes, when do you have them fill it out? Do you think that is a good time to do it or would you change?

- Yes they fill them out the first week they are here I think at semester time they should be re evaluate it.
- After 2 weeks of school
- About 2-3 weeks into the semester. I like that time because residents have been around for a little bit, know the kind of environment they want, and know their roommates, yet it is early in the year to it can be used for a while.
- I had them fill it out in the beginning of the year. Yes, I think it is a good time to do it.
- 2 weeks I think it was good, because they are comfortable and more likely to agree.
- Beginning of the year. It has worked so far.
- After first week or so. That way they can get a feel for the habits that bug them.
- Do it from the start not after conflict has arisen.
- I had everyone fill one out at our first meeting at the beginning of the year. Yes, I think that is a good time because it sets “rules” straight right at the beginning.
- I only had them filled in with the roommate conflict rooms.
- They filled them out at the beginning of the year, at the first meeting.
- Yes! I thought it was a great idea. When they hand it in I look at it and make sure they took it seriously, and if they didn’t I ask them to re-do it.
- The first week of school. But next year I think it would be a good idea for them to refill it out after winter break.
- The beginning of the year
- I required all of them to do one at the beginning of the year. I would require all at the beginning of the year.
- I think they should fill it out in sometime during the first week of classes of both semesters.
- I had them do it right away but I think I should have done a second the third week and one after winter break.
- Only when needed
- When a conflict arises.
- Having them aware of the contract at the first floor meeting – as explained by the RA- and then given out after the initial 2 weeks of getting a personal schedule down and a feel for college.
- The first time one of them comes to me with a concern/ complaint
- I think the beginning of 2nd term is a good time

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- Right away when they fill out their other room info I do but I think you need to remind them to update it.
- When conflicts arise, maybe better before things get too heated.
- When they ask for it or when I feel the situation is necessary to have one filled out. I think this is good because it gets roommates talking about what they want to see from the beginning but face to face and it gives them freedom to try and be good roommates on their own
- They fill it out after there is a disagreement. Yes. Because then we can use it as a tool and it is recognized more. If everyone has to fill one out they are just regarded as another piece of housing paper work by residents
- Good to do it in the beginning. PL RAs all not required to do it but I think it would have been better for my floor as a whole this year
- The beginning of the year and though out the year if new roommates move in together
- They filled them out about 3 weeks into the year. I think it is good time because roommates get to know each other and learn what they like and dislike
- In the fall, about two weeks in yes, it was a good time, but I maybe would have even waited one or two more weeks
- A couple a weeks into school so they get used to one another first “out of the honeymoon stage”
- My residents filled them out on move in day. I think that is a great time, because they had to think about it right away. It made them come up with solutions on their own and discuss the problems

9-Is there any information/questions on the Roommate Agreement that you think is missing that would be helpful for the residents to talk about?

- No, I think they are fine. But add a spot for a third roommate.
- To be honest I have never read through it. I just drop it off and tell them to write anything that isn't on there on the back.
- Maybe something about habits that one might have and not the other, like smoking or praying before going to bed, or some cultural tradition.
- Not that I can think of.
- No
- Nope
- No idea. Never looked at it
- No
- No
- Maybe a section about study habits, so that each roommate knows how the other person studies.
- I don't quite remember, but when I did one we added some questions because they had conflicts with a lamp.
- No I think everything on there is pretty accurate. They have questions about everything, and I think that some things can't be put on there. Sex is as far as it should go.
- Maybe a couple more questions about their personal characteristics i.e. I party, stay up late...

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- How to approach one another – are you passive, aggressive, etc...
- I think it might be advantageous for residents to write an essay on how they feel and read it aloud to their roommate, in order to vacillate conversation.
- I think it does a good job of covering it all.
- There is but it's a case by case issue that would be hard to address.
- Dishes, Laundry, cleaning-EL only
- No- it seems well covered.
- Confrontation style
- Not that I know of
- No the questions and everything seems standard, they are well put together.
- I don't think you could make one long enough to cover everything so it helps to have them fill in the missing links.
- Coming in at night, use to door space being a problem and no slamming doors
- At what time of day should appliance should be used, If someone violates agreements what will happen
- Maybe something to make sure they talk about them both having alone time in the room or how to handle friends hanging out in the room (when they want the room to just hangout with friends without their roommate their)
- Maybe something about playing music
- Nope
- NO
- More specific guidelines on guests, significant other and noise issues (TV, etc)
- I think that the roommate contracts are pretty good like they are. It has been quite effective.

Residents

10-What have been the typical roommate conflicts on your floor regarding?

- Noise
- I have had problems with people getting angry with each other over noise in morning or at night.
- Usually it is a personality clash or a silly feud among friends. Also, perceived disregard or lack of communication is a roommate issue.
- Cleanliness, noise, disrespect, miscommunication
- Different personalities (ex: stay up late/go to bed early, different values, go home/ stay every weekend)
- Some hygiene, and some friendships going bad. Also some stealing issues.
- Noise, getting into each other's space
- Typical conflicts are usually that they are "opposite" therefore they do not want to try and get along.
- I haven't had any
- None, just people wanting to move, but not because of conflict.
- Cultural differences. Different lifestyles.

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- Cleaning, schedules, guests
- Overstepping boundaries (too much sharing of things like clothes)
- Bed times, when the tv can be on, guests
- Policy violations, worry about theft.
- I haven't had any.
- The one I had was coming home super late, turning on the lights and then spitting and doing other strange things in the room.
- Schedule difference (night person/morning person), drunk and noisy roommate, personality clashes, having tv on too often, or people over constantly
- Cleaning schedule, personal fights, noise, friends coming over, and never knowing when they are and aren't there.
- Differences in lifestyles
- Space issues, mediation, and news contact
- Just plain not getting along because of different schedules and not talking about it.
- Dislike Roommates habits.
- Sleep times and habits. Also cleanliness
- Dishes, laundry, cleaning
- In P-L it was music and sleep/ study/rec. times. At EL mostly shared cleaning (i.e. dishes bathrooms, ect.)
- Different personalities- quiet vs. social , stolen food/ clothes, talking on cell phones, clingy roommates, lights and friends vs. sleep/ studying
- They don't talk to each other, so they'll get frustrated with something small but allow it to grow!
- Pretty much basic consideration problems not being quiet when one is sleeping, hygiene issues.
- Usually who has friends over, or if one uses the room way too much
- Primarily about noise, and to a much lesser extent language barriers.
- Hygiene
- Sex in the rooms, roommate borrowing but not asking and conflicting schedules and beliefs
- Cleaning, guests, respect issues
- Self differences and social norms
- Personality conflicts when bed times are
- One roommate spent a lot of time in the room, so the other didn't have time to themselves, one roommate constantly talking on the webcam- no quiet times for HW or a nap
- Talking on phone when other is trying to sleep or study. Not cleaning up after yourself
- Hygiene or cleaning of the room
- Having sex in the room while the other one is there. Clashing personalities
- The only minor one was regarding who would be the one to move out of the buildup. I guess maybe different study/sleep habits
- Build-ups needing more stuff or when they will be moving out

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

11-What do you wish the residents knew when they were in conflict with their roommate?

- Many times they are guilty of the same thing they complain about.
- How to talk to each other without being rude and positive confrontation skills.
- To come talk to me before things get out of hand.
- That people are different and especially that the best way to work through them is to communicate openly, and in a very nice and friendly manner (not yelling or blaming the other)
- Communication is a good start
- I haven't had any
- To be respectful and understanding
- The other side of the story. They never talk
- Most people can talk it out instead of letting it build up.
- Address the situation ASAP, do not bottle it up inside and ignore the problem.
- They should talk to their roommate and understand them or try to resolve differences on their own.
- To relax and talk things through, if not possible find a mediator (RA)
- The room is there's but they aren't the only person sharing the space. Respect is HUGE! Respect your roommate and the people around you.
- They need to give their roommates a chance first of all. Sometimes my girls would make their roommate sound like they were the...
- That they can talk to each other about it. They were not big issues, but because they didn't say anything it transformed into this big deal, any then they came to me.
- I wish they knew how it affected me, and how it affected the other person. Sometimes, just an easy apology is all that is needed.
- That talking is the answer! It is ok to be different.
- Talk it out right away. Don't get the whole floor involved.
- I wish residents knew that nobody is to blame and that nobody is at fault. Conflict is normal and I wish that students would not take things so seriously or over-dramatize their roommate's actions.
- Many times residents don't know how to communicate what they are feeling in an effective way.
- I wish they knew that their roommate is not psychic and therefore doesn't know that their actions are bothering others.
- That they don't have to be the best friends. That they have to live together
- That their parents can't fix it and also how to approach it.
- How to talk out situations
- That it is not only their room and some things will have to be sacrificed or accommodations will be made.
- How to communicate effectively!
- Your roommate does not have to be your bff, you need to be straight forward/ direct/ specific on what is the problem and how you feel, be partners in the solution, it's a give and take, you have to work with people you don't like all your life.
- Communication is often the piece missing.
- That there is always two sides to the story.

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- How to stay calm and try to work it out themselves first
- More about roommates psychology
- Talking early can solve a lot of problems
- That there are a variety of options to settle this, that it is okay to complain right away and not letting the situation to build up.
- I just would like for them to take a mature approach and put themselves in the other person's shoes. –empathy–
- How to talk to each other, how to not be selfish, not to gossip, and how to accept individuals
- They need to talk to one another
- The earlier they talk about the little annoying habits that are bothering them, the more it prevents big arguments
- Just talk to them and you can solve a lot of problems
- That it's a learning experience and there has to be compromises
- To talk to their RA and to the roommate do not let it build up because it only gets worse
- That they can come and talk to me
- That I can do so much they each have to meet each other at a common level of respect

12-What skills have you tried to teach/model your residents when they are in conflict?

- Maturity
- I haven't had any
- To be chill and ask respectfully. Not to just to conclusions.
- To talk to each other
- To grow up and work things out because they will always have problems with people in the real world
- Address ASAP (even if it's through an email if you're scared to face them), compromise
- Patience and understanding
- Calm relaxed, honest
- Respect! Communication, communication
- I have just told them just to respect one another throughout the issue, also to not tell everyone about the issue.
- To calmly talk about it. Communication is key, but not with other people. No gossiping.
- Good communication, understanding of differences
- Communication with roommate
- Show them that respect and listening to one another is important.
- I try to model good communication, active listening, fairness, and maturity.
- To communicate and respect one another.
- To be open to diversity/differences
- To talk it out and just ignore the little things I tell them to kind of look at it in a different perspective.
- Confrontation Techniques, Bring an RA about helping people grow up and sometimes they need to deal with things on their own.
- That they don't have to be best friends. That they have to compromise.

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- To confront the situation.
- That you are not going to love everyone that comes into your life, there will always be conflict – it can not be avoided. Respect and maturity goes a long way in solving conflict.
- Listening
- To talk it out- not to “sweat the small stuff” (with my guys in P-L it was usually something small that could be easily fixed but a much bigger deal was made of it.)
- Listening to feelings and messages, examples of compromise with my past roommates.
- Better communication skills- really working to understand the other person.
- Remaining calm and considerate, keeping open conversations
- Patience, listening skills, willingness to compromise generally being civil.
- Calmness and even-headedness
- Just bein able to carry a level conversation, stay calm, don’t get worked up
- I always try to express possibilities for why some behavior may occur and remind them of calm approaches to take. I always try to encourage them to take this as an opportunity to be adults about the situation
- Listen first
- Be honest, be sincere, don’t talk about people behind their backs, listen
- Try to work things out on their own, not to take the easy way out – you can’t just switch rooms
- Communication, talking it out, not taking the easy way out and changing rooms
- Just talk to the person because sometimes they don’t know what is wrong. Be respectful plan out schedule or cleaning list
- To talk it through, ask for help when needed set rules for talking though it
- Being mature in handling the situation
- To stop, hear all sides, take turns and keep open minds etc
- Choices
- How to ask/suggest thing without making the other person defensive.

13-What could Housing & Residence Life do better to address roommate conflicts with residents?

- Less Build-ups! This is where most conflicts come from.
- Solve conflicts as adults
- I am not quite sure! Nothing.
- The “Behind Closed Doors” was helpful; however, it would benefit the RA to literally do each situation. Maybe add some more roommate conflicts to the mix, but have each person go through each situation. It would be time consuming, but worth it.
- Nothing
- Maybe have a intro session or something like that for roommates
- RA could do one on ones each semester for each resident, many may be too afraid to complain.
- Give them packets on how to deal with certain situations
- Maybe have like more peers they could to go instead of the RA. In case they are afraid of authority of RAs
- I think some people just clash with others and housing should encourage them into a single. I know some of my guys that are in conflicts would be better off paying for a single

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- Nothing
- Give tools and sources to them. Maybe even run a roommater conflict seminar or mediation group.
- Give the residents an assertiveness workshop
- I think it's more a matter of RAs addressing problems, but the housing office could ask more questions before assigning roommates
- Have the roommate applications be more descriptive, and fit similar personalities together better
- Make sure the residents address the situation clearly, make a statement, if you will, just so they can't change their story despite the other roommate.
- I think we do great!
- Have workshops at the beginning of the year.
- Like I said there should be a way residents can connect with each other, on day one. Residents need to get into the habit of talking with their roommates.
- Maybe have a sit-down meeting with the hall director (both present) roommates.
- Teach residents about the ABC's of confrontation perhaps in orientations classes.
- Maybe give handouts on how to mention things like... how to tell your roommate to clean up.
- Nothing
- Require roommates to have a conversation the first day about boundaries/ expectations for one another.
- Listening to feelings and messages, examples of compromise with my past roommates.
- Maybe stress communication to teach residents!
- Try to have a mandatory event about it during orientation it could apply to life in general with friends, coworkers, ect.
- Make a roommate conflict resolutions skills part of orientation week.
- Not much really
- A more in depth matching survey when residents fill out housing info.
- I think it might help to have actual set up an extra place they could go to for help or maybe that the RA's and residents could go to for extra assistance for the big issues that go on
- Better matching
- I don't know how teaching people to "grow up" would be possible, but some students need to, I don't know how some people raised their kids to be so selfish or closed minded- I wish everyone could be accepting.
- Make them know at the beginning of the year that they can not just switch rooms because they don't get along. This is a learning experience and they need to know how to work with other people
- Nothing I can think of
- Make some type of phamlet to give to roommates that help them understand how to get along
- More info to prepare them to living with someone else
- Have a survey for incoming people to fill out
- Having a section on it in orientations
- Have them meet their roommates at registration so they have a chance to talk in person. No build ups

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

Parents

14- Have you had any parents contact you regarding roommate conflicts with their son/daughter?

- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No, I have not
- No
- Yes!
- I have had none!
- Yes
- Yes
- No
- No
- Nope
- Once
- No
- Nope
- No
- No
- I guess a father of one of the residents called the hall director.
- No
- no
- Thank goodness no.
- No thankfully! One parent contacted HD.
- No
- Yes, Scary!
- No
- No, but parents have contacted the HD
- No
- No
- Yes
- I have had parents who have discussed it with me after the situation was taken care of (I was gone on winter break).
- Yes
- No
- No
- No
- Not me personally but the hall director yes
- No

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- No
- No
- I guess a father of one of the residents called the hall director

15-If so, what did they talk to you about (in general)?

- Not eating or leaving room b/c roommate was her only friend to go to the cafeteria With and now they were fighting.
- Problems their child sees in the roommate but is afraid to talk about it.
- They talked about how they didn't think it was a good idea from the beginning and that they were very frustrated their daughter had to be put in that situation.
- It was not their child's fault, and they were completely hostile
- One was mad. Because her daughters roommate had a boyfriend the other one was that the mother was worried because her daughter's roommate situation was making her daughter sick
- They said that they knew something was going on between roommates because their daughter was acting differently they didn't know the cause of the conflict
- One roommate was kicked out and started harassing the other roommate
- I was told that he was upset about the situation of his daughter
- That their daughter is not being treated fairly and they want her to move out
- Daughter was wanting to move out

16-Did they want you to do something or were they mostly just informing you of situations?

- Informing and asking for advice/teamwork in encouraging the resident to be social
- They wanted me to talk to both sides to see what the issues really were.
- Because it had already been resolved by moving their daughter to a new room the pretty much just informed me of the situation.
- Basically just yelling at me and complaining about Wsu housing
- They wanted me to do something
- I have had concerned mothers about school- related things but not roommate conflicts
- They just wanted to inform me about it, because the daughter would not talk to me about it
- Do something play mediator
- He wanted her to be able to move out
- Move out
- Informing and asking if I noticed they didn't get along

17-What would be good information for parents to have regarding roommate conflicts?

- Do not cal RA's and have them talk to there son/daughter and take care of themselves.
- I think most often parents need to realize they most likely don't have the whole story.
- That this is a time to let their sons/daughters go and mature on their own. Make mistakes learn form them etc..

