

## Living with a Roommate

Many students come to college without the experience of sharing a room with someone else and may be used to having a larger, more private living space. Living successfully with others requires open communication, respect, trust, flexibility, a willingness to share, courtesy, and remembering to be concerned about the needs and feelings of the other person or people in the room. When making decisions about how to live in this shared space, students must take into consideration the impact they have on one another. The following are a few tips on how to be a good roommate:

**Complete a roommate agreement** – RAs can provide these agreements to help roommates define their expectations of each other and how to share their common space.

**Limit personal items** – The space that roommates share is compact, and there may not be enough room for everyone to bring all of their personal property. Roommates should discuss and agree upon what to bring and maintain in the shared space.

**Share** – It is not possible for both/all roommates to have everything they want in the room and to have it for their exclusive use. Due to the limited space and electrical capacity of the rooms, it is not possible for each roommate to have their own electrical appliances and large items that consume large amounts of space. Roommates should talk about sharing items and set some ground rules for their use.

**Live by “The Platinum Rule”** – Roommates should always keep in mind the feelings, rights, and needs of the person/people with whom they share space and remember to “treat others as they want to be treated.”

**Communicate** – Roommates should talk openly and honestly with each other when they have concerns. They should be assertive, but considerate.

**Seek help** – Roommates should utilize the assistance of their RA/CA or Hall Director to help them address difficult issues in their living situation.

**Be open-minded and willing to compromise** – Roommates do not need to be best friends, but they should realize that there is much to be learned from living with someone whose personal habits, background, values, and characteristics are different from their own. They should talk with each other, share their ideas, perspectives, and beliefs, and be willing to listen, learn, and compromise when they disagree.

## The Roommate “Bill of Rights”

The following Bill of Rights contains basic rights of roommates. In an effort to protect the rights of individual roommates, the Department of Residence Life, Housing and Dining Services expects all residents to have:

1. *The right to study free from undue interference in one's room. Unreasonable noise and other distractions inhibit the exercise of this right.*
2. *The right to sleep without undue disturbance from noise, guest of a roommate, etc.*
3. *The right to expect that a roommate will respect personal property.*
4. *The right to live in a clean and healthy environment.*
5. *The right to free access to one's room and facilities without pressure from a roommate.*
6. *The right to personal privacy.*
7. *The right to host a guest as long as all residence hall policies are followed and the guest is respectful of the rights of all roommates.*
8. *The right to have grievances addressed and conflicts resolved. Residence hall staff members are available for assistance.*
9. *The right to be free from intimidation; physical and emotional harm; and racial, sexual, and other prejudicial harassment.*

10. *The right to expect reasonable cooperation in the use of the room's shared items (e.g., refrigerator, TV, stereo, etc.) and a commitment to honor agreed-upon payment procedures (e.g., HBO cable bill, etc.).*
11. *The right to live according to one's own unique values, beliefs, identities, and cultures, as long as they do not unduly interfere with the rights of others.*

## Roommate Conflicts

If roommate conflicts occur, the Department of Residence Life, Housing and Dining Services works with all residents involved through various channels to mediate the conflict. These channels include:

**Roommate Agreements** – As discussed earlier, roommate agreements can help roommates identify potential problems before they arise. Also, when a conflict does arise, roommates can go back to the guidelines they set in their roommate agreement to resolve their conflict.

**Mediation and Counseling** – Residence hall staff are trained and experienced in helping roommates resolve conflicts and can offer advice, support, and informal assistance. Furthermore, residence life staff members are aware of resources to aid roommates with formal mediation assistance. Students need to determine their concerns and share them honestly during the mediation session.

**Student Conduct** – Roommate issues can at times be related to violations of the University's *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities*, found at <http://www.missouristate.edu/studentconduct/12331.htm>. Students have the option of reporting conduct violations and seeking assistance through the student conduct system. This system is an educational process that communicates and reaffirms standards of conduct, encourages students to make wise choices and engage in appropriate behavior, and holds students accountable for unacceptable behavior. The conduct system is not intended to be used as a vehicle to force roommates out of their living environment, and removal or relocation is not always an outcome of the conduct process.

**Room Changes** – If issues reach the point that other methods of resolving the conflict have not been successful, there may be an option for a change in room assignment. Room changes are not available during the first two weeks of the fall and spring semesters, and there must be space available to allow a room change. It is important, therefore, that roommates try to resolve issues prior to requesting a room change. Room changes may be requested in My Missouri State under the "Profile" tab on the "Housing" channel, under "Assignment Information." Students wishing to move into a living-learning community will need to meet the criteria for that LLC.

Residence hall staff members have a responsibility to provide support and assistance to all students involved in a conflict and, therefore, do not decide who is "at fault" and who should be moved. If a determination is made that the conflict cannot be resolved without a room change, and if a roommate does not volunteer to change room assignments, all roommates may be reassigned.

## Community Standards

Community standards are in place in our residence halls. Students living in University housing have an opportunity to live in a community environment and to accept the responsibility of being a member of a diverse group of people. To help ensure that students may exercise their rights as individuals while at the same time ensuring that the rights of those around them are upheld, basic policies have been established to facilitate mutual respect and consideration. For the policy on community standards, please refer to the Policy Library at <http://www.missouristate.edu/policy/>.