



## SET REALISTIC RULES AND MAKE PEACE WITH YOUR ROOMMATE

by the student editors of ***NAVIGATING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR***  
a Students Helping Students™ book

For those of you without siblings, your roommate will be the first person with whom you'll truly have to share. This might seem like an elementary skill, but it's hard to totally immerse yourself in the culture of dual-use if you've never shared a small room before. The most important thing to do in the first weeks of school is to make general rules with your roommate about how you want your room to be so that you can both be happy. If your roommate and you are compatible, this will be easy; if not, this will be necessary to your mutual sanity.

*"Once things start to go badly, try to grin and bear it. That works until your roommate breaks out his turntables and plays the most mind-stabbingly bad "music" you've ever heard. That's when you pretend you are asleep. Once your roommate does things that are not silenced by sleep (smoking, eating smelly foods, singing, etc.), you must politely request a few rules."*

**Sophomore,  
University of Hartford**

The most basic rules deal with hours. There's a time for music and dancing and a time for the sound of silence. Try to work out some simple rules, such as Monday through Thursday after eight your room will be for studying only. Or, if you both like to party, agree to blast your music well into the night. If you like to study in your room, assert yourself and make sure your roommate knows that you need quiet time. At the same time, remember that you can also study in the library, so be reasonable.

Visitors can also be an issue. If your roommate's friends like to gab at two in the morning while you're sleeping, you should politely ask them to be quiet and should talk to your roommate about having people over late at night. Along the same lines, bedtime is an essential discussion. Hopefully you'll both have honestly filled out your rooming questionnaire and can agree on what time the lights go out. Even if you don't go to bed at the same time, one of you can always use your desk lamp or even go to the library.

The most important thing is to be respectful and compromise—this is a home for both of you. You have the right to be comfortable in your own room but need to give that same freedom to your roomie.

*"Show as much respect as you can to your roomie, and always consider how he or she might view the things that you do. Just be assertive and talk openly about things that bug you. Even if you try to show that something bothers you, your roommate may have absolutely no idea."*

**Sophomore,  
Rutgers University**

The phone has the dubious distinction of being at the core of many disagreements and fights between roommates, especially if you only have one line in your room. Who uses it, when and how often, and with how much privacy are all issues that will invariably come up.

If you know that your roommate religiously calls his girlfriend every night at eight, be nice and don't hang on the phone during that time. And if you need privacy to talk to someone, just ask. No need to make it a huge deal, but you should recognize that unless you're both considerate, there will be conflicts.

Another way to avoid phone quarrels is to have a cell phone. You can get one pretty inexpensively—a basic plan, usually with free long distance, can run you from \$40 to \$60 a month—and maybe save yourself a lot of trouble.

*"The only phone jack in our room was near my roommate's bed. It was awful because I always felt like I was borrowing her phone, even though it was for both of us. I ended up making a lot of calls from the pay phone in the campus center."*

**Recent Grad,  
Wesleyan University**

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