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- How to stay out of it and yet be supportive.
- Let their son/ daughter deal with it them.
- For them to know their children are adults in an adult setting and they need to give their child the responsibility to solve problems by his or herself. Also, letting them know what the roles of an RA/CA are and how we are here to help.
- Not always take their child's side. To tell them that their child is in college, is an adult, and it would be healthier to stay out of the situation.
- Informing and asking for advice/teamwork in encouraging the resident to be social
- To know exactly what their child has said or done (not always the same story as what their child gives to the parent).
- Tell them to help their child understand the other side to the story, if in fact that is appropriate.
- Not speaking from experience, but reminding parents that RAs can't resolve the conflict if their son or daughter only tells the parent about conflict, and not their RA.
- That its normal to some extent and to let their adult students handle it.
- Info on ways we deal with things, contract to counseling services
- That RAs do not choose the roommates, we cannot just make a new room for their daughter/ son. Also wish they were aware that their children have faults too.
- Your children are in college now, let them be grown ups and don't fight their battles for them
- That their son or daughter needs to talk to RA if they haven't, that students needs to approach the situation first themselves
- Let their adult students handle their own situations. They need to mature now that they are on their own.
- Have their daughter come talk to us before it becomes a huge deal- basically their daughter communicating with RAs
- Their daughter need to come and tell the RA what is going on because we can't just read their minds
- Same as what new college students and roommates should know
- Have them know that it takes time to work things out and that their child needs to talk to the roommate to try to work things out
- They need to stay out of it and let their children learn for themselves
- Their child has to make the first step not them to talk to the roommate
- Parents should know about the roommate contracts
- I think that the conflicts should be between roommates only. Sometimes the parents try to get in the situation but their children are in college and have to figure things out on their own sometimes
- Maybe let them know about FERPA and the codes we RA's are held at
- Let their adult children learn how to handle interpersonal conflict...it's a life skill that is part of the maturing process
- Suggest their child try and work through it first
- Not to fuel their child's frustrations and maybe even help them work through it instead of encouraging them to move
- Maybe very biased info on the situation, no specifics
- Whatever their kid wants them to know, as well as how we are working on fixing the conflict
- I don't really feel the parent should be involved at all, but I know that's not always an option

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- That they do not need to get involved unless the situation is serious
- I don't think parents know how often roommate conflicts occur
- Parents should know that roommate conflicts are normal; roommates will not always cline at first. Time and communication are imperative towards building relationships. Dramatization and victimization only hurt the situation. Parents should be concerned for their children but should not tell their children to quit or retaliate because that hurts people. Students need to fight their battles and hash out problems with their roommates.
- That there is a roommate contract
- Don't assume or generalize that your daughter is innocent, don't encourage your child to move out, encourage them to talk it out
- Good information would just be the basics. They don't need to know details.
- Good positive conformation techniques
- How to deal with the roommates try to find out a lot of info about them
- If their kids tell them about roommate conflicts then encourage them to talk about it nicely and honestly without yelling or blaming them for everything. Parents should help the kids to be assertive and address problems as they arise so they don't build up.

18-Is there anything else regarding roommate conflicts and your experience that you would like me to know?

- Require all rooms with roommates to fill out roommate agreement form. It really helped me out.
- I think also to have to housing staff (desk in kryzko) involved too because people go to them sometimes and they aren't always on the same page.
- If a student says he or she does not want to live with an international student, do not put them with one. The question should not even be asked if this is not even being considered because it makes residents very bitter towards housing and makes it harder on the RA.
- No
- In my experiences 9 out of 10 times was because of a lack of proper communication, when passive forms are used (such as notes, IMs, e-mails, ect) the conflict generally escalates.
- How to approach one roommate without the other roommate knowing! I have had to e-mail before b/c I could not catch 1 roommate alone and saying "Can I talk to you for a minute?" in front of friends can be embarrassing, but emails seem very impersonal and unconcerned.
- Don't get involved with drama as an RA—help analyze the situation and developing a solution and developing a solution (and that's it!)
- It takes a certain type of person to handle these situations, while we can be trained to handle them; some of it is in our genes.
- Not really, I think what we do know is pretty good. But I really hope you look into the interest survey for incoming freshmen.
- I really wish they had a more detailed questionnaire about getting roommates so we could make better matches.
- I apologize for the lack of feedback. I have only been an RA for 11 days and have little experience in this area. I would be happy to supply feedback after gaining this experience and going through training

Resident Assistant Survey Regarding Roommate Conflicts

- No, just that people need to get a more open perspective
- No, not really
- More info about the build up situations and international students
- No build ups
- Nope, I wish I could help, more but I'm glad I haven't had to deal with roommate conflicts this year, so I am not much help!
- I have had a lot of them so I have grown from the experience
- This may be biased but I have heard that most roommate conflicts are on female floors or rooms. Would it be smart to offer a small class about roommate conflicts during the leadership retreat?
- No
- I had mixed experiences It was a sour experience that I had to deal with roommate conflict but I had great experience getting good help from and advice from my hall director
- Nope, have a good day
- I guess I just got lucky this year
- I do not think so
- Roommate conflicts are a drag but it is always worth the effort to help someone because it makes a difference. Conflicts are the worst part of being an RA, but helping people through these conflicts is rewarding. The time and toil you put into it will be rewarding, it might not be visible, but rewarding none-the-less.
- Moving is not the answer sometimes!! Communication is great!!!
- You just need to let the RA's know to brace themselves
- Sorry I cant be more helpful I had a wonderful year
- Not really
- Set goals for them and make compromises
- In my opinion most conflicts are impossible to resolve with conflict, because they rely on personality or schedule issues or habits of one of the residents, not matter what it says in the contract is not willing to change. So it would be nice to develop a different way to help them deal with that

Appendix B:

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

Dear Sheehan Hall Residents:

This past year has been filled with many roommate conflicts of varying degrees. I realize that these conflicts have had an effect on student satisfaction with living in the residence halls and attending Winona State University, especially when the residence halls are at full capacity and there are no options for room changes. In efforts to assist in helping students work through roommate conflicts in the future, I have received a grant to develop some informational and training materials for students, staff and parents. Please fill out this questionnaire regarding your experience with roommate conflicts. *I place high value on your honest feedback and opinions.* If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at trahim@winona.edu or 457-5323.

Sincerely

Tracy Rahim
Sheehan Hall Director

1. *Have you experienced a roommate conflict(s) this year? If yes, please describe of the conflict(s).*
 - Yes, she's way messier than I am and she thinks I'm a bitch if I don't talk to her
 - No, things are good, we got lucky because we have a lot of the same interests, she does snore though
 - No, my roommate is wonderful, my roommate and I got along great and we never had conflicts! If we would have, I'm sure my RA would have handled it accordingly!
 - Yes, various – lights/noise while sleeping, hogging couch and TV, never leaving the room
 - Yes, she would have her boyfriend spend the night and not ask me at all. She also leaves her alarm go off in mornings.
 - At times I would get frustrated with my roommates sleeping patterns or her noise level when she would come in when I was sleeping
 - Yes, but nothing that hasn't worked itself out with time.
 - I don't have a roommate this year – last year I had a conflict
 - Yes! She acted as though it wasn't my room. Made me feel like I shouldn't be in there and accused me of stealing when I'm the one who caught her going through my closet
 - Yes, my roommate moved out at the beginning of 2nd semester. I tried communicating with her previously about situations and she was not open to talking to me for some reason.
 - I would get frustrated when she would go to bed at 9 and expect me to quiet or when she snaps at me for no reason
 - Nope. My roommate stayed up later than I did and when she did go to bed, she snored a lot, but these things weren't that big of a deal.
 - No, we never have had any problems
 - Nothing too bad where we have fought about anything
 - Yes, my roommate is a slob compared to me
 - Yes, we did not get along very well
 - Yes – personality differences. Messy vs. neat, just didn't really get along
 - Yes, she is extremely rude to me because of my snoring and most of the time ignores me

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- Yes, we didn't seem to get along, even after three attempts to solve our issues.
- No, things have been great
- No, we don't have conflicts at all!!!
- Yes, tension in the room around test times
- Yes
- Yes no interest in each other
- No, but I found out my roommate wanted to leave
- I thought she was mad at me
- Yes, my roommate and I were complete opposites. She never went out and was really messy and I'm the exact opposite of both
- Yes. She goes to bed at an earlier time than me. She complained I kept her awake. She talks on the phone when I am in my room studying.
- No. I love my roomie.
- Nope! The only thing is that I can be messy but it hasn't caused a fight or anything.
- Not externally
- No. I love my roomie.
- Yes. Temperature of the room.
- Yes, room cleanliness.
- Yes, not getting along, food issues.
- Yes we are very different and never talk
- Yes but nothing major. Just little fights here and there. We are just getting sick of each other
- Yes, nothing in common she is messy and I am very clean
- Yes, room temp
- Yes messy clothes
- Having a third roommate
- Yes, roommate wanted to share bottled water but never would buy a case I always did
- If you count waking up each other in the morning by eating and stuff
- Not really problems but opposite schedules
- Having a third roommate
- Yes she made noise when I was sleeping
- Coming in late drunk
- Yes minor things like being clean
- Roommate wouldn't leave the room because she didn't have any friends
- Yep- up late all the time drinking
- Yes
- Roommate smoked in the room and stole my things
- She was crazy, cried all the time, fought with everyone close to her, she was a slob, used all my stuff w/o asking, went through my stuff
- Yes but it was very minor we both just needed a break from each other
- What time the lights should go out at night
- Yes personal issue

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- She wouldn't respect me when I was trying to sleep, she wouldn't take out the trash had friends over when I was studying first
- Yes she was inconsiderate when I was sleeping or trying to study in our room...I had to ask her to put her headphones on and she would but then she would do it again
- Roommate was picky and full of herself
- When the three of us were given the option to move out
- Had problem with roommate using stuff in my closet
- Temp issues
- Little bickers nothing huge
- Previous roommates partied and brought guys back were always up late didn't share space well watched TV at an unreasonable volume and had sex in the room
- Yes, disrespect friends, purposely being annoying
- Yes
- Yes, ignorance, always going home and bringing boys into the room
- No not really just boy conflicts
- Yes, spending too much time together, got annoyed with each other
- Yes, issues over room temperature, clutter, cleanliness and respect
- Yes, my roommate and I just had a lot of differences and there were things stolen from me
- Yes, I didn't get along with 3rd roommate
- Yes, it was small though
- Yes, just little annoyances- not really conflicts
- No, I have not, no major conflicts
- Yes, many disagreements on bringing the key where they had to go, having the tv on, music, what time is "bed" time, morning wake ups, clashed times
- Yes, roommate didn't talked for 3 months to me, awkward living situations
- Some, but it's just getting to know new people
- Yes, but very small. Just with new friends meeting old and dealing with them being friends
- Yes, roommate was very disrespectful and rude to me. I would be trying to sleep and she would have her friends over and TV was on.
- Not really, we haven't fought about anything except maybe which movie to watch
- Yes, very little things though, like the door locking on each other
- No big ones
- Yes, it was a small easy conflict
- Nothing besides disagreements
- There hasn't been any conflicts as far as I know
- Differences in lifestyles
- Yes, we both are very different, sleeping styles were very different and cleanliness of the room
- Yes, we fought over using something that wasn't theirs
- Nothing serious, just minor disagreements here and there
- Last semester yes, this semester no
- Kind of, she doesn't talk to me at all

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- Not with my roommate but with neighbors
- Not with roommate but with neighbors and no one enforcing quiet times
- Yes, lack of communication
- Yes, sharing food was an issue
- No
- No
- Yes, she just did stuff without telling me- we always just didn't talk a lot and that built up. Also always woke me up
- Yes, she was annoying me because she tries to hard to satisfy everyone and is full of drama
- Yeah, she would let the door slam shut when I was sleeping
- Nothing that didn't have a simple solution
- Yes, they were inconsiderate
- Yes, we had our disagreements
- Yes, sleeping time being loud the usual
- No roommate
- Yes a roommate moving out then back again
- No real confrontations- but unvoiced problems, taking food, and going into my closet to get things when I'm not there or sleeping, talking on the phone all day with her boyfriend
- Yes, I had a guest and there was a conflict between them when she wanted to sleep
- Yes we have had communication issues
- Yes, inconsiderate inappropriate
- Yes, I was trying to keep her from seeing a boy
- Left 1st semester
- Yes with my 1st semester roommate, it was awful we did not get along
- My roommate constantly lost her key
- Yes, I feel like my roommate does not respect me due to things she has done
- Yes, stuff was taken from me without permission and lost. Room was always messy, no respect for each other
- Yes, she didn't shower, she wouldn't stop staring in the mirror. Every she touched reeked. She lived for gossip. Loud all night. Boozey
- Not really a conflict more of differences of schedules that didn't work well sharing a room with 3 others
- Yes, talks about me to her friends and also on the phone, rude comments about not liking me being around and can't wait for me to go home sometimes
- Problems with space, thoughts of suicide, constant fighting, inability to sleep at night, loud music
- She was kind of demanding things I hadn't agreed to and she wasn't willing to compromise and she constantly lost her keys and if she had a problem with me wouldn't talk to me for a week after

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

2. *What steps did you take to resolve the conflict?*

- Not Yet, it's a recent conflict
- Nothing ☹ I just vented to friends and family
- Talked to her
- Talked
- Talked to parent for advice, I never really said anything to her, talked to coach – my roommate was also a teammate
- We met with our RA first and it didn't help because she acted even worse later!
- Tried communicating, but I got no input from her.
- I told her that it bothered me
- Tried talking to her, didn't help, she moved out at semester
- Talked about our differences
- I told her it hurts my feelings but apparently she doesn't care
- Confronted each other, talked about it
- Just avoid each other
- We talked about it and came to an agreement on what to do/act when both of us are in the room
- Try to communicate
- No steps to resolve
- Let it ride out and then talked to my RA
- Talked to RA
- I tried to go to bed earlier.
- She helps keep me organized.
- No problems.
- We just always talk.
- Talked about it and made a compromise.
- I cleaned up.
- Talked, took a break.
- Talked it through
- Never resolved
- Yes
- We haven't
- Compromised at a set temp
- Talked and kept her stuff to her side
- Tried to talk to her and decide how to share things when nothing was hers
- Talk to each other about what is going on
- Try to be the quietist we can in the morning
- Got used to being quiet when the other was sleeping
- She moved out, disagreements
- Talked to her about it
- Tried to remind her to clean and clean myself
- Tried to encourage her to meet friends

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- Talked to her
- Talked and figured out what was bothering us
- Talked to RA and security
- Vented to my RA, roommate eventually dropped out
- Talked it over and figured it out
- Talked about a solution and what would be an appropriate time for the lights to be out that would benefit both schedules
- Talked about it
- For the trash I would set it somewhere where she would get the idea. didn't confront her because I was afraid
- I would ask her to put her headphones on and she would do it for that time but do it again
- Asked RA for a room change
- Find out all the options talk to our RA and housing
- Talked about it when we both got really annoyed
- Let it go until it was way to cold to let her have the windows open
- Didn't say anything because I was to nice
- Talked to R.A and to roommate
- Just talked to her about it
- RA and housing
- I didn't say anything
- Talked to each other, let each other know what was going on
- Talk to roommate and RA
- Talked to RA and ended up switching rooms
- Tried talking to Tracy but she blamed everything on me and my other roommate
- Talking with my roommate
- Left the room
- Talk to her
- Talked with her, talked to RA, and talked to her again
- Tried talking and hanging out but she didn't want anything to do with me
- Talking
- We just talked it out
- I talked to RA and she helped me decide what to say
- Random picking of movie
- Talked about it because we are best friends
- Talk to her
- We talked because we are like best friends
- Didn't have any
- Talked things out
- Talk in a quiet setting with out interruptions
- Gave it time
- Talked about it online

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- We talked and tried to work it out
- I just tried to talk more and say things that related to my roommate more
- Emailed you and sucked it up
- Emailed RA and nothing was really done
- I moved out of the room to a new one
- Asked her not to eat specific foods
- We talked beforehand so conflicts didn't happen
- Talked about it
- Asked her not to anymore
- Confronted each other and discussed a compromise
- Talked to roommate, then switched rooms when conflicts weren't resolved
- We talked it out
- Took time to calm down and then talked about it
- Nothing tried to resolve with housing at first
- We didn't we just don't talk much anymore I brought up some stuff with the RA
- Nothing. I don't spend time in my room anymore due to the phone conversations
- She talked to the RA and set up a meeting between the three of us but when she told me about it I asked her what it was about and we talked it though
- We try and talk about how we feel if we had issues
- Ignored her until she moved out
- Talked about it
- Got a new roommate
- I spoke to my RA then roommate about the issue
- She moved out after she had her dad call and yell at me
- Moved out
- Signed a waiting list for a single room and got moved to Sheehan
- Haven't taken any yet
- Talked though it, brought it up to RA and HD

3. *Did the conflict come to resolution? Were you happy with the outcome?*

- Not really, no
- Sort of
- Yes
- No resolution
- No it didn't! The outcome was a new roommate who I LOVE!
- Yes, she moved out and I'm happy with this outcome
- No
- Just kind of learned to live with it
- Kind of, we just deal with it
- Not until she moved out

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- She moved to another room at the end of the semester. I was happy with the outcome
- No, she barely speaks to me
- Sometimes, not always happy but sometimes we were able to blow things off
- No still same and moved out after semester
- Yes, yes
- She moved out, yes
- Not really
- Yes
- Yes, we became better friends
- Yes
- We are both satisfied.
- Yes.
- No
- No barely even talk
- Yes
- Things got better then she moved
- Yes worked out fine
- Living in the dorm is convenient
- Ongoing battle
- No she didn't meet anyone
- Yeah kind of
- Yes it has been fine since we talked about it
- Kind of after the first semester it was better but she still did it once in a while
- Still living with her there is underlying hate but we don't discuss it/ not happy with the outcome
- Not the best option one roommate left after being pressured
- Yes heat on low and window closed
- Nope but I got out of that room and got a better roommate
- Eventually but I' not sure if I' happy with what came out of it but it is better
- Yes
- Yes, transferred rooms
- Sort of
- Yes, mostly it worked out ok, but it was a little awkward
- Yes, the roommate moved out and I was fine with it
- Yes
- Eventually, yes
- Yes
- The 1st time it did but the 2nd time we had a conflict it never got fixed and now its weird
- No- moved out
- Yes, very
- Yes, my roommate moved out
- Yes

