

Roommate Contract

The concept is simple: you sit down with your roommate at the beginning of the semester, talk about “rules” to regulate behavior in your room and put it all down on paper and sign. Compromise will almost certainly be necessary. So what should you include in a roommate contract? Here are some suggestions.

Start with the “no compromise” points:

Although compromise is important in this situation, most people have a few issues they feel strongly about and don’t want to compromise on those issues. For example, a roommate might object to overnight guests. Another roommate might insist on quiet after 11 p.m. because of an early morning job. As long as your “no compromise” list is fairly short, there’s nothing wrong with this approach. It is better that you know these things ahead of time than to find them out accidentally along the way.

Respect:

This may be the most important category. Establish some rules about how you want to be treated. Some of these might include:

- Politeness to each other in the apartment
- Politeness to each other’s guests
- No talking about roommate problems with mutual friends or neighbors
- No talking about each other on social media
- No sharing secrets you might find out about each other
- Respect for each other’s religious beliefs and practices

Noise:

If there are times when you want the room or apartment to be quiet---for sleep, studying, prayer, or whatever---put this in your contract. Talk about how much you plan to use the room as a study area and how quiet you like the room to be when you study. If one roommate wants quiet study time and the other does not, set aside a certain number of quiet hours per week, and the quiet-loving roommate can study in the library at other times.

Cleanliness:

In your room, you can set up rules like “no clothes on the floor” or “all dirty dishes must be washed and put away.”

Visitors:

Roommates are entitled to bring visitors into their room or apartment, but it’s important not to abuse this privilege. You might set some rules about overnight guests: and establish how often they are welcome in the room. You might also set rules about the frequency of daytime guests, since you probably don’t want your roommate’s best friends to become unofficial residents. Rules about parties fall into this category as well.

Your stuff:

These rules might be as simple as “stay out of my stuff and don’t eat my food.” However, you can set more lenient rules such as “you can use my plates as long as you clean them up” or “feel free to play my video games.”

Best of luck with your roommate situation!

Adapted from *College Roommate Conflicts: Negotiation Strategies for Your Dorm Room or Apartment Issues* © Naomi Rockler-Gladen, Oct 31, 2007