

How to talk to your Roommate

In order to build a cohesive community, it all begins with the relationship you have with your roommate. Roommate relationships are the foundations for community development. It is not necessary to be best friends or share every aspect of college life together, but it is important that roommates respect each other's rights.

However, in order to establish a positive relationship with your roommate, both of you must be willing to make it work on the front-end and understand that there will be highs and lows along the way. Developing a positive relationship is a process; it does not happen overnight and takes effort.

Here are some things to keep in mind when working on establishing a positive relationship with your roommate:

A step-by-step approach

I. Get to know your roommate

Ask questions that will help you learn about each other and build on your similarities.

Why did you choose MUW?
Where are you from?
What are you planning to study here?
What is your family like?
What are your favorite things to do?

II. Talk about expectations of each other.

Now that you know a little about your roommate as a person, it is time to talk about expectations and set some guidelines for living in the same room or suite. Be open with your needs, but also be willing to compromise.

Here some common issues:

Alcohol Use/Abuse
Cleanliness
Computer Use
Guests
Music/Noise
Safety & Security
Schedules
Study Habits
Use of Property

Cleaning:

How neat will you keep your side of the room?

How clean do you expect the room/suite to be?

How will housekeeping duties be shared?

How would you like the room arranged and decorated?

Borrowing:

What items are you comfortable sharing and which are you not?

Will you share food and drinks?

Do you mind if guests use items in the room?

Do you prefer to be asked before someone borrows something?

Study Time:

What time do you typically study?

Can you study with the TV or radio on?

If you are studying, what are your expectations on hosting guests?

Sleeping:

What time do you typically go to bed or get up in the morning?

Are you a heavy or light sleeper?

Can you sleep with the TV or radio on?

Roommate Conflict Tips

If the agreements you and your roommate reach now break down later, speak up! There are ways to complain without alienating your roommate(s). Here are some basic rules for talking about the conflicts that may come up during the year:

State issues directly; speak to your roommate neutrally while still relaying your feelings.

Be calm and cool. When you lose your temper, you might also lose the opportunity to resolve your differences.

Use statements that begin with "I". For example, say "I get really upset when you don't clean the dishes," instead of "You never clean up after yourself!" This way, your roommate(s) can see the direct connection between their actions and your reactions. Make sure to be careful, though, that this doesn't degenerate into "I'm sick and tired of . . ."

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.

Be willing to offer solutions and compromise.

Seeking Assistance

If a solution cannot be reached by the roommates, the next step is to ask Community Living staff for help or mediation. ACAs have been well trained to serve as impartial mediators. Roommate changes are only used after other methods of resolving conflict have been tried and if space is available. Contact your CD if the situation reaches this point.