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- No conflict
- Yes
- Yes, it was resolved itself
- Yes
- Not really
- It's about the same
- No the yelling/screaming is out of control (especially after 11)
- Nothing was really done besides for RA telling them after a meeting
- Yes, I am really happy with the outcome, I get along well with my new roommate
- Yes
- No conflict
- Well since I didn't work on its fine now
- No I didn't, but happy I switched rooms
- Yes, yes we are more considerate of each other now
- No and was fine at first but not it is becoming an issue
- No because id like to do more than exist in a room id like to be able to talk to them
- No I hate that she annoys me so much we were so close last semester
- Yes
- If came to a resolution sometimes I'm more happy but not completely
- Yes
- Yes
- It did for a while we don't talk much
- I was sad we couldn't resolve it and use no longer or speaking terms
- Yes, got a single room
- No we still fight and no I am not

4. *Did you seek help from an RA? If yes, please describe the feedback/advice they gave you.*

- A little, I just asked to see the roommate contract
- No
- No
- No
- No
- Yes, just to think our actions over and be willing to work together
- No, there weren't huge conflicts, we just didn't mesh well
- No
- No
- No
- At first yes, she suggested we talk about it
- No, I like to work thing out myself
- No

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- Yes, communicate more
- Yes, come to see her
- Yes, she talked to my roomie for me
- Yes, she was very helpful
- Eh, not really.
- Some. Talk to her about it.
- Yes she was great!!
- Mentioned it but never looked into it further
- No just stick it out
- Yes, not what we wanted to hear but what we needed to hear
- Yes gave a lot of good advice
- Told me to talk to her and ignore the small things
- I asked my RA what to do she told me to talk to her about it but I couldn't because my roommate would make it awkward
- Nope didn't get that bad
- Yes, she gave me a great advice and I think it helped me decide what to do
- No
- Yes, they help and was easy to talk to
- No
- Yes they helped me talk to her about it
- Yes, I felt the RA was rude and could have been nicer
- Yes, had meeting with RA and Tracy. Wasn't all that helpful got blamed for everything
- No
- No
- No
- Yes, she told me that all 3 of us could talk and work it out but we never did. She said that neither one of us could move
- Not my RA's problem
- Yes, she helped me decide what to say
- No only to get a key to unlock the door
- No- we solved it on our own
- No
- I sought advice on other situations, she was very helpful with possible solutions
- No
- No- was on huge problems
- They told me I could move
- Yes, they told me just to talk to them
- No
- I asked my RA things but not about my roommate
- No conflict got that far
- Yes, they said to wait it out/ try to fix it

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- Yes, she just told us that we could talk to her if we needed to
- No
- Yes, she told me that I didn't have to listen to her I had to make my own decisions
- No
- Set up a meeting but we cancelled it after we talked
- My roommate went to out RA before talking to me about it she told us to tell each other when things are bothering us
- No we figured it out on our own
- Yes, a lot of meetings
- Yes, it resolved the main issue but not all issues can be resolved with people who refuse to change
- Yes, she helped a lot, didn't take a side and helped make the transition
- Yea. Stick with it
- Yes, just to keep talking

5. Do you feel that the feedback/advice the RA gave you helped in solving the conflict?

- It will
- No
- Somewhat
- Yes
- Yeppers
- I feel that any feedback form an RA is very helpful
- Yes, she worked with the hall director
- Yes
- Was no feedback
- Yes most definitely
- Kind of my roommate was to much to handle
- Good advice but the person I was going to use it on made it awkward
- Kind of
- Yes
- Yes and no
- Yes
- No, she was just rude
- No
- No
- No
- Sort of. My roommate talked to me before the 3 of us were to meet but then the conflict came back
- Yes and no
- Didn't have a conflict
- If I had a problem Im sure she would be a great help
- Yes on other situations

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- Yes I believe it helped a lot
- Yes it did
- Didn't seek help
- Yes, maybe not wait as long if it's really not working
- Yeah but it almost made the situation worse because my roommate thought I was talking about her
- Yes, it was ok just to vent
- Yes, it resolved the main issue but not all issues can be solved
- Yea
- Yes, moving in information
- Some was and some was just frustrating

6. *Did you seek assistance or support from your parents? If yes, describe how they helped you.*

- Yes. They told me to be more assertive and voice my concerns. They helped me blow off steam.
- Yes, I just complained and it made me feel better
- At times I vented to them when I was really upset
- I complained and my mom just talked me through it
- Yes, told me to talk to her
- I just talked to my mom about it
- Yes, they told me to continue to be nice to her and I did
- Yes- I often vent to my parents about the problems I have
- No
- Yes, they told me either to confront her nicely or accept it
- Yes, they told me to talk to her
- Yes, they said to try to work it out and be nice
- Yes, they told me to talk to my roommate and try to make the best of the situation
- Yes, they said maybe we're just getting tired of each other
- Yes, talked to them
- Yes, I vent to my mom a lot she always has good advice
- Yes, positive feedback
- No
- Sometimes but only when really needed
- No
- Yes. Talk to her about it subtly.
- Yes, told me to stay strong and try leaving the room for the majority of the day
- Talked to them about it and they told me to talk to her
- Yes I just told her what was going on
- Told me to tell her to get some or stop sharing
- Tend to vent to them about her actions
- Yes that it was her friend issue
- Yes helped me figure it out

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- Told me to talk to her and gave advice about their experiences
- Mom told me to talk to the RA
- Told me to try and make it the rest semester
- I shared with them what we discussed and then they told me that we have to work it out together and try respect each others wishes because we are sharing the room
- Yes reminded me that I didn't have much time left with her
- Got my emotions out to them and they gave me the same advice as my RA pretty much
- Yes told me to talk to the RA and roommate
- Helped me figure out how to handle it
- No just complained to her
- Yes they told me what I should say to them and how to be positive and approach the situation
- Yes, but basically just told me to try and work things out or take action and leave
- No
- No
- Yes, they just told me that it was normal and would soon slow down
- They just listened to me and made me feel better
- Kind of, moral support
- No
- No
- Not really just told them what was going on
- Yes, they told me they couldn't help, but were there for support
- Yes, vented to them
- No
- Yes, parents told me to talk to my RA, which I did, and then talk to her again, which I did too
- Yes, suggestions on what to do- helped get a single room
- Not really- siblings
- A little more from old friends
- Yes, I vented to them and they gave me some advice on what to do
- No
- I just talked to them
- Told us to talk things though
- Yes, advice
- Yes, told us to talk it out
- No just complained to them
- Just told them about problem
- Yes talked to them and they gave me ideas how to try to improve the situation
- Yes, they just said that they were paying for it so she shouldn't eat it
- Yes, I just kind of vented to them
- No, im good at solving problems
- Yes, they said to change rooms or whatever I could do to get along with roommate
- Yes, they helped me see from her perspective, and helped me control my emotions

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- Yes, she just gives advice not tells me how the “3rd roommate should go back to her own room
- Yes they gave me advice
- Yes they told me to talk to her about it
- Yes asked if they minded me moving. They didn’t
- Yes after my roommates dad called me my dad told me to stay clam and not let him get me worked up
- Yes, she told me what she might have done to resolve it
- They talked to my parents about my concerns
- Yes, they told me to stay strong and tell her when you have problems
- They gave me a point of view from both sides. They didn’t tell me that I was right but more of less tried to have me see the whole situation
- Yes she told me to talk to her after I finally called her crying
- Yes they told me to deal with it on my own

7. Did the roommate conflict(s) you experienced affect your satisfaction of:

a) Living in the residence halls?

b) Attending Winona State University?

Please describe how it affected your satisfaction.

- My roommate has been wonderful
- It made me more sad all the time. It affected how I thought of Winona State and sad when I had to come back after breaks
- I didn’t have the privacy I wanted and didn’t look forward to going back to school.
- I got along with my roommate really well it’s just that she always had her boyfriend sleep there. It just made me very frustrated
- It just made me feel like I chose the wrong school and like I should have lived alone.
- To some extent, however I know not everyone will always get along the best with different personalities and all
- Taught me patience and how to get along with others
- A – I kind of regretted living in the residence halls for a while, but after a few months it got a lot better. B – I’m still satisfied with Winona State
- No
- It just made me not really want a roommate
- We could not be in the same room together
- Didn’t affect living in the res halls, but I didn’t want to be here in the first place so having roommate issues didn’t help in making my situation better
- I’m transferring for Fall 2008
- I look forward to getting out of the dorms
- Well, it’d be nice to my own room
- Didn’t affect me
- I will not live in residence halls again

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- It made my life amazing! But I know my friend's conflicts have been super stressful. Some didn't want to come back. They dread living in their own room.
- Yes.
- Yes, I love the halls and WSU and my roommate!
- We worked it out.
- Still like it the same. One person isn't going to ruin the whole experience.
- Hated being in room hard to make friends and meet people
- Used to having a schedule and own room. Good experience but prefers to have own room
- Wishes for a clean roommate that she would like
- Makes me not want to live in the resident halls because I don't want another roommate that I don't really get along with
- Yes don't like it
- Yes to both it made it less enjoyable
- Effectuated my satisfaction of this hall because it is just two people in a room there is no where to go if you don't have friends that live in Sheehan so it kinda isn't fun
- Made me dread being here at all
- Hated school because of her liked it when she left
- My roommate is very approachable. It was great that we got along at the beginning of the year when we were both still meeting people
- Made me look forward to living in an apartment next year
- Not comfortable in my living arrangements made it awkward
- Just annoyed me
- I dreaded coming back to the dorm room we had nothing in common it doesn't help that the girls in this hall are obnoxious
- Should make distinction if roommate is gay/bisexual when signing up for housing
- Just made school more stressful
- It made me wish I lived off campus
- Not really, got over everything when conflict resolved
- I really don't enjoy living in Sheehan floors don't hangout- people are very into themselves
- No, my roommate had nothing to do with it, I just plan out don't like living in the resident halls
- I wasn't happy living in the dorms but I will be living here again next year
- I didn't want to be here anymore
- I wish they tired to matched you up better so you could make a good friend
- Didn't really affect anything I still love it here
- I can't wait to get out and experience quiet and peace to study otherwise it's fine
- Girls are too loud
- Yes, im worried about who I will live with next year
- I actually made me happier because I know I can solve living situation problems
- No- but not living in double again, it is too risky to randomly but put with a roommate get more info in future to put people together
- Yes, kind of, don't wan to live in a small room with someone again, just cleared feelings up with WSU

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- I had a good experience but maybe you could do more personality surveys on the housing applications
- I get along with my roommate well. It's made living in the res halls fun
- We got along well, any problems we had was easy to figure out
- Yes because I felt like I didn't have a private place that was partly mine to go to that I could do what I want
- I learned how much I need my own space. She is always in the room I can't ever get the room to myself
- I could not fully enjoy the roommate experience
- I hated sharing a room with someone like her
- It was just a terrible first semester
- It made me dislike being in my room and the idea of having a roommate
- I was unsatisfied and wished winona would worker on matching roommates
- Put me in a bad mood
- I was annoyed but didn't affect my views of WSU
- Don't always like to hangout in my room much. Feel weird around her
- I am still considering switching schools

8. *If you had a magic wand, how would you have liked to see Housing & Residence Life handle your roommate conflict?*

- The opposite of lazy, and irresponsible
- None got moved
- Tell her to stop talking about me
- Handle it faster
- I would have changed her or made it easier to change rooms
- Match us up better in the beginning, warn about this.
- I'm not sure, I think they do the most they can
- I should have handled it better. I didn't think they could have helped
- When security decided she had lied kick her out and give me back the money and cloths she stole
- Not really sure, we just had different personalities
- Give me my own room without the extra cost
- Be able to move them out right away when they wanted – not just at semester
- Be able to move us around before the end of the semester
- Make the rooms larger or make a second room available
- Live by myself
- Didn't really have a conflict my roomie and I get along
- Move out earlier
- Split the room in half with a wall. Get a Deaf roommate. Not have a roommate.
- I have had a great roommate experience!
- I have had a great success but I think more questions and culture should be considered.
- Move me to a single

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- Get me a new roommate no questions asked
- Give everyone their own room or more space
- Picked up all her clothes
- Had her move out quicker
- By giving me a roommate I actually had things in common with
- Nothing my roommate is the best
- Have them do what they always do
- Get more rooms so you wouldn't have a build up unless you wanted three
- Have options to switch rooms
- I wish people would have to attend school gatherings
- Better pairing of people
- Make it go away not much else
- Make her go away and erase all memories
- Rather fixed it myself the conflict was minor
- Room me with someone who has similar interests
- Me get a different room
- Wish you could vote someone out
- Get a more similar roommate shut up the soccer girls
- You cant fix the terrible roommates but you can fix the build up situation
- Makes that if you have a problem that has to do with your roommate then talk to them about it
- Letting people move out sooner
- Make a survey like (ex. Do you smoke) and be paired up with someone your compatible with
- Sit down both roommates and talked it out as a group
- Be nicer
- Stay back
- Would have liked them to have more of a hand in it because when they didn't it all came back
- It was a big personality conflict
- No problems really
- I didn't really have roommate conflicts
- Not sure, it hasn't been an issue
- Not have it be such a hassel for the RA to get a key because then I felt bad about it
- Have a venting session with RA
- No wand needed, but if I had a wand I would give us a bathroom, bigger room and a queen bed
- If I had a wand, I would wish away all my hw, but in handling roommate conflicts I'd like to be confidential and professional, along with quick resolving
- Just to understand both ways
- I think things were handled wonderfully
- Get a new roommate, but I just put up with it
- At sign up have us take surveys about our living styles to match people up better
- Handing out warnings so they realize to be quiet and stop screaming
- Just RA to be more helpful and telling girls to quiet down and maintaining it

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- Just the way they did
- If we had problems I would have hoped they could have helped switched rooms
- Have a separate room where one can stay/live until the conflict is resolved
- More roommate bonding activities
- Put bummers on the doors
- Change rooms ASAP/discipline roommate fore being inconsiderate
- I handled it on my own
- Made them go away
- Im not sure seeing as though the problem just happened, make sure the roommates know that moving out is permanent
- New roommate but able to keep my room and that was nice
- To actual try to find my roommate help
- Make her leave the room once and a while get her involved in campus activities because I have tried but it doesn't work
- Could have switched rooms
- They shouldn't have to handle it

9. What ideas do you have for how Housing & Residence Life could address roommate conflicts more effectively in the future?

- I think that the majority of roommate conflicts stem from a lack of communication – helps both parties to open up!
- Phone times, do agreements again 2nd semester
- Have different people available other than RA's
- Have ways that are easier for girls to get in touch with someone
- I think they could prevent a lot of having people fill out questionnaires first and matching roommates with that.
- Make sure both residence are in understanding with the rules of the room
- Find a way to address conflicts so that it doesn't make it awkward for the roommates to continue living together for a period of time.
- I'm not sure
- Leave open rooms!!!
- Pay more attention to conflict repeats
- Don't know
- I think it would be cool if we could fill out a survey of our hobbies, interests, etc. and then we could get "matched" with someone who likes the same things
- From other people's problems, I've heard that housing had done a good job
- I don't really know, I don't know how they handle it
- Fill out interest sheets – match with people with common interests
- Have us fill out personality/interest survey and match us with similar people
- Have "roommate meetings" with the RA once a semester
- Maybe have a specific person that could help people
- Surveys when entering

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- Have a survey
- Meet with RA and roomy to solve any problems
- More compatible people
- People should take personality tests and be matched better with roommates
- Maybe offer roommate counseling or have residence fill out a very personal questionnaire or something
- A longer questionnaire
- Personality match questionnaire
- Switch roommates instead of making them stick it out to long because people decide right away if they get along with someone
- Discuss problems
- Have the roommates switch right away if they want to, don't have it delayed
- Ask what time you like to go to sleep. If a person is a light sleeper don't put them with someone that is noisy.
- Winona should have the roommate search online like how the U of M and you can pick your roommate based on some interests and hobbies. I hear that it's a lot better with conflicts.
- Add a few more questions to housing application.
- They could have people fill out surveys about what their hobbies and interests are BEFORE being matched up! Like different colleges do.
- Maybe questions on applications about personality could somehow match people.
- More questions. More concern it's hard to live with a stranger.
- Send personality surveys.
- Uh, I think they should ask day and night people, how clean their room is etc.
- Put more options on the sheet at the beginning of the year
- Add more questions to the first sign up form to get roommates with common habits/interests
- More questions on the questionnaire, make them talk it out more
- Have the roommates talk it out
- Add more questions to the survey at the beginning of the year
- Housing apps should be more specific
- More detailed information
- Have students write down their hobbies and lifestyle
- Ask more personal questions and more compatible room mates
- Better questions
- Have compatibility surveys
- Try and match people better
- Pair up on common interest
- Pair people with the same background (athletics, theater, etc.)
- Have more questions to answer besides smoking preference
- Match up morning night personalities
- Want people to attend more school gatherings
- Ask more questions about people

