Roommate Success Guide

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Congratulations, your college years have begun! Many new and different experiences await you. An important part of college is learning to get along with others by developing an awareness and appreciation for other lifestyles and values. One of the first opportunities you will have is establishing close relationships with others. The time you will also learn about living in a community will be when you move into your room! The information below is designed to assist you in building a positive relationship with your roommate.

Also be sure to look at Emily Post's tips for roommate success [1].

The Guide to Positive Roommate Relations

Having a positive relationship with your roommate depends on each of you trying to make an honest attempt to get know the other. When students are placed in a residence hall they must prepare for this new experience with an open mind and an appreciation for those differences that exist in each person's background. The following information is designed to assist you in practicing the important communication skills of careful listening, open and honest feedback, and reaching a mutually agreed upon living arrangement.

Part I: About My Background

During the first couple of days at Delaware State, sit down with your roommate and begin to get to know each other. Even if you have been friends before coming to school, it is important to start getting to know each other as roommates. If you have just met your roommate it can be difficult to begin sharing, but start with the basics.

Some suggested topics for "breaking the ice":

- Discuss your family backgrounds and hometowns.
- Share you reasons for choosing Delaware State University.
- Describe your neighborhood, your high school friends, and your best friends.
- Explain your hobbies, interests, and activities.
- Answer the questions: What will you miss most while being away from home? What will you miss the least?

Part II: Personal Preferences

Once you have covered the basics about each other, you are ready to move into more serious areas of concern for roommates. Living in the same room does not mean that you must do everything together nor will you necessarily be the best of friends, but you do have to develop the ability to communicate with each other and adapt to each other's lifestyle. Discuss the following questions with each other.

1. Discuss your sleeping habits (i.e., weekdays, weekend, etc.).
2. Discuss what kind of sense of humor you have (e.g., silly, sarcastic, etc.).
3. What time do you typically come home by? (e.g., before midnight, after midnight, 2:00 am) Discuss how to handle late nights and evenings.
4. Discuss issues about the noise level in the room (e.g., TV, radio, studying, sleeping, etc.).
5. How much TV do you watch and what kinds of shows do you like to watch?
6. Does it bother you if your roommate watches TV when you are in the room? (Give examples when it would/would not be

okay).
7. Discuss what state you like the room to be in (e.g., very neat, messy, etc.)
8. What kind of music do you listen to? Are there any types of music that you dislike?
9. Where do you like to study?
10. What belongings of yours are you willing to share? If so, what are the ground rules?
11. How do you feel about the use of drugs/alcohol?
12. Do you smoke? (Keep in mind, residents cannot smoke in the residence halls.)
13. What are your spiritual or religious values?
14. What are some of your habits that a roommate might need to know?
15. What guidelines should be set for guests in the room? Under what circumstances can someone else stay in the room? Does this conflict with the University's overnight guest policy?

Part III: My Emotional Style

How you experience and express your feelings has a lot to do with how easy you are to get along with. Roommates who enjoy living with each other typically "read" each other's feelings fairly accurately, and respond with empathy. By sharing some information about your emotional style, you may make understanding and responding to each other easier.

Discuss the following issues:

1. When I am upset about something I usually…
2. Something that will usually cheer me up…
3. When things are going really well I'm usually…
4. I would prefer to be left alone when…
5. When do you need time alone?
6. How will you let me know when you need time alone?
7. You'll know when I'm angry because I usually…
8. What makes you angry?
9. How will you let me know when you are angry?
10. I get tense or uptight when…
11. What makes you tense or uptight?
12. How will you let me know when you are tense or uptight?
13. You'll know I am tense/stressed because I usually…
14. How will you let me know when you are tense/stressed?
15. Something that is likely to annoy me is…
16. How will you let me know what annoys you?
17. We will communicate feelings or frustrations by…
18. To me, relaxing is…

Part IV: My Impressions/Reactions

The quality of roommate relationships is related to the communication between roommates. Positive relations have been shown to be typified by roommates more clearly understanding each others' expectations, more openly communicating with each other, and their ability to verbalize to each other thoughts and feelings about one another. During all of your discussions with your roommate, listen carefully. Try to be unconditionally accepting of what you hear even though you may disagree. When you are accepting, your roommate will feel free to express things honestly.

Try to follow these guidelines:

- Be willing to listen and speak openly.
- Try to understand rather than evaluate or judge.
- Be receptive to different ways of life and different values.

- Be willing to make compromises.
- Spend time getting acquainted.
- Be aware of assumptions and try to get the facts.

When differences arise, try talking out issues while using the communication skills that help most—be open and honest, listen closely, and be specific.

Use the Roommate Agreement Form (see below), reevaluate your living situation, and change the ground rules. You will both change throughout the year, which means that this document should change as well.
However, if difficulties do arise in your roommate relationship, there are people and resources on campus available to assist you:

- Talk with a residence life staff member in your corridor or another staff member in the building.
- Seek assistance from the Resident Advisor, Manager, or Assistant Manager.
- If you still have a need for further assistance,

The Roommate Agreement Form

This agreement is designed to help roommates get to know each other, and to start opening the lines of communication on topics that we know are important for successful roommate relationships.

A blank Roommate Agreement will be given to all residents within the first day or two after move-in. Roommates fill out and sign the Roommate Agreement Form together.

This agreement may be revised at any time. Residents are encouraged to revisit this agreement after the first month of the semester.

Click here for a copy of the Roommate Agreement Form [2] in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format.

Source URL: http://desu.edu/student-affairs/roommate-success-guide

Links
[1] http://desu.edu/student-affairs/tips-roommate-success
[2] http://desu.edu/sites/default/files/roommate_agreement.pdf