

Getting Along With Roommates In Your Apartment

Living with strangers, or even friends, can be challenging – especially if it's your first time living away from home. While you can introduce a 'family' atmosphere to an apartment full of strangers, it's important to realize that new boundaries apply.

Living with Friends vs. Strangers

Living with friends can either be a very rewarding experience or a very trying experience, depending on your relationship history.

Some of the benefits of living with friends include knowing whether or not they're reliable. You have an idea of their financial history and whether you can trust them to pay the apartment rent on time.

With friends, you're more likely to have common interests and even common friends, which can make your apartment more welcoming for visitors. However, knowing each other well brings higher expectations, which can sometimes lead to disappointment. Often it is better to share an apartment with acquaintances - people you know enough to trust – rather than close friends. Seeing each other every day might grate on each other's nerves and a once strong friendship might quickly sour. You might also find your friendship suffers because you stop spending time together outside of the apartment.

Look upon living with strangers as an opportunity to expand your social network. It's a chance to get to know people you otherwise would not. This living arrangement also grants you more independence to do your own thing – strangers are less likely to worry about your comings and goings.

But trust your instincts when you first meet them - if their social skills or integrity are questionable, choose another apartment or another roommate. We recommend you ask for personal references before making a final decision on a potential roommate.

Respecting Each Other's Property

This may sound basic, but there are certain liberties people can take with their own family that they can't with others. While your mother had an open pantry and your siblings didn't mind sharing their clothes, this may not fly in an apartment arrangement. Some people are guarded of their possessions, and rightly so.

Establish the boundaries early – is it acceptable to borrow clothes, browse through each other's music collection, use somebody else's personal computer, etc.

Choosing Whether to Share Food or Cook Separately

Communal meals or dinner for one? There are advantages to both strategies. Sharing food can help you save money because you split the price of dietary staples. However, if

you aren't a large eater you may find yourself spending above your weight. Also, settling on a diet that everyone agrees upon can be difficult.

Cooking for yourself can be more convenient because you only have to please yourself. If your roommates have boyfriends or girlfriends who often hang around the apartment, buying your own groceries won't make you worry that you're supporting the food plan of a 'significant other'. Also, you can eat on your own time schedule and purchase whatever food you want regardless of others' budgets.

That's not to say you can't share certain foods though. Often apartment roommates share food staples such as milk, sugar and bread. If you run out of something, it's nice to have an understanding with your roommates that you're allowed to borrow something of theirs until you replenish your stock.

If you all cook separately, and at different times, you might consider arranging a weekly sit-down meal together. Dining together is one of the easiest and most satisfying ways to bring people closer.

Find a system that works best in your apartment. Remember to establish the rules early, but be flexible if the system isn't working for you.

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