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- More on the questionnaire
- Tell them to stay calm and rational and figure it out
- Have meetings with someone to mediate
- Resolve the situation right away
- Never put a junior international student with a freshman!!
- Interests survey
- When contracts are being made have more details about behavior
- Be sure to get both sides of the story
- Tell stories from previous years and make people more open
- Let room changes happen
- Interest survey before moving in
- Tell people to grow up and be respectful
- Personality and interest surveys prior to move in
- Not at the moment
- None really
- Come up with a program that electronically pairs you up based on a survey that you fill out online, the survey could be 10-20 questions
- Roommate building relationship activities
- When you do roommate assignments send out a survey that tells more about you so you are paired with someone more like you
- Be nicer
- Making a meeting with the RA and the girls mandatory no matter if they think they can handle it or not
- Try to match people up with more than just smoking preference
- Have a way of knowing person better
- Pick roommate better, give more info about them before you even get here
- Provide easier room changes
- Not sure. Give everyone their own room
- I think it would be a good idea to take a personality quiz before you come so you and your roommate have something in common
- Some people may be afraid to tell conflicts so I think a box where letters can go would be amazing
- Listening
- Get back to us quicker
- Fill out interest surveys so people get roomed up
- Not sure
- Enforcing quiet times
- I think they should stress how even the little things that you disagree with and that these little problems might eventually lead to big problems
- Listen and do it in a timely manner
- Have a suggestion box
- I don't think they should get into unless it is very bad

Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- I think they do it alright
- Get more info in future to match roommates better
- You could have a workshop at the beginning to teach you how to deal with it
- Take surveys about when you go to sleep if you study in the room when pair people up together
- Placing people with the same interest together
- There should be better forms to fill out to make sure roommates are compatible
- Maybe if there was a place for written documents. I know people had trouble repeatedly
- Maybe making like 2 meetings a semester with both at the same time to talk it out or something
- Be more open to room changes in the beginning of the year
- Tell girls to be more respectful
- Matched roommates on more specific terms

10. Is there anything else regarding your roommate conflict experience that you would like me to know?

- No
- No
- No
- No
- I feel bad for feeling this way
- After telling her I was having a boy stay over in advance she didn't respect my space and leave for the night
- Not really about roommates but more about floors – I wish there were more activates for floors to do together because I had a lot of trouble making friends ☹ I'm very shy.
- Nope
- Nope
- Not really, but it would be nice to have my conflict resolved without an RA
- I really like my roommate
- My roomie is awesome
- No
- Some of my friends have conflicts with their roommate's boyfriends, letting them in late etc.
- I got lucky!
- I think that people should be able to handle each other. My roommate didn't bathe and so I told her to, it's as simple as that.
- That I love my roommate!
- It really is the luck of the draw!
- One of the worst experiences ever!!
- Its fun when your not feuding
- Personalities dint match up at all
- Room people with similar interests
- I love my new roommate
- No

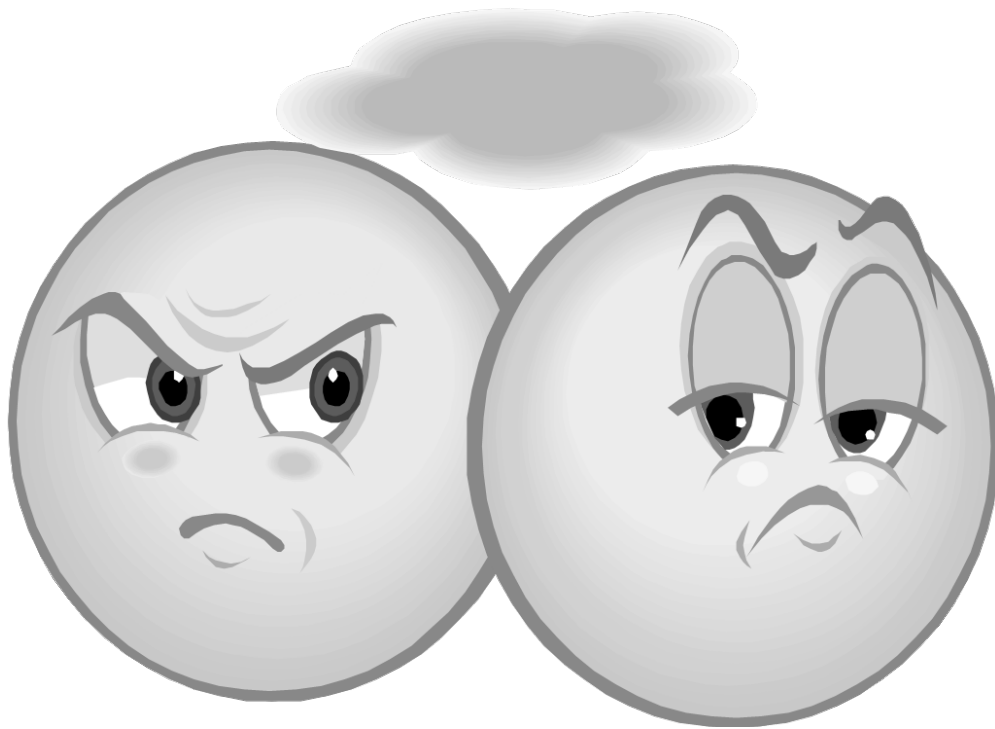
Resident Questionnaire on Roommate Conflicts

- No
- Have a more in dept questionnaire at the beginning of the year
- No, but RA could be nicer when dealing with resident problems
- If someone really wants to move, let them. Maybe do a questionnaire about interest/likes/dislikes/etc to place people together better
- I love my roomie! I 'd be lost without her
- My roommate and I get along really well
- I know it's nice to have your door open but I don't need to hear everything when I m trying to study
- I feel like most of our problems came from the fact that she was from a small town and I was not
- More single rooms available
- I don't think smokers should be allowed to live with nonsmoker

11. My roommate and I completed a Roommate Agreement. YES 214 NO 12

My Residents Are in a Roommate Conflict... Now What?

*A Residence Life Staff Training on
Handling Roommate Conflicts*



Presented by: Tracy A. Rahim, MS

Fall Training 2008

Conflict...It's Really OK!

Many people believe that conflict between two people or among a group is bad and should be avoided. However, conflict is productive and can lead to a higher level of understanding if it is resolved properly. The value of conflict for individuals is great: it can encourage creativity, curiosity and an examination of personal values. “Through conflict, people can shape their values. A positive conflict situation can foster respect and can consolidate groups of individuals” (Blimling, 1999, p. 160).

Conflicts are usually caused by individuals disagreeing with another person’s values or lifestyle and by communication breakdowns. Most roommate conflicts are the result of value differences. For instance, one person may like a neat or organized room while the other likes the liberty of being sloppy in their room. This difference can be the root cause for a conflict over how the room will be kept (Blimling, 1999).

Human nature dictates that we are most comfortable with people who are like us and least comfortable with people who are very different. If people of different backgrounds are placed together in the same room, conflict can result from their different lifestyle choices. However, if roommates take the time to get to know each other, discuss their differences, understand each other’s point of view, and why they believe what they do, many negative conflicts may be avoided. (Blimling, 1999).

If people feel that they are being treated unfairly or their ideas are discounted, they may feel rejected and lash out at others. This can be caused by communication breakdowns or by one person not accepting the other by being judgmental or evaluative. These types of conflicts are common but may require an outside person to observe why there are negative interactions between the two people (Blimling, 1999).

Most conflicts can be resolved between the two roommates without any outside help. However, sometimes conflicts may affect other residents on the floor or in the building. When that happens, the RA/CA will need to intercede. Some roommates may contact the RA/CA for advice, suggestions, or assistance with conflict resolution between them. When the RA/CA is called into this opportunity, your role is to facilitate a discussion to help resolve the conflict—not determine who is right or wrong (Blimling, 1999).

RA/CA Roles in a Roommate Conflict

You must be aware of the various roles you will have to play simultaneously during a roommate conflict. Once you realize that you wear many hats, you can adequately shift between one role and another as needed.

1. ***The Legitimater.*** You can provide a safe mechanism through which roommates can air differences without losing face by directly approaching each other.
2. ***The Opener of Communication Channels.*** When roommates are not talking to each other for various reasons (emotional heat, hostile actions, etc.), you can open channels of communication and get them talking to each other.
3. ***The Translator and Transmitter of Information.*** Sometimes roommates may be talking to, but not understanding, each other. They may come from different backgrounds or cultures, or they simply may perceive the problem differently. You may then act as a translator, transmitter, and clarifier of information.
4. ***The Facilitator.*** If the roommates are talking but not getting anywhere, a third party offering skills in conflict resolution will facilitate the flow of feelings and information. You can also facilitate resolution of the problem simply by keeping the discussion flowing and by helping to maintain a good perspective on the goals.
5. ***The Trainee.*** One of the most important functions you can serve as an RA/CA is to explain the conflict resolution process involved within the framework of their particular situation.
6. ***The Resource Expander.*** Often the roommates in conflict do not have access to information on how to get specialized help, if needed, in resolving their conflict. You can serve as a link to the necessary resource people such as the Counseling Center.
7. ***The Agent of Reality.*** As the conflict nears resolution, it is your job to help the roommates to perceive each others' needs.
8. ***The Scapegoat.*** You may serve as someone to blame for the roommates' mutual dissatisfaction with the results (LeHigh University, n.d.).

How to Handle a Roommate Conflict

STEP ONE: ACTIVE LISTENING

When a resident approaches you that they are experiencing a problem or a conflict with their roommate, the first step is to just **LISTEN**. The development of active listening skills is extremely important to assist in conflict resolution as well as other parts of your job in which residents come to you for help or advice.

Active Listening Skills

1. **Ask yourself:** “Am I ready to listen? Do I have any distractions in my way?”

YES

NO

**If the answer is NO, figure out what you need so you have the ability to give the resident your attention.*

2. **What is your body language saying right now?** Do your nonverbals indicate that you are ready to listen or do you appear distracted and unable to give your undivided attention?
3. **Acknowledge: What are your “minimal encouragers”?** This could be direct eye contact, nodding your head, saying “Tell me more”. It lets them know that you are listening.
4. **Invite conversation with open-ended questions.** These are the What? Why? When? Where? With Whom? questions—not ones that just require a “yes” or “no” response.
5. **Paraphrase to the resident what you’ve just heard.**
6. **Check your paraphrasing for accuracy to make sure you’ve heard them correctly.**

Tips for Paraphrasing and Reflecting What You've Heard

- A paraphrase reflects the content of what has just been communicated to you. The purpose is to encourage the resident to discuss an issue in more detail and to ensure that the communication has been understood by both you and the resident.
- By appropriately reflecting content, you assure the resident that you are following the story and attempting to understand what is happening. Before you can help the resident, you need to understand what he or she is trying to say to you.
- Here are a variety of sentence starters you can use to paraphrase. If your reflection is correct, the resident will generally confirm your response. If you are not accurate, the resident will provide you with more specific information.
 - It seems that...
 - Let's see if I understand you correctly...
 - I hear you saying that...
 - So what happened was...
 - Right now, it's...
 - If I have it right, you are beginning to...
 - It looks like it might be...
 - My sense of what you are saying is... (Evans, Hearn, Uhlemann, & Ivey, 2008)

Ten Commandments for Good Listening

1. Stop talking—you cannot listen if you are talking!
2. Put the talker at ease—help him or her feel that s/he is free to talk. This is often called a permissive environment.
3. Show him or her that you want to listen—look and act interested. Do not read your mail or text a friend while s/he is talking.
4. Remove distractions—don't doodle on paper, watch TV, or check your email.
5. Be patient—allow plenty of time. Do not interrupt him or her. Don't start for the door or walk away.
6. Empathize with him or her—try to put yourself in his or her shoes so that you can see his or her point of view.
7. Hold your temper—an angry person gets the wrong meaning from words.
8. Go easy on argument and criticism—this puts him or her on the defensive. Do not argue; even if you win, you lose.
9. Ask questions—this encourages him or her and shows that you are listening. It helps to develop points further.
10. Stop talking! This is the first and last because all other commandments depend on it. You just can't do a good job while you are talking (Brumet & Mielke, n.d.).

STEP TWO: ROOMMATE AGREEMENTS

Based on the experiences of previous RAs/CAs, we recommend that you have your residents fill out the Roommate Agreements within the first two weeks of school. This allows the residents to get to know each other's expectations of the room, habits, and schedules. It also allows them to talk about things that can be shared and things that are off-limits.

Once residents complete the Roommate Agreement, everyone in the room should sign the document. One copy is given to the RA/CA to be kept on file and the other is given back to the residents to be displayed or kept for future reference. It is recommended to revisit the Roommate Agreement at the beginning of Spring Semester to make sure no changes are necessary.

After you have listened to the resident and determined what the problems are that are causing the conflict, tell the resident to sit down and fill out a Roommate Agreement with their roommate if they have not already done one. If they have one already completed a Roommate Agreement, encourage them to revisit it to see if changes need to be made or if certain points need to be reinforced. People's habits, schedules or personal tastes may change throughout the year. Each person has a right to change and this should be discussed.

STEP THREE: ROOMMATES MUST TALK TO EACH OTHER!

The first step for the roommates to take is to actually talk face-to-face about the problems that are occurring. Many times, one roommate may not realize that something they say or do is bothering the other—no one can read another person's mind! Without open, honest communication, problems and conflicts cannot be resolved.

It is best to address the problem as it is occurring before it gets out of hand. No one enjoys getting the "cold shoulder" and being ignored in their own room when they do not know what is going on. Being able to address problems assertively can relieve a lot of tension and stress in both roommates before it unnecessarily builds up.

Give the resident a "*I'm in a Roommate Conflict—Now What? A Student Guide to Being Respectful of Your Roommate Even if You're not BFFs*". Walk them through the guide and what they should do to prepare for the conversation, how to conduct the conversation, and what to do after the conversation. Remind them to remain calm and conduct the conversation in a non-threatening, non-judgmental way in a distraction-free environment.

Make sure to emphasize that they need to have a face-to-face conversation—don't conduct the conversation over email, Facebook, text messages, or instant messaging. Technology has its advantages in that a person can say what they want without having to look the other person in the eye, but neither person can gather body language or tone of voice through these methods of communication.

Assertiveness Skills

If the resident is nervous about having the conversation, practice with them how to be assertive without being too aggressive or passive.

Nonverbal Assertiveness

Assertiveness is not only a matter of *what* you say but also a function of *how* you say it. Even if you make an assertive verbal response, you will not be believed if your body's response is nonassertive. Those who express themselves assertively:

1. Stand straight, remain steady, and directly face the people to whom they are speaking, while maintaining eye contact.
2. Speak in a clear, steady voice, loud enough for the people to whom they are speaking to hear them.
3. Speak fluently, without hesitation and with assurance and confidence.

Verbal Assertiveness

DESC Form—The verbal response is divided into four components:

1. **Describe**—Paint a verbal picture of the other person's behavior or the situation to which you are reacting. (EX: "When you...")
2. **Express**—Relate your feelings regarding the other person's behavior or the situation you have just described. Use "I" statements here. (EX: "I feel...")
3. **Specify**—Be specific by identifying ways you would like the other person's behavior or the situation to change. Rather than saying, "You should...", use "I" statements. (EX: "I would prefer...", "I would like...", "I want...")
4. **Consequence**—Select the consequences you have decided to apply to the behavior or situation. What will you do if the other person's behavior or the situation changes to your satisfaction? (EX: "If you do ____, I will..."). What will be the consequences if nothing changes, or if the changes do not meet your needs? (EX: "If you don't ____, I will...") (Greenberg, 2006)

EXAMPLE: When you watch TV all night, I feel angry because I cannot get any homework done. I would like to set limits on what times the TV is on. If we can do this, we both could get homework done at a decent hour, hang out together, and then go to bed at an earlier time. If we don't do this, I will take my TV home for good at Thanksgiving Break. My studies are really important to me.

Make sure to remember that you should come in with an idea of what you would like to see for change and realize that the other person may have other ideas. Remain steadfast in your desire for change but flexible on the avenue of going about change.

Five Ways to Say “I”

An “I” message can include any or all of the following five parts. Be careful when including parts four and five since they contain hidden judgments or threats.

1. ***Observation: Describe the facts—the indisputable, observable realities.***

Talk about what you, or anyone else, can see, hear, smell taste, or touch. Avoid judgments, interpretations, or opinions. Instead of saying “You’re a slob” say “The garbage has not been taken out in a week and it is overflowing.”

2. ***Feelings: Describe your feelings.***

It is easier to listen to “I feel frustrated” than to “You never help me.” Talking about how you feel about another’s actions can be valuable feedback for that person.

3. ***Thoughts: Communicate your thoughts and use caution.***

Beginning your statement with an “I” doesn’t qualify as an “I” message. “I think you are a slob” is a “You” judgment in disguise. Instead, say, “I’d have more time to study if I didn’t have to clean up so often.”

4. ***Wants: You are far more likely to get what you want if you say what you want.***

If someone doesn’t know what you want, s/he doesn’t have a choice about helping you get it. Ask clearly. Avoid demanding or using the word “need.” Most people like to feel helpful, not obligated. Instead of “Do the dishes when it’s your turn, or else!” say “I want to divide the cleaning fairly.”

5. ***Intentions: The last part of an “I” message is a statement about what you intend to do.***

Have a plan that doesn’t depend on the other person. For example, instead of “From now on we’re going to split the dish-washing evenly,” you could say “I intend to do my share of the room cleaning and leave the rest undone.” (Ellis, 1997)

STEP FOUR: THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

If one or both residents come to you after they have put in a good-faith effort of trying to work it out themselves, then you can step in as a neutral person to help facilitate a conflict resolution.

