Living With Roommates 101

The secret to a positive roommate experience is the 3 C’s: Communication, Cooperation, and Compromise.

COMMUNICATION:
When it comes to sharing a living space, it’s best to be proactive in order to prevent potential problems, and to address any problems that do come up right away before they become a bigger issue. Be direct and honest, but still nice. Use “I” statements to explain how you feel, as “you” statements tend to sound more accusatory.

For example: “You always leave your dirty dishes in the sink. You are such a slob.” “I feel stressed out when there are dishes in the sink. I’d appreciate if you could wash your dishes more often so I can cook when I need to.”

COOPERATION:
Be patient and mature. Realize that your roommate may have no idea that what they are doing or not doing is an issue for you.

Your roommate may come from a different culture, whether that means a different kind of family, a different country, or a different value set. Respect that “different” does not mean “wrong.” Cultural differences may complicate communication between roommates, but be patient and try to understand your roommates’ viewpoint.

COMPROMISE:
Respect your roommate and respect their wants as well as your own. You have certain rights – to safety, to privacy, to a good night’s sleep – and your roommate has them too.

Be mindful that you may not be a perfect roommate either. Listen to your roommate’s side of the story, and be willing to make concessions to preserve peace in your apartment. The goal should be for everyone to feel heard and respected, not for everyone to get everything they want.

Choosing A Roommate

If you have the option to choose a roommate, think carefully before you make a decision. You can be best friends with someone but have completely opposite living styles, and sharing a living space can put a lot of pressure on even the strongest friendships.