

ROOMMATE BOUNDARIES & RIGHTS

You and your roommate are individuals with particular interests, goals, values, likes and dislikes. You may not find it necessary to share every aspect of college life with your roommate. Learning to accept each other's differences without infringing on one another's freedom is a valuable part of your total education.

Each roommate has equal rights as an occupant of the room. Roommates must be able to come to compromises and agreements. Each person has the right to his/her own personal space within the room. This is why there is a desk, bed, and closet or wardrobe for every person. It is vital that you talk about your preferences for the room and what purposes you feel the room should serve. Consider the following roommate rights when creating your roommate agreements.

Each person assigned to the room has...

- ⇒ The right to study free from undue interference (noise, stereo, guests, etc).
- ⇒ The right to sleep without undue disturbance from noise, guests, roommates, etc.
- ⇒ The right to expect that roommates will respect each others' personal belongings.
- ⇒ The right to a clean environment in which to live.
- ⇒ The right to free access to one's room without pressure from roommates.
- ⇒ The right to personal privacy.
- ⇒ The right to host guests at agreed upon times. Guests are to respect the rights of the host's roommate and other residents in the community. (Hosts are responsible for their own guests.)
- ⇒ The right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and fear of intimidation and physical and/or emotional harm.
- ⇒ The right to expect reasonable cooperation in the use of the room telephone.
- ⇒ The right to expect that any disagreements will be discussed in an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect, and that it is acceptable to confront the roommate respectfully when he/she is not fulfilling mutual agreements.

Residence Hall Staff are Available for Assistance in Settling Conflicts

We recognize that sometimes students need assistance in settling roommate conflicts. Your RA can be a great resource when you and your roommate are not able to come to a compromise on your own. RAs have received training to deal with these circumstances, and HDs are also available to help. We encourage you to first try to work things out on your own, but staff are happy to help out if needed.

RA Name(s) _____ Phone #(s) _____ Rm #(s) _____

A Guide to Successfully Living With a Roommate

Roommate Relations



- ⇒ Make Your Roommate Relationship Win-Win
- ⇒ Communicating with Your Roommate
- ⇒ Compromising Early and Often
- ⇒ Setting Clear Expectations
- ⇒ Roommate Boundaries and Rights
- ⇒ Enclosure: Roommate Expectations

Use this guide to explore your expectations for living with a roommate. Additionally, this can be used as a discussion tool for creating a roommate agreement with your roommate. Your RA can assist you with this.

MAKE YOUR ROOMMATE RELATIONSHIP WIN-WIN

At Carleton, you will develop many relationships. Many of those will happen in the residence halls. Of those, your relationship with your roommate will be one of the most important. **Communication, compromising often, and setting clear expectations** will help you create a positive, long-lasting relationship with your roommate(s).

When housing first year students, Residential Life staff try hard to match people who will have some similarities, but also have some contrasts so they can learn from each other. We ask that new students meet with their RA(s) and roommate(s) during the first few weeks of school to have a discussion about how to live in the room together and to complete a Roommate Agreement. Some of those agreements involve the compromises you make together and what you will do when your relationship doesn't seem to be going right.



Find ways to balance both roommates' needs!

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR ROOMMATE

Good communication is critical to ensuring a successful roommate relationship. It is important that each roommate understands his/her own needs and shares them early in the term with the other roommate(s). We encourage this sharing because the possibility of conflict increases when communication breaks down. Below are three common mistakes:

1. Complaining behind the roommate's back about something he/she is doing.
2. Not being direct about an issue.
3. Assuming the roommate knows what is bothering him/her.

It's important to be proactive with your communication and discuss any issues in a direct, yet respectful way. When roommates dance around issues, they rarely get to the core of those issues and one or both continue to be frustrated.

When discussing any issues, make sure to think about how you say things to your roommate and how those statements will be interpreted. Keep the following things in mind when communicating with your roommate:

Stay optimistic. It's important to have a positive attitude when discussing issues with your roommate. Remember that you each have equal rights in the room, and if both of you communicate and try to make the relationship work, most likely it will.

Be clear. Throughout the conversation, it is important to be clear about what you need (while still listening to the other person). When first getting acquainted with

your roommate, it is easy to say something doesn't bother when it actually does. However, after living together for a while, you may wish you had been upfront about it and find that it would have been easier to discuss at the beginning of the relationship.



Listen. Make sure you both have an opportunity to tell the other what is on your mind. While one is talking, the other should listen without interrupting. Communication breaks down when roommates are only focused on their own personal needs in the room and don't carefully listen to the other person's needs.

Use "I" Statements. When talking with others about behaviors (whether good or bad), it's always best to own what you are saying by using the word "I" instead of the word "you" and to talk about how you are feeling about specific behaviors instead of specific people.

For example, "I am uncomfortable when my clothing is borrowed without my permission" is much easier to hear than, "I can't believe you took my shirt without asking." This would set even the nicest person on the defensive.

Accept Feedback. Be willing to hear feedback from your roommate in the same manner. If you and your roommate communicate using "I" statements instead of "you" statements and use non-accusatory approaches, no one will feel attacked.

COMPROMISING EARLY AND OFTEN

Many Carleton students come to campus without having ever shared a room. Not only do first year students have to adjust to the college lifestyle, but they also must adjust to sharing their personal space.

It is critical for roommates to openly discuss issues and find ways to compromise on those where they disagree. A good way to start the year is to decide together how to arrange the room and when you will complete your roommate agreement. Flexibility, consideration and compromise are extremely important in creating and maintaining successful roommate relationships.



Communication + Compromise = Agreements

SETTING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Think about your expectations for the room. On the insert are some things to consider prior to sitting down with your roommate and RA to draw up the roommate agreement. Please think about each item and what will truly make you the most comfortable in the room. Once you have done this, set up a time to meet with your RA and roommate. Remember, you will need to compromise with your roommate and set clear expectations together for the space you share.