An RA/CA is a helper, trying to assist students in a process known as facilitation. As a facilitator, the RA/CA tries to get people to express their views and listen to one another in the hopes of finding common ground to achieve a solution. Often the role of the RA/CA is to help people listen to one another, to help people find a middle ground or to compromise. Often though, the RA/CA must also reinforce community expectations and remind people on the limitation of their agreements (Illinois State University, n.d.).

Your first step is to talk to each resident individually to assess what the problems are, what occurred when they tried to talk about things themselves, and what they would still like to see happen. This way, you will not be surprised when you hold a joint meeting with both roommates. More people and circumstances may be involved than the two conflicting roommates. Parents, siblings, peers outside the immediate living situation, religious beliefs, racial prejudices, ethnic and cultural orientations, and financial matters may play influential roles in the conflict. To be effective as a facilitator of a solution, you must be familiar with the student's particular background and with what resources are available to help resolve the conflict.

Next, find a time to meet with them together. Find a private space to conduct the meeting where you can be left alone. You could go to their room or they could come to your room if they want to get out of their environment. Make sure to hold the conversation behind closed doors.

Understanding the process of conflict resolution is important. You must ensure that each of the roommates understands the process: when one roommate has said that s/he is willing to talk about a problem (negotiate), s/he has agreed to be willing to accept less than his/her total demands.

Your role at this juncture is to help the conflicting roommates to understand that resolution of the problem/conflict will probably involve compromise. It should be noted that achieving a compromise does not necessarily mean that either party will lose the things that are most important to him/her. The disputing roommates may find after calmly discussing the problems in good faith that the conflicts are more perceived than real. They simply may have been misreading each other's signals (LeHigh University, n.d.).

The Conflict Resolution Process

1. ***Explain your presence and your role in the conflict resolution process.***
2. ***Set ground rules.*** Examples include: each party will listen without interrupting the other person, no name calling, each person has to “own” his or her feelings, and setting time limits on each person’s turn when speaking.
3. ***Each person describes the situation without any interruptions.*** How does each person feel about it?
4. ***Understand all points of view by summarizing what each other has said.***
5. ***Brainstorm possible solutions.*** Generate as many as possible: quantity-not quality-right now.
6. ***Evaluate each solution.*** What is realistic and unrealistic? Discuss the pros and cons of each solution, suggesting possible compromises, and try to help generate other alternative solutions.
7. ***Choose the solution—one that is agreeable to both or is a workable compromise.*** Put it in writing. This could either be a change to the Roommate Agreement or an addendum. Each person should initial the revision.
8. ***Implement specifics of the plan—by when, how, what, who where?***
9. ***Set a time to re-evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.***
10. ***Follow up with the roommates to see how things are going, and help them address any other concerns which might arise.***

A Workable Compromise

A fair compromise may not be possible. Instead, you must go for a “workable compromise” you can live with.

SUGGESTIONS:

- My way this time, your way next time.
- Part of what I want with part of what you want.
- Meeting halfway.
- If you do _____ for me, I’ll do _____ for you.
- We’ll do this one my way, but we’ll do _____ your way.
- We’ll try my way this time, and if you don’t like it, you can veto it next time. (Davis, Eshelman, & McKay, 1995)

Tips to Keep in Mind When Facilitating a Roommate Conflict

1. ***Be open and listen attentively and patiently in order to reduce defensive and/or inaccurate information.*** Inaccurate communication often occurs when one individual is distrustful of another and feels threatened, sometimes subconsciously by what the other says and the way s/he says it. One can ask questions and listen in such a way as to minimize defensiveness and encourage open communication.
2. ***Describe, do not evaluate.*** Avoid value judgment statements (EX: "I'd never do that!") and value-laden words (EX: unimportant). Say the minimum necessary to keep the discussion going (EX: "Tell me more about it.>").
3. ***Be problem-oriented, not control-oriented.*** Initial indications that you are trying to exercise control may turn off both roommates to further communication. You must not seem to have a hidden agenda, strategy, or desired solution in mind for the roommates.
4. ***Display empathy and equal concern for both roommates.*** You do not have to agree with everything they say, but you must express an understanding of their problems and accept their emotional reactions to the situation at face value.
5. ***Convey equality, not superiority.*** You cannot afford to appear superior if you expect to be helpful. If you create the impression that the conflicts are petty and beneath you, you will be ineffective.
6. ***Never take sides.*** Never become the decision maker. Never defend one person's point of view. When necessary, ask questions for clarification or feed back your perceptions, not to devalue one person's position but to bring to the attention of both parties what was said.
7. ***When possible, employ a win-win strategy to resolve conflicts.*** It is almost always possible that each person can walk away feeling as though he or she has won at least part of the conflict.
8. ***Ensure that each person's personal integrity is maintained.*** It is never acceptable to have one person feel debased or humiliated. This lays a foundation for greater hostility and is not an adequate resolution to any conflict.
9. ***Get conflicts into the open.*** If people are arguing back and forth about a particular situation, you may be able to assist them in defining their conflict. It is better that they get a conflict in the open where it can be confronted rather than react negatively to each other without adequate explanation.
10. ***Be aware of barriers to conflict resolution.*** Defensiveness, put-downs, judgmental reactions, manipulation, discounting, and aggressive attacks are barriers to communication and are counterproductive.
11. ***Do not escalate conflicts by involving more people than necessary.*** Resolve conflicts at the lowest possible level between the individuals who are directly involved. When too many people are involved, people become concerned with maintaining loyalties and saving face.

Some Helpful Strategies You Might Employ

- **Ask “Are there times when you do get along?”** What is different when they do get along? Do more of the same!
- **Try to back it up to common ground.** List all the points on which they are not in conflict. Also look at common values. This can begin with the Roommate Agreement.
- **Slow down the communication when things heat up.** Try to just listen. Usually this slows down the pace and allows the other person to become more level-headed. They may need to take a break from the communication if things get too heated.
- **Tell the residents to write a letter to each other BUT DON'T SEND IT.** This helps to calm emotions and get their thoughts down on paper before they confront each other.
- **Agree to disagree, but be respectful**
- **Ask the Miracle Question**
 - If you went to sleep tonight and a miracle happened so that all the roommate conflicts disappeared, what would you be doing differently tomorrow? In what ways would your life change?
- **Structured Fight Task to Determine How Conversation Begins**
 - Toss a coin to decide who goes first
 - The winner gets to vent for 5-10 uninterrupted minutes
 - Then the other person gets a 5-10-minute turn
 - Then there needs to be 10 minutes of silence before another round is started with a coin toss.

STEP FIVE: FUTURE CONFLICTS

If the residents return to you stating that the solution they agreed to is not working, find out the specifics from each of them and conduct another conflict resolution process to generate a new solution to the problem or to discuss new problems that might have come up.

Keep your Hall Director in the loop of information so that s/he is prepared if any parent calls or if the residents visit with them. If a resident is intentionally not cooperating or is violating university policy, make sure to file a report with the Hall Director. If problems keep persisting between the roommates, they will need to ultimately meet with the Hall Director to explain the situation.

STEP SIX: ROOM CHANGES

No room changes will occur during the first two weeks of Fall semester unless the situation involves a health or safety issue. This allows roommates to get beyond superficial first impressions and unfounded biases to learn how to get along with people who are different from them. It also allows the university to determine who has and has not arrived to WSU. With the high occupancy rate and overflow situation at the beginning of each year, room changes can be very difficult to orchestrate.

It is only up to the Hall Director to determine if a room change can/should occur. The decision may be based on the efforts put forth by the roommates, the issues surrounding the conflict, and the availability of another space. Splitting up may be the best solution; however, it is often difficult to determine who should move to the new room and who should remain in the current room. The best option is for the roommates to decide themselves. However, when that fails, the following options exist: application dates (earliest gets to stay), flipping a coin or drawing straws, or deciding who is most desperate to get out of the situation. If a decision cannot be made, both roommates may be required to move. After the decision has been made as to who will move, the Hall Director will attempt to find a new room for the student moving in a desired location (building or floor). In some instances the Hall Director will have no options and will move the student to whatever space is available at that time if there are any. Students are then given a specific time period during which they are to complete the move.

The RA/CA and Hall Director will work with both roommates to reflect on what happened and what could have been done differently to avoid the need to move rooms. It is important for the students to learn from this experience so as not to repeat it with their new roommate.

STEP SEVEN: TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!

Roommate conflicts on your floor or in your building can be extremely taxing on your mind, body, and soul. They can be exceptionally stressful emotionally and physically because you are dealing with people's emotions at a time when they are not always at their best. But you must always keep in mind that you need to remain neutral and put forth your best effort to assist in the process. If you get into a situation that you feel is over your head or where you feel that you have become ineffective, ASK FOR HELP! Your Hall Director, Assistant Hall Director and other staff are always available for you to bounce ideas off, be a sounding board for you to vent, or just to help you take your mind off the situation for a little bit. Taking a step back to evaluate what you've done and what still needs to happen can give you a fresh perspective.

Be sure to set boundaries with your residents. Remember that you have a floor or building full of residents who need your attention too. If you are caught up in the middle of a roommate conflict that is taking all of your time, you are not being fair to your other residents as well as your job responsibilities. Assertively state that you are always willing to help and listen, but if a resident comes to you asking for advice but doesn't take it, there is not much more that you can do for them until they take the initiative.

You will have some residents who think the world is crashing down around them because they have had a small argument with their roommate over a bag of trash, and that is OK. Give them guidance on how to address the situation and moral support that they can tackle this problem on their own, and then set them to the task.

If you become overwhelmed with a lot of roommate conflicts (or with one in particular), make sure to bring it up with your Hall Director so s/he can help you. There may be instances where the Hall Director will step in earlier in the conflict resolution process if needed. The Hall Directors want you to feel and be successful in your position. Always remember that the Counseling Center is also available to you too! Taking an hour to visit with someone to share your frustrations and stress can help ease your load when you have a lot of things on your plate.

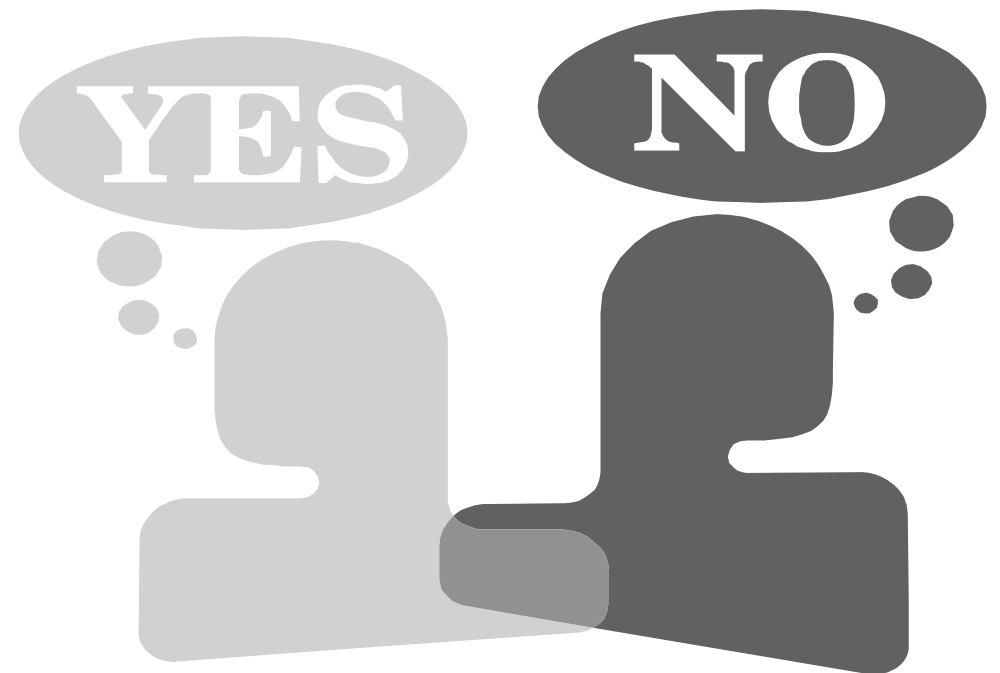
Finally, always keep in mind that a roommate conflict is not YOUR problem to solve—it's the residents'. You are there to serve as a listening ear, a trainer, a translator, a facilitator, and a resource expander, but you are not there to solve other people's problems for them. Conflict resolution is a growth-producing experience that requires the acquisition of a set of skills that are valuable for life.

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I'm in a Roommate Conflict... Now What?

*A Student Guide to Being
Respectful of Your Roommate,
Even if You're not BFFs*



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Conflict—It's Really OK!

More often than not, college students are coming to campus without ever having shared a bedroom before. But we believe that having a roommate can be a great lesson you learn in college. The experience provides you with many opportunities to develop communication and compromise skills, which can be of benefit with many other types of relationships in your life.

You will often see TV shows and movies portraying a college roommate relationship in an idyllic manner: roommates are best friends who stand up in each other's weddings, become godparents to each other's children, and visit each other over the holidays. For some, this certainly is reality. But for others, it is not, and that is OK. We believe the most important thing in the roommate relationship is to develop mutual respect and honesty for each other—you don't have to be best friends in the process.

The college roommate experience can be one of the most trying yet gratifying times in your college career. You will encounter values and concepts that you may never knew existed. For many, this will be the first time that they have had to share their space. This sharing will require that you learn how your behaviors and actions, both positively and negatively, affect others. We encourage each student to open his or her mind to themselves and others.

This will be a time to be flexible, set limits, hold others accountable, and to be held accountable. The college experience entails growing and changing, not staying the same. The roommate experience can be an invaluable part of each student's college education. As with all things of worth, it will take effort, initiative, and understanding.

Living with a person who has different habits and customs can be an educational experience. Sharing differences with one another can lay the foundation for greater understanding of different religions, cultures, lifestyles, customs and traditions. The workforce of the new millennium will demand a greater understanding of the diversity of lifestyles, customs and ways of communicating because technology has made it easier to link persons and companies across the world with nothing more than a computer. Seen in this context, living with a person who has different customs and lifestyles offers students practical preparation for the workforce of tomorrow.

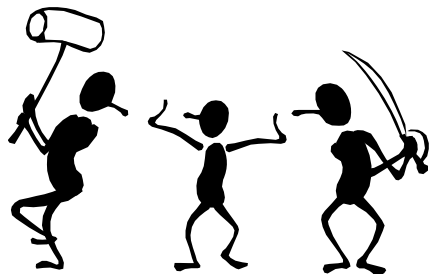
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Some Rules for “Fighting Fair”

- State and own your feelings, needs, and wants.
- Never speak for the other person(s).
- Never assume-check it out.
- Ask for feedback.
- Avoid asking “Why?”
- Avoid comparing (i.e., “If you were only like Susie down the hall...”)
- Deal with things as they come up—don’t hold onto things for a long time and bring them up later for a sneak attack.
- Be willing to negotiate/compromise.
- No outside interruptions allowed—cell phones off, TV off, friends out of the room.
- BE HONEST! People prefer and can handle honesty.
- Be aware of your “belt line” and that of others—never hit below the belt.
- Fight towards understanding and acceptance—not always agreement.
- Recognize how ridiculous some situations can get and be able to laugh about it.
- Never push anyone up against the wall, emotionally, physically, or psychologically.
- Let others “win” a few. It feels good on all sides.
- Remember, we all say things “in the heat of battle” that are untrue, half true, or not meant.
- Minimize ultimatums (some are necessary), but avoid using them as a weapon.
- Listen! Please listen to both content and feeling of what is being said.
- Ask for clarification if the message is not clear.
- Remember: Nothing is forever, and change is always possible.
- KEEP IT SIMPLE!



Personal Bill of Rights



- I have the right to ask for what I want.
- I have the right to say no to requests or demands I can’t meet.
- I have the right to express all of my feelings, positive or negative.
- I have the right to change my mind.
- I have the right to make mistakes and not have to be perfect.
- I have the right to follow my own values and standards.
- I have the right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe, or it violates my values.
- I have the right to determine my own priorities.
- I have the right not to be responsible for others’ behaviors, actions, feelings, or problems.
- I have the right to expect honesty from others.
- I have the right to be angry at someone I love.
- I have the right to be uniquely myself.
- I have the right to feel scared and say “I’m afraid.”
- I have the right to say “I don’t know.”
- I have the right not to give excuses or reasons for my behavior.
- I have the right to make decisions based on my feelings.
- I have the right to my own needs for personal space and time.
- I have the right to be playful and frivolous.
- I have the right to be in a non-abusive environment.
- I have the right to make friends and be comfortable around people.
- I have the right to change and grow.
- I have the right to have my needs and wants respected by others.
- I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- I have the right to be happy.

Roommate Bill of Rights & Responsibilities

All roommates have the right...

- To privacy
- To respect
- To open communication
- To mutually clean living quarters
- To personal safety and security of possessions
- To comfortable sleep and study conditions
- To be asked before their possessions are used
- To stay true to their own values
- To agree and disagree
- To ask residence life staff for assistance when needed
- To be treated civilly
- To a comfortable living space
- To get their messages in a timely manner
- To a room free of policy violations

All roommates have the responsibility...

- To respect one another's privacy
- To respect themselves and others
- To communicate openly with their roommate and discuss potential conflicts
- To keep their living space neat and clean
- To lock doors and maintain personal safety
- To maintain a comfortable environment for sleep and study purposes
- To treat one another's possessions with care and ask before borrowing personal items
- To respect differences
- To compromise
- To enlist the help of residence life staff when a difficult roommate issue arises
- To be kind and civil with no intent to harm
- To check with one another before having overnight guests
- To abide by all residence hall policies and regulations

- Make sure you are prepared to discuss criticism that may be aimed at you—often times roommates have concerns with each other.
- Try and separate yourself from any anger. You will get better results by remaining calm and rational and anger may just fuel the situation.
- Don't assume a "victim" mentality—it is within your control to address the situation and take action. Inaction is an option but then you must accept the consequences of choosing no action.
- Commit yourself to listening. Everyone wants to be heard and only by listening to your roommate's point of view can you understand and better resolve any conflict.
- Confront the problem, not the person.
- Speak to each other. Don't leave notes or send emails.
- Express your feelings and needs in a non-blaming way.
- Take ownership for your part of the problem.
- Focus on what can be done, not what can't.
- Make reasonable, realistic requests of one another.
- Solve the problem and strengthen your relationship.
- Plan ahead—think about what you want to say ahead of time and what responses you might hear.
- Speak directly, honestly and respectfully—make eye contact and watch their reactions to make sure that what you're saying is being heard.
- Put the problem(s) out on the table, and work together to find a solution.
- Be calm and cool. When you lose your temper, you might also lose the opportunity to resolve your differences.
- Be careful not to make accusations like, "You couldn't care less about how I feel!" This will only make your roommate defensive. Talk about specific behaviors, not a person's character.
- Put yourself in your roommate's shoes, treating them as you would like to be treated. Before you make any demands, think about how you would react to such demands.

Tips for Handling Roommate Conflicts (Continued...)

- Share the space. It is imperative that you acknowledge how important it is to know and respect your roommate, just as you would like him/her to respect you. S/he is working to share the space, just as you are. So, be respectful of your roommate's belongings and area of the room and try to work out a living arrangement that is suitable for both roommates.
- Acknowledge your differences and similarities in the beginning and don't be afraid to speak up. Maintaining open communication is imperative. Establishing the similarities and differences in your living styles, habits, and interests is the basis for creating an enjoyable living environment.
- Lay down the rules beforehand and no one gets hurt. Create some ground rules from the start and don't be afraid to speak up for yourself. When developing friendships people generally try to be extra considerate, but as the newness wears off of being roommates, it is important to have a mutual understanding of one another. Collaborate and devise a living plan to suit you both. Coordinate your lives to avoid irritating one another.
- Regardless of how close you and your roommate may become and how well you prepare to live with one another, conflict will arise, even if your roommate is your best friend from high school. Conflict is perfectly normal, but knowing how to deal with the conflict can sometimes feel like a pretty challenging task. When a conflict does surface, you can choose to constructively confront the situation(s) at hand or you can choose to ignore it. In general, ignoring a problem often makes the problem worse and it doesn't really seem to just disappear like we might hope for, so try to work it out as best you can.
- Make sure you have the facts straight.
- Be gentle, but direct. The longer you wait to confront the problem, the worse it may become.
- Expect some defensiveness, possibly even after the confrontation. Give your roommate an opportunity to think about what you have said.
- Don't cloud the issue by checking with everyone else on the floor before you give feedback to your roommate.

How to Be a Good Roommate

Having a good roommate experience includes being a good roommate! If you treat your roommate as you would like to be treated at all times, conflicts will be minimal. However, if you take over more than your share of the room, don't clean up after yourself, and refuse to compromise on anything, you will be headed down a road of disaster. Here are a few tips on how to get along with your roommate and how to be a good roommate.

- Don't expect too much...roommates don't have to be best friends.
- Getting along and being respectful to each other is all that is necessary.
- Be open-ask questions, listen, discuss. Don't wait until things get out of hand.
- Learn to talk it out before you are ready to blow up.
- Tell your roommate in a mature fashion what is bothering you and help him or her to understand why.
- Be sensitive to each other's moods.
- Everybody has bad days, so try to understand when your roommate has one, too.
- The room belongs to both of you. Decorate together so it meets both your needs.
- When things can't be worked out between the two of you, seek assistance from your RA/CA.
- Be assertive when your basic rights and needs are an issue.
- Do not let little annoyances or "quirks" bother you. Especially things that your roommate cannot change (i.e., an accent).
- If your roommate starts to get on your nerves, leave for a while to blow off some steam. When you return, you can confront him or her and perhaps you will not even remember what was bothering you in the first place. A potential fight is avoided.
- Remember that you have a right to be treated with respect.
- Your roommate also has a right to be treated with respect.
- Be tolerant of each other.
- Compromise. All good relationships are based on equal amounts of give and take.
- Learn from each other. Be open-minded to your roommate's point-of-view and listen to his or her side.

Ten Rules for Roommates

Once in a while, abiding by a set of rules give us structure and guidance in our lives! Believe it or not, there is even a set of rules for how to be a roommate! Read through these and figure out which ones may not be followed...either by you or by your roommate.

1. Play Fair

One of the main problems roommates have is getting the chores done that you always had to do at home and now want to avoid. So you both may end up playing the waiting game. Meanwhile, your floor develops a new, bumpier terrain, and your breathing air reeks of dirty laundry and pizza boxes! Nobody really likes to take the trash out or vacuum the floor, but these chores will eventually need to be done! Figure out some kind of arrangement so that you are both comfortable with the frequency with which the tasks are accomplished, and with how often you each have to do it. If it becomes a struggle, make a schedule, specifying everything that must be done, how often, and who is responsible each time.

2. Respect Privacy

One consequence of sharing space with someone is the obvious lack of privacy. Honor your roommate's right to want some "alone time" without feeling insulted. You will probably want some "alone time" as well. Respecting one another's privacy also means that you not reading your roommate's mail or eavesdrop on personal conversations. Discuss ways to ensure that you each will be able to have private time in your shared space.

3. Plan Ahead

Let your roommate know when you will have guests in your room—whether it is a group of friends, a study group, or your parents. Your plans will undoubtedly have an impact on your roommate's life, too.

4. Mind Your Own Business

Your roommate storms into the room, throwing books on the floor and slamming the door. S/he may have a problem, but not want your advice or input. Try offering to listen...before sharing your opinion!

Fall Semester Room Changes

WSU places a two-week hiatus on roommate changes at the beginning of the Fall semester. We do this for several reasons. The first is so we can administratively get all of our "ducks in a row" and know who has and has not arrived. The second, and most important, reason is for roommates to have enough time to get to know and become comfortable with one another. It can be tempting at first for the overly anxious roommate to want to move at the slightest sign of discord. Given time, that same student might become comfortable with the roommate and less inclined to want to bail at the first sign of a disagreement.

NOTE: Room changes during Fall semester are extremely difficult due to the level of occupancy in the residence halls already. There may not be any openings for several weeks, so do not get your heart set on changing rooms at the first sight of conflict because it probably won't happen.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING, HANDLING, AND RESOLVING ROOMMATE CONFLICTS

It is imperative that you address these issues by yourself—not with the accompaniment of parents, siblings, or other friends. Although parents may be tempted to take care of the problem for you by contacting the residence life staff, your roommate, or your roommate's family, this will not help you learn to deal with similar situations in the future.

Roommate relationships begin first and foremost with the choices YOU make. Regardless of how dissimilar you and your new roommate may be, you hold the power to make your living situation successful. Here is a list of useful tips for avoiding, handling, and resolving roommate conflict:

- You have to make the decision to get along or not.. If you can't make the decision to get along, all of the advice in the entire world will be useless when a conflict arises. So, open up your mind and prepare for a new experience. Make the best of your living situation and experience campus living with a fresh start.

STEP SIX: DEALING WITH FUTURE CONFLICTS

If you and your roommate experience more conflicts in the future, we expect that you will follow the process we have already put into place so you and your roommate can work them out on your own. If this is not possible, the RA/CA can facilitate another conflict resolution process to help guide you to solutions.

If it is determined that a roommate is intentionally not cooperating or is violating university policy in any way, the RA/CA will file a report with the Hall Director and one or both roommates will need to meet with the Hall Director. The Hall Director will determine how to proceed with the conflict. If there is still room for compromise, s/he will work with you to come to a final resolution that must be observed.

WHAT ABOUT ROOM CHANGES?

Making a room change is up to the discretion of the Hall Director and no one else—not even your parents. Granting a room change may be based on many factors. The decision may be based on the efforts put forth by the roommates, the issues surrounding the conflict, and the availability of another space. Splitting up may be the best solution; however, it is often difficult to determine who should move to the new room and who should remain in the current room. The best option is for the roommates to decide themselves. However, when that fails, the following options exist: application dates (earliest gets to stay), flipping a coin or drawing straws, or deciding who is most desperate to get out of the situation. If a decision cannot be made, both roommates may be required to move.

After the decision has been made as to who will move, the Hall Director will attempt to find a new room for the student moving in a desired location (building or floor). In some instances the Hall Director will have no options and will move the student to whatever space is available at that time if there are any. Students are then given a specific time period during which they are to complete the move.

The RA/CA and Hall Director will work with both roommates to reflect on what happened and what could have been done differently to avoid the need to move rooms. It is important for the students to learn from this experience so as not to repeat it with their new roommate.

5. *Nobody's Perfect*

Your roommate's endearing little character traits may turn into the biggest annoyances of your young life. Try keeping in mind that your snoring or humming while you work may inspire the same reactions in them. Patience and tolerance are truly virtues—practice them! If you think that you are at a breaking point, take some time away, and then discuss your concerns.

6. *Money Matters*

Even if you are only sharing living space, money can become a point of contention with roommates. You and your roommate may have very different feelings about borrowing money or about sharing food and laundry detergent. Make specific repayment schedules for any borrowing that may occur and discuss your feelings about sharing your personal purchases.

7. *It Was Bound to Happen*

You've followed your chore schedule, slept with earplugs, and kept your nose in your own business. Nevertheless, you and your roommate are engaged in a small war. Try to think of your disagreement in terms of the "big picture"—will this be significant in five years? There are no guarantees that another roommate situation will be any less difficult, and if you walk away without trying to resolve your issues, you will have learned nothing. Try with all of your might to see the situation from your roommate's perspective.

8. *Be Considerate*

If you apply this rule in all situations, you may never need Rule #7! Leaving accurate phone messages where your roommate can find them, being extra quiet when they are trying to take a nap, leaving the room when they are talking to family or friends from far away—it all adds up to being a considerate roommate.

9. & 10. *Compromise & More Compromise!*

Living with anyone is a matter of give and take. Rules and schedules can do their part, but what really matters is how you and your roommate treat each other each day. Learn to share and compromise easily and remember that your friendship means more than who is supposed to take out the garbage.

The Roommate Agreement

During the first two weeks of school, your RA/CA should have had you fill out a Roommate Agreement. This is a form that has you discuss expectations of your room, habits, schedules, likes/dislikes, what can be shared and what is off-limits, and how you will discuss conflicts should they arise. The efficacy of the Roommate Agreement is dependent on how open and honest the communication is between you and your roommate while filling it out.

Once you have completed the Roommate Agreement, everyone signs it. The RA/CA retains a copy to be placed on file and the other copy is given to the roommates to be hung in the room. Find a place (such as the back of your door) to display the agreement so that you can refer to it easily if there are questions or to help you remember what was agreed upon.

If you are having a roommate conflict, and have not filled out a Roommate Agreement yet, completing one can help guide a conversation between the two of you and set parameters for your room. See your RA/CA to get a copy of the Roommate Agreement.

How do I Deal with a Conflict with my Roommate?

STEP ONE: DETERMINING YOUR CONCERNS

The first step is to figure out what is bothering you about your roommate or about your roommate situation. Is there something that your roommate says or does that is constantly bothering you? Are the terms of your Roommate Agreement not being followed? Has your roommate developed a new habit or schedule that you don't like? Take some time to journal about what you need to address with your roommate.



Your RA/CA will talk to both you and your roommate individually to gather information on what the problems and issues are. S/he will then schedule a time to meet with you together to find another solution. Below is an outline of the conflict resolution process.

The Conflict Resolution Process

1. ***The RA/CA will explain his/her presence and role in the conflict resolution process.***
2. ***Set ground rules.*** Examples include: each party will listen without interrupting the other person, no name calling, each person has to “own” his or her feelings, and setting time limits on each person’s turn when speaking.
3. ***Each person describes the situation without any interruptions.*** How does each person feel about it?
4. ***Understand all points of view by summarizing what each other has said.***
5. ***Brainstorm possible solutions.*** Generate as many as possible: quantity-not quality-right now.
6. ***Evaluate each solution.*** What is realistic and unrealistic? Discuss the pros and cons of each solution, suggesting possible compromises, and try to help generate other alternative solutions.
7. ***Choose the solution—one that is agreeable to both or is a workable compromise.*** Put it in writing. This could either be a change to the Roommate Agreement or an addendum. Each person should initial the revision.
8. ***Implement specifics of the plan—by when, how, what, who where?***
9. ***Set a time to re-evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.***
10. ***The RA/CA will follow up with the roommates to see how things are going, and help them address any other concerns which might arise.***

STEP FOUR: FINDING ROOM FOR COMPROMISE

It is extremely important to find common ground from which the both of you can work to develop a compromise to your conflict. Sometimes your roommate might realize that what is happening is being caused by something they say or do, and so they will stop immediately. However, most conflicts are not resolved that simply. Finding a compromise may require some “give and take” on both your parts to reach a suitable solution. Be prepared to stick to the things that are really important to you and you are not willing to waiver on and be flexible on the things that are not as important.

The goal of a compromise is to find a win-win solution so that neither person feels as though they’ve lost something. In some cases, this can’t be done and a workable compromise needs to be developed that both of you can live with. Here are some suggestions for workable compromises:

- My way this time, your way next time.
- Part of what I want with part of what you want.
- Meeting halfway.
- If you do _____ for me, I’ll do _____ for you.
- We’ll do this one my way, but we’ll do _____ your way.
- We’ll try my way this time, and if you don’t like it, you can veto it next time.
- My way when I’m doing it, you’re way when you’re doing it.

Once you have found a solution/compromise that is agreeable to both of you, put the plan in place to follow through with it. It is also important to schedule a time to revisit the situation to see if the solution is working or if adjustment needs to be made.

STEP FIVE: TALKING TO YOUR RA/CA & THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

If things between you and your roommate still are not working, talk to your RA/CA to get their perspective and let them know what is going on right away. They may be able to “put a fresh pair of eyes” on the situation and offer suggestions or advice on how to help the situation. Your RA/CA will ask you what steps you have already taken to resolve the conflict, so be honest in what you’ve said and done. If there is a need, the RA/CA will start facilitating the conflict resolution process.

1. Evaluate your Personal and Roommate Bill of Rights. What do you feel has been violated in this conflict (see pages 3-4)?

2. Who is the person involved in your conflict?

3. When does the problem occur (time and setting)?

4. What bothers you about the situation?

5. What would you like to see happen to meet your needs?

6. What can your roommate do to meet your needs?

7. How can your roommate benefit by helping to meet these needs?

8. What is the least I will settle for in a compromise to resolve this conflict?

STEP TWO: TALKING TO YOUR ROOMMATE

Your next step is to talk to your roommate about your concerns. This may seem a bit too easy, but surprisingly, it is often an option that people avoid. It is easy to let problems go until they seem so large that talking about them is intimidating. While it may be hard to approach your roommate if s/he is doing something that bothers you, it will usually help move the problem toward resolution. On the other hand, if you don't tell your roommate that something is bothering you, s/he may not know that you are bothered, and might continue to do the thing which bothers you. Even worse, if you seem annoyed at the behavior, s/he may misread this annoyance as animosity toward him or her. When this happens, it becomes very difficult to re-open the lines of communication.

When discussing any issue with your roommate, be assertive. Being passive and suppressing your point of view will only make you frustrated and cause you to resent your roommate. Eventually a small thing like borrowing a shirt will blow up into a huge argument. On the other hand, being aggressive, fighting for your rights while stepping on someone else's rights might solve the problem initially, but your roommate will end up harboring hard feelings and resenting you. Remember to be assertive in communication and to speak in a calm, friendly, and reasonable manner.

Talking to your roommate means having a face-to-face conversation—don't conduct the conversation over email, Facebook, text messages, Post-It Notes, or instant messaging. Technology has its advantages in that a person can say what they want without having to look the other person in the eye, but neither person can gather body language or tone of voice through these methods of communication.

Assertiveness Skills

Nonverbal Assertiveness

Assertiveness is not only a matter of *what* you say but also a function of *how* you say it. Even if you make an assertive verbal response, you will not be believed if your body's response is nonassertive. Those who express themselves assertively:

In addition to using active listening skills, there are some other important tips for overall good listening. Read through these to see which ones you might disobey on a normal basis that would restrict you from really hearing what someone is saying.

Ten Commandments for Good Listening

1. ***Stop talking—you cannot listen if you are talking!***
2. ***Put the talker at ease—help him or her feel that s/he is free to talk.***
This is often called a permissive environment.
3. ***Show him or her that you want to listen—look and act interested.***
Do not read your mail or text a friend while s/he is talking.
4. ***Remove distractions—don't doodle on paper, watch TV, or check your email.***
5. ***Be patient—allow plenty of time.***
Do not interrupt him or her. Don't start for the door or walk away.
6. ***Empathize with him or her—try to put yourself in his or her shoes so that you can see his or her point of view.***
7. ***Hold your temper—an angry person gets the wrong meaning from words.***
8. ***Go easy on argument and criticism—this puts him or her on the defensive.***
Do not argue; even if you win, you lose.
9. ***Ask questions—this encourages him or her and shows that you are listening.***
It helps to develop points further.
10. ***Stop talking!***
This is the first and last because all other commandments depend on it. You just can't do a good job while you are talking.

STEP THREE: LISTENING TO YOUR ROOMMATE

Now that you have had an opportunity to share your concerns with your roommate, it is time to shut your mouth and listen to what they have to say. Developing active listening skills is an important skill set to have now and in the future with a variety of relationships and environments.

Active Listening Skills

1. Ask yourself: “Am I ready to listen? Are there any distractions?”

YES

NO

**If the answer is NO figure out what you need so you have the ability to truly listen to your roommate.*

2. What is your body language saying right now?

Do your nonverbals indicate that you are ready to listen or do you appear distracted and unable to give your undivided attention.

3. Acknowledge: What are your “minimal encouragers”?

This could be direct eye contact, nodding your head, saying “Tell me more”. It lets them know that you are listening.

4. Invite conversation with open-ended questions.

These are the What? Why? When? Where? With Whom? questions—not ones that just require a “yes” or “no” response.

5. Paraphrase to your roommate what you’ve just heard.

6. Check your paraphrasing for accuracy to make sure you’ve heard them correctly.

In addition to using active listening skills, there are some other important tips for overall good listening. Read through these to see which ones you might disobey on a normal basis that would restrict you from really hearing what someone is saying.

- Stand straight, remain steady, and directly face the people to whom they are speaking, while maintaining eye contact.
- Speak in a clear, steady voice, loud enough for the people to whom they are speaking to hear them.
- Speak fluently, without hesitation and with assurance and confidence.

Verbal Assertiveness

DESC Form—The verbal response is divided into four components:

Describe—Paint a verbal picture of the other person’s behavior or the situation to which you are reacting. (EX: “When you...”)

Express—Relate your feelings regarding the other person’s behavior or the situation you have just described. Use “I” statements here. (EX: “I feel...”)

Specify—Be specific by identifying ways you would like the other person’s behavior or the situation to change. Rather than saying, “You should...,” use “I” statements. (EX: “I would prefer....,” “I would like...,” “I want...”)

Consequence—Select the consequences you have decided to apply to the behavior or situation. What will you do if the other person’s behavior or the situation changes to your satisfaction? (EX: “If you do ___, I will...”). What will be the consequences if nothing changes, or if the changes do not meet your needs? (EX: “If you don’t ___, I will...”)

EXAMPLE: *When you watch TV all night, I feel angry because I cannot get any homework done. I would like to set limits on what times the TV is on. If we can do this, we could get homework done at a decent hour, hang out together, and then go to bed at an earlier time. If we don’t do this, I will take my TV home for good at Thanksgiving Break. My studies are really important to me.*

Make sure to remember that you should come in with an idea of what you would like to see for change and realize that the other person may have other ideas. Remain steadfast in your desire for change but flexible on the avenue of going about change.

Five Ways to Say “I”

It is important when crafting your “I” statements, that you do so with care. You don’t want to sound judgmental or demanding because that will cause your roommate to feel attacked and not willing to compromise. Follow these simple rules when developing your “I” statements. Be careful when including parts four and five since they contain hidden judgments or threats.

1. *Observation: Describe the facts—the indisputable, observable realities.*

Talk about what you, or anyone else, can see, hear, smell taste, or touch. Avoid judgments, interpretations, or opinions. Instead of saying “You’re a slob” say “The garbage has not been taken out in a week and it is overflowing.”

2. *Feelings: Describe your feelings.*

It is easier to listen to “I feel frustrated” than to “You never help me.” Talking about how you feel about another’s actions can be valuable feedback for that person.

3. *Thoughts: Communicate your thoughts and use caution.*

Beginning your statement with an “I” doesn’t qualify as an “I” message. “I think you are a slob” is a “You” judgment in disguise. Instead, say, “I’d have more time to study if I didn’t have to clean up so often.”

4. *Wants: You are far more likely to get what you want if you say what you want.*

If someone doesn’t know what you want, s/he doesn’t have a choice about helping you get it. Ask clearly. Avoid demanding or using the word “need.” Most people like to feel helpful, not obligated. Instead of “Do the dishes when it’s your turn, or else!” say “I want to divide the cleaning fairly.”

5. *Intentions: The last part of an “I” message is a statement about what you intend to do.*

Have a plan that doesn’t depend on the other person. For example, instead of “From now on we’re going to split the dish-washing evenly,” you could say “I intend to do my share of the room cleaning and leave the rest undone.”

Now take some time to journal about how you will be assertive in the conversation you will have with your roommate. Remember, face-to-face communication is required and utilize the DESC form when crafting your message. Leave room for flexibility and compromise.

1. *Designate a time to discuss your concerns with the person(s) involved. Take into account what the other person might have going on at that time.*

2. *State the problems in terms of its consequences for you and the other person.*

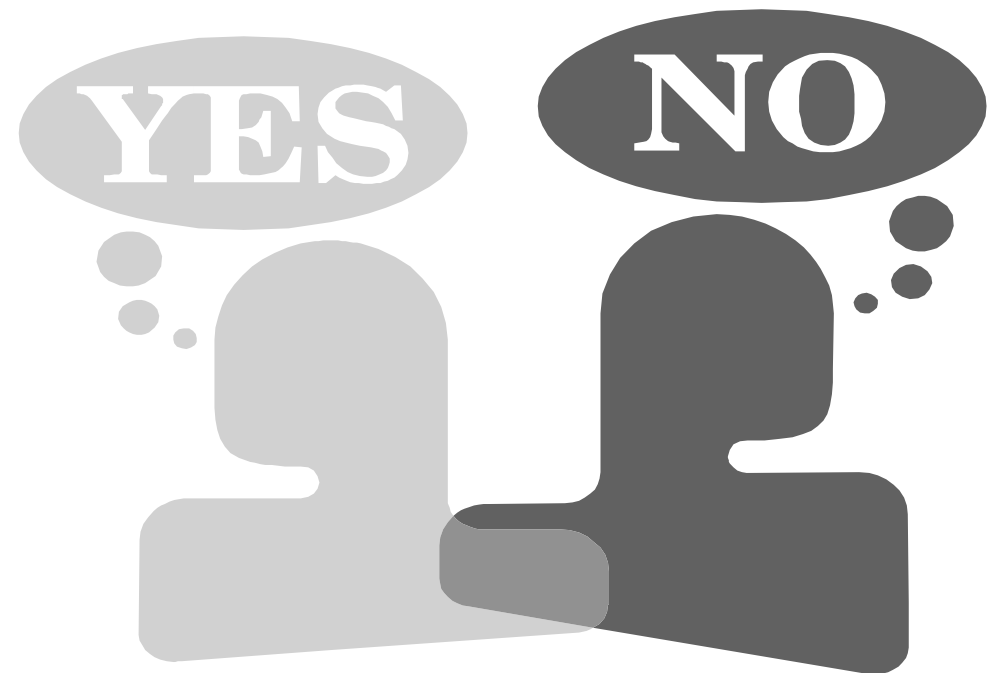
3. *Express your feelings using “I” statements—not “You” judgments.*

4. *Make your request (simple, 1-2 sentences, specific, one thing at a time).*

5. *State consequences of gaining/not gaining cooperation. (Remember: praise can go a long way!)*

I'm in a Roommate Conflict... Now What?

*A Student Guide to Being
Respectful of Your Roommate,
Even if You're not BFFs*



By: Tracy A. Rahim, MS
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Conflict—It's Really OK!

More often than not, college students are coming to campus without ever having shared a bedroom before. But we believe that having a roommate can be a great lesson you learn in college. The experience provides you with many opportunities to develop communication and compromise skills, which can be of benefit with many other types of relationships in your life.

You will often see TV shows and movies portraying a college roommate relationship in an idyllic manner: roommates are best friends who stand up in each other's weddings, become godparents to each other's children, and visit each other over the holidays. For some, this certainly is reality. But for others, it is not, and that is OK. We believe the most important thing in the roommate relationship is to develop mutual respect and honesty for each other—you don't have to be best friends in the process.

The college roommate experience can be one of the most trying yet gratifying times in your college career. You will encounter values and concepts that you may never knew existed. For many, this will be the first time that they have had to share their space. This sharing will require that you learn how your behaviors and actions, both positively and negatively, affect others. We encourage each student to open his or her mind to themselves and others.

This will be a time to be flexible, set limits, hold others accountable, and to be held accountable. The college experience entails growing and changing, not staying the same. The roommate experience can be an invaluable part of each student's college education. As with all things of worth, it will take effort, initiative, and understanding.

Living with a person who has different habits and customs can be an educational experience. Sharing differences with one another can lay the foundation for greater understanding of different religions, cultures, lifestyles, customs and traditions. The workforce of the new millennium will demand a greater understanding of the diversity of lifestyles, customs and ways of communicating because technology has made it easier to link persons and companies across the world with nothing more than a computer. Seen in this context, living with a person who has different customs and lifestyles offers students practical preparation for the workforce of tomorrow.

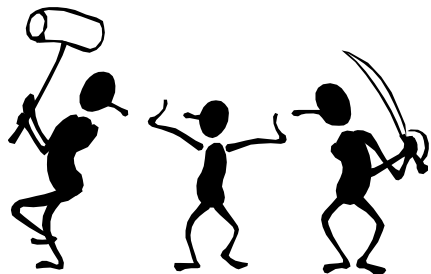
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Some Rules for “Fighting Fair”

- State and own your feelings, needs, and wants.
- Never speak for the other person(s).
- Never assume-check it out.
- Ask for feedback.
- Avoid asking “Why?”
- Avoid comparing (i.e., “If you were only like Susie down the hall...”)
- Deal with things as they come up—don’t hold onto things for a long time and bring them up later for a sneak attack.
- Be willing to negotiate/compromise.
- No outside interruptions allowed—cell phones off, TV off, friends out of the room.
- BE HONEST! People prefer and can handle honesty.
- Be aware of your “belt line” and that of others—never hit below the belt.
- Fight towards understanding and acceptance—not always agreement.
- Recognize how ridiculous some situations can get and be able to laugh about it.
- Never push anyone up against the wall, emotionally, physically, or psychologically.
- Let others “win” a few. It feels good on all sides.
- Remember, we all say things “in the heat of battle” that are untrue, half true, or not meant.
- Minimize ultimatums (some are necessary), but avoid using them as a weapon.
- Listen! Please listen to both content and feeling of what is being said.
- Ask for clarification if the message is not clear.
- Remember: Nothing is forever, and change is always possible.
- KEEP IT SIMPLE!



Personal Bill of Rights



- I have the right to ask for what I want.
- I have the right to say no to requests or demands I can’t meet.
- I have the right to express all of my feelings, positive or negative.
- I have the right to change my mind.
- I have the right to make mistakes and not have to be perfect.
- I have the right to follow my own values and standards.
- I have the right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe, or it violates my values.
- I have the right to determine my own priorities.
- I have the right not to be responsible for others’ behaviors, actions, feelings, or problems.
- I have the right to expect honesty from others.
- I have the right to be angry at someone I love.
- I have the right to be uniquely myself.
- I have the right to feel scared and say “I’m afraid.”
- I have the right to say “I don’t know.”
- I have the right not to give excuses or reasons for my behavior.
- I have the right to make decisions based on my feelings.
- I have the right to my own needs for personal space and time.
- I have the right to be playful and frivolous.
- I have the right to be in a non-abusive environment.
- I have the right to make friends and be comfortable around people.
- I have the right to change and grow.
- I have the right to have my needs and wants respected by others.
- I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- I have the right to be happy.

Roommate Bill of Rights & Responsibilities

All roommates have the right...

- To privacy
- To respect
- To open communication
- To mutually clean living quarters
- To personal safety and security of possessions
- To comfortable sleep and study conditions
- To be asked before their possessions are used
- To stay true to their own values
- To agree and disagree
- To ask residence life staff for assistance when needed
- To be treated civilly
- To a comfortable living space
- To get their messages in a timely manner
- To a room free of policy violations

All roommates have the responsibility...

- To respect one another's privacy
- To respect themselves and others
- To communicate openly with their roommate and discuss potential conflicts
- To keep their living space neat and clean
- To lock doors and maintain personal safety
- To maintain a comfortable environment for sleep and study purposes
- To treat one another's possessions with care and ask before borrowing personal items
- To respect differences
- To compromise
- To enlist the help of residence life staff when a difficult roommate issue arises
- To be kind and civil with no intent to harm
- To check with one another before having overnight guests
- To abide by all residence hall policies and regulations

- Make sure you are prepared to discuss criticism that may be aimed at you—often times roommates have concerns with each other.
- Try and separate yourself from any anger. You will get better results by remaining calm and rational and anger may just fuel the situation.
- Don't assume a "victim" mentality—it is within your control to address the situation and take action. Inaction is an option but then you must accept the consequences of choosing no action.
- Commit yourself to listening. Everyone wants to be heard and only by listening to your roommate's point of view can you understand and better resolve any conflict.
- Confront the problem, not the person.
- Speak to each other. Don't leave notes or send emails.
- Express your feelings and needs in a non-blaming way.
- Take ownership for your part of the problem.
- Focus on what can be done, not what can't.
- Make reasonable, realistic requests of one another.
- Solve the problem and strengthen your relationship.
- Plan ahead—think about what you want to say ahead of time and what responses you might hear.
- Speak directly, honestly and respectfully—make eye contact and watch their reactions to make sure that what you're saying is being heard.
- Put the problem(s) out on the table, and work together to find a solution.
- Be calm and cool. When you lose your temper, you might also lose the opportunity to resolve your differences.
- Be careful not to make accusations like, "You couldn't care less about how I feel!" This will only make your roommate defensive. Talk about specific behaviors, not a person's character.
- Put yourself in your roommate's shoes, treating them as you would like to be treated. Before you make any demands, think about how you would react to such demands.

Tips for Handling Roommate Conflicts (Continued...)

- Share the space. It is imperative that you acknowledge how important it is to know and respect your roommate, just as you would like him/her to respect you. S/he is working to share the space, just as you are. So, be respectful of your roommate's belongings and area of the room and try to work out a living arrangement that is suitable for both roommates.
- Acknowledge your differences and similarities in the beginning and don't be afraid to speak up. Maintaining open communication is imperative. Establishing the similarities and differences in your living styles, habits, and interests is the basis for creating an enjoyable living environment.
- Lay down the rules beforehand and no one gets hurt. Create some ground rules from the start and don't be afraid to speak up for yourself. When developing friendships people generally try to be extra considerate, but as the newness wears off of being roommates, it is important to have a mutual understanding of one another. Collaborate and devise a living plan to suit you both. Coordinate your lives to avoid irritating one another.
- Regardless of how close you and your roommate may become and how well you prepare to live with one another, conflict will arise, even if your roommate is your best friend from high school. Conflict is perfectly normal, but knowing how to deal with the conflict can sometimes feel like a pretty challenging task. When a conflict does surface, you can choose to constructively confront the situation(s) at hand or you can choose to ignore it. In general, ignoring a problem often makes the problem worse and it doesn't really seem to just disappear like we might hope for, so try to work it out as best you can.
- Make sure you have the facts straight.
- Be gentle, but direct. The longer you wait to confront the problem, the worse it may become.
- Expect some defensiveness, possibly even after the confrontation. Give your roommate an opportunity to think about what you have said.
- Don't cloud the issue by checking with everyone else on the floor before you give feedback to your roommate.

How to Be a Good Roommate

Having a good roommate experience includes being a good roommate! If you treat your roommate as you would like to be treated at all times, conflicts will be minimal. However, if you take over more than your share of the room, don't clean up after yourself, and refuse to compromise on anything, you will be headed down a road of disaster. Here are a few tips on how to get along with your roommate and how to be a good roommate.

- Don't expect too much...roommates don't have to be best friends.
- Getting along and being respectful to each other is all that is necessary.
- Be open-ask questions, listen, discuss. Don't wait until things get out of hand.
- Learn to talk it out before you are ready to blow up.
- Tell your roommate in a mature fashion what is bothering you and help him or her to understand why.
- Be sensitive to each other's moods.
- Everybody has bad days, so try to understand when you roommate has one, too.
- The room belongs to both of you. Decorate together so it meets both your needs.
- When things can't be worked out between the two of you, seek assistance from your RA/CA.
- Be assertive when your basic rights and needs are an issue.
- Do not let little annoyances or "quirks" bother you. Especially things that your roommate cannot change (i.e., an accent).
- If your roommate starts to get on your nerves, leave for a while to blow off some steam. When you return, you can confront him or her and perhaps you will not even remember what was bothering you in the first place. A potential fight is avoided.
- Remember that you have a right to be treated with respect.
- Your roommate also has a right to be treated with respect.
- Be tolerant of each other.
- Compromise. All good relationships are based on equal amounts of give and take.
- Learn from each other. Be open-minded to your roommate's point-of-view and listen to his or her side.

Ten Rules for Roommates

Once in a while, abiding by a set of rules give us structure and guidance in our lives! Believe it or not, there is even a set of rules for how to be a roommate! Read through these and figure out which ones may not be followed...either by you or by your roommate.

1. Play Fair

One of the main problems roommates have is getting the chores done that you always had to do at home and now want to avoid. So you both may end up playing the waiting game. Meanwhile, your floor develops a new, bumpier terrain, and your breathing air reeks of dirty laundry and pizza boxes! Nobody really likes to take the trash out or vacuum the floor, but these chores will eventually need to be done! Figure out some kind of arrangement so that you are both comfortable with the frequency with which the tasks are accomplished, and with how often you each have to do it. If it becomes a struggle, make a schedule, specifying everything that must be done, how often, and who is responsible each time.

2. Respect Privacy

One consequence of sharing space with someone is the obvious lack of privacy. Honor your roommate's right to want some "alone time" without feeling insulted. You will probably want some "alone time" as well. Respecting one another's privacy also means that you not reading your roommate's mail or eavesdrop on personal conversations. Discuss ways to ensure that you each will be able to have private time in your shared space.

3. Plan Ahead

Let your roommate know when you will have guests in your room—whether it is a group of friends, a study group, or your parents. Your plans will undoubtedly have an impact on your roommate's life, too.

4. Mind Your Own Business

Your roommate storms into the room, throwing books on the floor and slamming the door. S/he may have a problem, but not want your advice or input. Try offering to listen...before sharing your opinion!

Fall Semester Room Changes

WSU places a two-week hiatus on roommate changes at the beginning of the Fall semester. We do this for several reasons. The first is so we can administratively get all of our "ducks in a row" and know who has and has not arrived. The second, and most important, reason is for roommates to have enough time to get to know and become comfortable with one another. It can be tempting at first for the overly anxious roommate to want to move at the slightest sign of discord. Given time, that same student might become comfortable with the roommate and less inclined to want to bail at the first sign of a disagreement.

NOTE: Room changes during Fall semester are extremely difficult due to the level of occupancy in the residence halls already. There may not be any openings for several weeks, so do not get your heart set on changing rooms at the first sight of conflict because it probably won't happen.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING, HANDLING, AND RESOLVING ROOMMATE CONFLICTS

It is imperative that you address these issues by yourself—not with the accompaniment of parents, siblings, or other friends. Although parents may be tempted to take care of the problem for you by contacting the residence life staff, your roommate, or your roommate's family, this will not help you learn to deal with similar situations in the future.

Roommate relationships begin first and foremost with the choices YOU make. Regardless of how dissimilar you and your new roommate may be, you hold the power to make your living situation successful. Here is a list of useful tips for avoiding, handling, and resolving roommate conflict:

- You have to make the decision to get along or not.. If you can't make the decision to get along, all of the advice in the entire world will be useless when a conflict arises. So, open up your mind and prepare for a new experience. Make the best of your living situation and experience campus living with a fresh start.

STEP SIX: DEALING WITH FUTURE CONFLICTS

If you and your roommate experience more conflicts in the future, we expect that you will follow the process we have already put into place so you and your roommate can work them out on your own. If this is not possible, the RA/CA can facilitate another conflict resolution process to help guide you to solutions.

If it is determined that a roommate is intentionally not cooperating or is violating university policy in any way, the RA/CA will file a report with the Hall Director and one or both roommates will need to meet with the Hall Director. The Hall Director will determine how to proceed with the conflict. If there is still room for compromise, s/he will work with you to come to a final resolution that must be observed.

WHAT ABOUT ROOM CHANGES?

Making a room change is up to the discretion of the Hall Director and no one else—not even your parents. Granting a room change may be based on many factors. The decision may be based on the efforts put forth by the roommates, the issues surrounding the conflict, and the availability of another space. Splitting up may be the best solution; however, it is often difficult to determine who should move to the new room and who should remain in the current room. The best option is for the roommates to decide themselves. However, when that fails, the following options exist: application dates (earliest gets to stay), flipping a coin or drawing straws, or deciding who is most desperate to get out of the situation. If a decision cannot be made, both roommates may be required to move.

After the decision has been made as to who will move, the Hall Director will attempt to find a new room for the student moving in a desired location (building or floor). In some instances the Hall Director will have no options and will move the student to whatever space is available at that time if there are any. Students are then given a specific time period during which they are to complete the move.

The RA/CA and Hall Director will work with both roommates to reflect on what happened and what could have been done differently to avoid the need to move rooms. It is important for the students to learn from this experience so as not to repeat it with their new roommate.

5. *Nobody's Perfect*

Your roommate's endearing little character traits may turn into the biggest annoyances of your young life. Try keeping in mind that your snoring or humming while you work may inspire the same reactions in them. Patience and tolerance are truly virtues—practice them! If you think that you are at a breaking point, take some time away, and then discuss your concerns.

6. *Money Matters*

Even if you are only sharing living space, money can become a point of contention with roommates. You and your roommate may have very different feelings about borrowing money or about sharing food and laundry detergent. Make specific repayment schedules for any borrowing that may occur and discuss your feelings about sharing your personal purchases.

7. *It Was Bound to Happen*

You've followed your chore schedule, slept with earplugs, and kept your nose in your own business. Nevertheless, you and your roommate are engaged in a small war. Try to think of your disagreement in terms of the "big picture"—will this be significant in five years? There are no guarantees that another roommate situation will be any less difficult, and if you walk away without trying to resolve your issues, you will have learned nothing. Try with all of your might to see the situation from your roommate's perspective.

8. *Be Considerate*

If you apply this rule in all situations, you may never need Rule #7! Leaving accurate phone messages where your roommate can find them, being extra quiet when they are trying to take a nap, leaving the room when they are talking to family or friends from far away—it all adds up to being a considerate roommate.

9. & 10. *Compromise & More Compromise!*

Living with anyone is a matter of give and take. Rules and schedules can do their part, but what really matters is how you and your roommate treat each other each day. Learn to share and compromise easily and remember that your friendship means more than who is supposed to take out the garbage.

The Roommate Agreement

During the first two weeks of school, your RA/CA should have had you fill out a Roommate Agreement. This is a form that has you discuss expectations of your room, habits, schedules, likes/dislikes, what can be shared and what is off-limits, and how you will discuss conflicts should they arise. The efficacy of the Roommate Agreement is dependent on how open and honest the communication is between you and your roommate while filling it out.

Once you have completed the Roommate Agreement, everyone signs it. The RA/CA retains a copy to be placed on file and the other copy is given to the roommates to be hung in the room. Find a place (such as the back of your door) to display the agreement so that you can refer to it easily if there are questions or to help you remember what was agreed upon.

If you are having a roommate conflict, and have not filled out a Roommate Agreement yet, completing one can help guide a conversation between the two of you and set parameters for your room. See your RA/CA to get a copy of the Roommate Agreement.

How do I Deal with a Conflict with my Roommate?

STEP ONE: DETERMINING YOUR CONCERNS

The first step is to figure out what is bothering you about your roommate or about your roommate situation. Is there something that your roommate says or does that is constantly bothering you? Are the terms of your Roommate Agreement not being followed? Has your roommate developed a new habit or schedule that you don't like? Take some time to journal about what you need to address with your roommate.



Your RA/CA will talk to both you and your roommate individually to gather information on what the problems and issues are. S/he will then schedule a time to meet with you together to find another solution. Below is an outline of the conflict resolution process.

The Conflict Resolution Process

- 1. *The RA/CA will explain his/her presence and role in the conflict resolution process.***
- 2. *Set ground rules.*** Examples include: each party will listen without interrupting the other person, no name calling, each person has to “own” his or her feelings, and setting time limits on each person’s turn when speaking.
- 3. *Each person describes the situation without any interruptions.*** How does each person feel about it?
- 4. *Understand all points of view by summarizing what each other has said.***
- 5. *Brainstorm possible solutions.*** Generate as many as possible: quantity-not quality-right now.
- 6. *Evaluate each solution.*** What is realistic and unrealistic? Discuss the pros and cons of each solution, suggesting possible compromises, and try to help generate other alternative solutions.
- 7. *Choose the solution—one that is agreeable to both or is a workable compromise.*** Put it in writing. This could either be a change to the Roommate Agreement or an addendum. Each person should initial the revision.
- 8. *Implement specifics of the plan—by when, how, what, who where?***
- 9. *Set a time to re-evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.***
- 10. *The RA/CA will follow up with the roommates to see how things are going, and help them address any other concerns which might arise.***

STEP FOUR: FINDING ROOM FOR COMPROMISE

It is extremely important to find common ground from which the both of you can work to develop a compromise to your conflict. Sometimes your roommate might realize that what is happening is being caused by something they say or do, and so they will stop immediately. However, most conflicts are not resolved that simply. Finding a compromise may require some “give and take” on both your parts to reach a suitable solution. Be prepared to stick to the things that are really important to you and you are not willing to waiver on and be flexible on the things that are not as important.

The goal of a compromise is to find a win-win solution so that neither person feels as though they’ve lost something. In some cases, this can’t be done and a workable compromise needs to be developed that both of you can live with. Here are some suggestions for workable compromises:

- My way this time, your way next time.
- Part of what I want with part of what you want.
- Meeting halfway.
- If you do _____ for me, I’ll do _____ for you.
- We’ll do this one my way, but we’ll do _____ your way.
- We’ll try my way this time, and if you don’t like it, you can veto it next time.
- My way when I’m doing it, you’re way when you’re doing it.

Once you have found a solution/compromise that is agreeable to both of you, put the plan in place to follow through with it. It is also important to schedule a time to revisit the situation to see if the solution is working or if adjustment needs to be made.

STEP FIVE: TALKING TO YOUR RA/CA & THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

If things between you and your roommate still are not working, talk to your RA/CA to get their perspective and let them know what is going on right away. They may be able to “put a fresh pair of eyes” on the situation and offer suggestions or advice on how to help the situation. Your RA/CA will ask you what steps you have already taken to resolve the conflict, so be honest in what you’ve said and done. If there is a need, the RA/CA will start facilitating the conflict resolution process.

- 1. Evaluate your Personal and Roommate Bill of Rights. What do you feel has been violated in this conflict (see pages 3-4)?*
- 2. Who is the person involved in your conflict?*
- 3. When does the problem occur (time and setting)?*
- 4. What bothers you about the situation?*
- 5. What would you like to see happen to meet your needs?*
- 6. What can your roommate do to meet your needs?*
- 7. How can your roommate benefit by helping to meet these needs?*
- 8. What is the least I will settle for in a compromise to resolve this conflict?*

STEP TWO: TALKING TO YOUR ROOMMATE

Your next step is to talk to your roommate about your concerns. This may seem a bit too easy, but surprisingly, it is often an option that people avoid. It is easy to let problems go until they seem so large that talking about them is intimidating. While it may be hard to approach your roommate if s/he is doing something that bothers you, it will usually help move the problem toward resolution. On the other hand, if you don't tell your roommate that something is bothering you, s/he may not know that you are bothered, and might continue to do the thing which bothers you. Even worse, if you seem annoyed at the behavior, s/he may misread this annoyance as animosity toward him or her. When this happens, it becomes very difficult to re-open the lines of communication.

When discussing any issue with your roommate, be assertive. Being passive and suppressing your point of view will only make you frustrated and cause you to resent your roommate. Eventually a small thing like borrowing a shirt will blow up into a huge argument. On the other hand, being aggressive, fighting for your rights while stepping on someone else's rights might solve the problem initially, but your roommate will end up harboring hard feelings and resenting you. Remember to be assertive in communication and to speak in a calm, friendly, and reasonable manner.

Talking to your roommate means having a face-to-face conversation—don't conduct the conversation over email, Facebook, text messages, Post-It Notes, or instant messaging. Technology has its advantages in that a person can say what they want without having to look the other person in the eye, but neither person can gather body language or tone of voice through these methods of communication.

Assertiveness Skills

Nonverbal Assertiveness

Assertiveness is not only a matter of *what* you say but also a function of *how* you say it. Even if you make an assertive verbal response, you will not be believed if your body's response is nonassertive. Those who express themselves assertively:

In addition to using active listening skills, there are some other important tips for overall good listening. Read through these to see which ones you might disobey on a normal basis that would restrict you from really hearing what someone is saying.

Ten Commandments for Good Listening

1. ***Stop talking—you cannot listen if you are talking!***
2. ***Put the talker at ease—help him or her feel that s/he is free to talk.***
This is often called a permissive environment.
3. ***Show him or her that you want to listen—look and act interested.***
Do not read your mail or text a friend while s/he is talking.
4. ***Remove distractions—don't doodle on paper, watch TV, or check your email.***
5. ***Be patient—allow plenty of time.***
Do not interrupt him or her. Don't start for the door or walk away.
6. ***Empathize with him or her—try to put yourself in his or her shoes so that you can see his or her point of view.***
7. ***Hold your temper—an angry person gets the wrong meaning from words.***
8. ***Go easy on argument and criticism—this puts him or her on the defensive.***
Do not argue; even if you win, you lose.
9. ***Ask questions—this encourages him or her and shows that you are listening.***
It helps to develop points further.
10. ***Stop talking!***
This is the first and last because all other commandments depend on it. You just can't do a good job while you are talking.

STEP THREE: LISTENING TO YOUR ROOMMATE

Now that you have had an opportunity to share your concerns with your roommate, it is time to shut your mouth and listen to what they have to say. Developing active listening skills is an important skill set to have now and in the future with a variety of relationships and environments.

Active Listening Skills

1. Ask yourself: “Am I ready to listen? Are there any distractions?”

YES

NO

**If the answer is NO figure out what you need so you have the ability to truly listen to your roommate.*

2. What is your body language saying right now?

Do your nonverbals indicate that you are ready to listen or do you appear distracted and unable to give your undivided attention.

3. Acknowledge: What are your “minimal encouragers”?

This could be direct eye contact, nodding your head, saying “Tell me more”. It lets them know that you are listening.

4. Invite conversation with open-ended questions.

These are the What? Why? When? Where? With Whom? questions—not ones that just require a “yes” or “no” response.

5. Paraphrase to your roommate what you’ve just heard.

6. Check your paraphrasing for accuracy to make sure you’ve heard them correctly.

In addition to using active listening skills, there are some other important tips for overall good listening. Read through these to see which ones you might disobey on a normal basis that would restrict you from really hearing what someone is saying.

- Stand straight, remain steady, and directly face the people to whom they are speaking, while maintaining eye contact.
- Speak in a clear, steady voice, loud enough for the people to whom they are speaking to hear them.
- Speak fluently, without hesitation and with assurance and confidence.

Verbal Assertiveness

DESC Form—The verbal response is divided into four components:

Describe—Paint a verbal picture of the other person’s behavior or the situation to which you are reacting. (EX: “When you...”)

Express—Relate your feelings regarding the other person’s behavior or the situation you have just described. Use “I” statements here. (EX: “I feel...”)

Specify—Be specific by identifying ways you would like the other person’s behavior or the situation to change. Rather than saying, “You should...,” use “I” statements. (EX: “I would prefer....,” “I would like...,” “I want...”)

Consequence—Select the consequences you have decided to apply to the behavior or situation. What will you do if the other person’s behavior or the situation changes to your satisfaction? (EX: “If you do ___, I will...”). What will be the consequences if nothing changes, or if the changes do not meet your needs? (EX: “If you don’t ___, I will...”)

EXAMPLE: *When you watch TV all night, I feel angry because I cannot get any homework done. I would like to set limits on what times the TV is on. If we can do this, we could get homework done at a decent hour, hang out together, and then go to bed at an earlier time. If we don’t do this, I will take my TV home for good at Thanksgiving Break. My studies are really important to me.*

Make sure to remember that you should come in with an idea of what you would like to see for change and realize that the other person may have other ideas. Remain steadfast in your desire for change but flexible on the avenue of going about change.

Five Ways to Say “I”

It is important when crafting your “I” statements, that you do so with care. You don’t want to sound judgmental or demanding because that will cause your roommate to feel attacked and not willing to compromise. Follow these simple rules when developing your “I” statements. Be careful when including parts four and five since they contain hidden judgments or threats.

1. *Observation: Describe the facts—the indisputable, observable realities.*

Talk about what you, or anyone else, can see, hear, smell taste, or touch. Avoid judgments, interpretations, or opinions. Instead of saying “You’re a slob” say “The garbage has not been taken out in a week and it is overflowing.”

2. *Feelings: Describe your feelings.*

It is easier to listen to “I feel frustrated” than to “You never help me.” Talking about how you feel about another’s actions can be valuable feedback for that person.

3. *Thoughts: Communicate your thoughts and use caution.*

Beginning your statement with an “I” doesn’t qualify as an “I” message. “I think you are a slob” is a “You” judgment in disguise. Instead, say, “I’d have more time to study if I didn’t have to clean up so often.”

4. *Wants: You are far more likely to get what you want if you say what you want.*

If someone doesn’t know what you want, s/he doesn’t have a choice about helping you get it. Ask clearly. Avoid demanding or using the word “need.” Most people like to feel helpful, not obligated. Instead of “Do the dishes when it’s your turn, or else!” say “I want to divide the cleaning fairly.”

5. *Intentions: The last part of an “I” message is a statement about what you intend to do.*

Have a plan that doesn’t depend on the other person. For example, instead of “From now on we’re going to split the dish-washing evenly,” you could say “I intend to do my share of the room cleaning and leave the rest undone.”

Now take some time to journal about how you will be assertive in the conversation you will have with your roommate. Remember, face-to-face communication is required and utilize the DESC form when crafting your message. Leave room for flexibility and compromise.

1. *Designate a time to discuss your concerns with the person(s) involved. Take into account what the other person might have going on at that time.*

2. *State the problems in terms of its consequences for you and the other person.*

3. *Express your feelings using “I” statements—not “You” judgments.*

4. *Make your request (simple, 1-2 sentences, specific, one thing at a time).*

5. *State consequences of gaining/not gaining cooperation. (Remember: praise can go a long way!)*