



Roommate Success Guide

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INTRODUCTION

This workbook has two purposes. Primarily, it is designed to help you and your roommate arrive at decisions and arrangements which will make living together easier and help to avoid aggravations, resentments, and discomfort. In addition, the skills you will learn will be useful for you in the years to come.

USING THIS WORKBOOK

Work Together: Negotiating, by definition, involves at least two people. One person cannot “lay down” rules for both. Some exercises in the workbook are done alone for the purpose of preparing to negotiate, but most of the exercises are to be done together.

Set Aside Time: First, negotiating how to live together in harmony is important. It deserves your time and attention. Secondly, the skills you are using may not be familiar at first, so you will need to give them your undivided attention. Later, as your skills develop, you will be able to negotiate spontaneously, as issues arise.

Write In This Book: The book is designed to be used, and space is provided for writing. As you will see later, writing things down is an important part of the process and actually helps to insure that agreements will be carried out.

Save This Book: It will help to remind you of exactly what agreements have been reached. If necessary, it can help you to determine when an agreement has been broken. And it can help by outlining the process you use to renegotiate agreements that aren't working out or in negotiating agreements on new issues.

After discussing each topic included within this book thoroughly, complete the enclosed agreement, sign it, keep the last copy for your room and return the remaining copy of the agreement to your RA within one week of moving in together.

Roommate Bill of Rights

- The right to a clean room in which to live.
- The right to expect that a roommate will respect one's personal belongings.
- The right to resolve grievances. Housing staff are available for assistance in settling conflicts.
- The right to read and study free from undue interference in one's room. Unreasonable noise and other distractions inhibit the exercise of this right.
- The right to sleep without undue disturbance from noise, roommate's guests, etc.
- The right to free access to one's room and facilities without pressure from a roommate.
- The right to personal privacy.
- The right to be free from fear or intimidation and physical or emotional harm.
- The right to have guests during visitation hours with the exception that the guests are to respect the rights of the host's/hostess's roommate and other hall residents.
- The right to expect reasonable cooperation in the use of the room telephone.

REMEMBER: To be a mature adult is to accept responsibility for the welfare of others. Only you can assure that your roommate enjoys these rights.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PART I: First, get to know each other by finding common interests and hobbies. By answering these questions together, you will learn some interesting and exciting information about one another.

Share with each other how you decided to come to UofL. What are the grades you hope to earn, and how important is it to you to do well? Explain the last movie or game you saw or the last book you read. Discuss your favorite time of the year and why you enjoy it. Talk a little about your favorite TV shows. Explain a favorite adventure from your past.

Read the following statements and decide how much you agree. Share these answers with your roommate.

	Strongly Disagree				Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> I'd describe myself as a "late night" person. I'll probably be up at midnight most nights.	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Neat is the wrong word to describe me, but I'm not very messy.	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to study in silence.	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> I'll probably have overnight guests stay often (4 or more times each semester).	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Generally speaking, I don't mind if my roommate borrows any of my things.	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Eating my food without asking is a definite problem.	1	2	3	4	5

PART II: This section will allow you insight to each others moods and feelings. By completing these questions you will develop sensitivity and understanding toward one another.

These are 3 things that make me happy and this is how I usually act when I'm happy:

This is what makes me angry and this is how I react:

These are times I prefer to be alone:

This is how I act when I'm feeling down and here are some things that cheer me up:

This is how I relax:

PART III: This last portion will give you guidelines for stating your individual preferences in given situations. The questions should first be answered individually. Remember, when you share responses each answer need not be the same or even similar. The answers provide an avenue of discussing individual preferences.

You have had an extremely tough day. You stayed up late last night studying for three major tests. You are exhausted. All you want to do is eat some dinner and head to bed. Just as you are drifting off to sleep your roommate returns with some friends. They study a while and then start to watch Netflix. It seems like your roommate always has at least one or two friends visiting.

- a) This situation is acceptable to me.
- b) This situation would be okay on occasion.
- c) I would prefer my roommate to limit guests to a few times a week.
- d) I do not invite friends to our room and would prefer if my roommate did not either.

Your roommate regularly attends parties sponsored by fraternities and sororities. He/She is planning to go through rush and is encouraging you to "GO Greek" too.

- a) You welcome the invitation since you are interested in Greek Life at UofL too.
- b) You would like to attend the open rush parties, but you are not sure yet if you want to join an organization.
- c) You would attend a few parties so as not to hurt your roommate's feelings, but you are more interested in other campus activities.
- d) You would not attend Greek functions and have no desire to associate with those students.

It is Friday afternoon and the weekend has arrived! As you sit in your room reading and listening to your iPod, you notice that there are dirty clothes on the floor, textbooks, and notebooks scattered around, and the beds are not made. As you survey this mess you think...

- a) I like this room. It has a comfortable, lived-in look.
- b) I let things get out of hand this week, but I will clean my room tomorrow.
- c) I seldom let my room get this messy.
- d) This would never happen to me. I always keep a neat room and would expect my roommate to do likewise.

As you return from the Ville Grill, you find your roommate using your new computer to complete his midterm paper. Your roommate, needing a break, grabs your jacket and heads for the SAC. Your roommate feels that since you share a room you should share your things too. Your attitude is...

- a) I perfectly agree with this.
- b) Borrowing items like your computer is okay, but borrowing personal items like clothes is not.
- c) My roommate should ask me before borrowing anything.
- d) I do not borrow from others because it causes problems so I would rather my roommate not borrow from me.

Your roommate's significant other lives off campus with three other students. Because it is more convenient to drop by your room between classes and because the apartment is always crowded he/she is spending most of their time in your room.

- a) I fully understand this and since my significant other lives off campus he/she will be visiting for long hours also.
- b) Dropping by on occasion is acceptable, but not each afternoon.
- c) My roommate should always make me aware before his/her significant other visits.
- d) I will not invite members of the opposite sex into the room and would expect my roommate to do likewise.

Other Preferences Not Mentioned Above:

Intercultural Roommate Relationships

- ☞ Acknowledge the differences in culture and prepare yourself for periods of confusion.
- ☞ Remember that part of your personality transcends your country of birth. It is not necessary to identify yourself or your roommate solely with one nation since this does not say everything about you or your roommate.
- ☞ Go to the International Center for a Culturegram or other information about your roommate's culture. This will enable you to have a better understanding of him or her.
- ☞ Introduce your roommate to other members of your peer group. Seeing how you interact with friends, your roommate will gain a valuable perspective of you.
- ☞ Ask! Don't make assumptions. Quite often roommates have problems because communication has broken down. If you don't understand something, make sure you ask.
- ☞ Have FUN! You have the opportunity of a lifetime right in your own room. Learn and open the door to a whole new world.



Some Basic Strategies to Conflict Management

- Talking** – Problems between people often involve a lack of communication. Work toward expressing yourself freely. Talking can help prevent differences from being blown out of proportion.
- Listening** – Learn to listen carefully. Most of us have learned to listen selectively so we can influence or win arguments. Strive for understanding by listening for words and identifying feelings without evaluating or reacting immediately.
- Flexibility** – The way you feel about a given situation today may differ a great deal from the way you feel tomorrow. Expect contradictions and be flexible with yourself and others.
- Understanding** – Do not assume or expect your roommate to view things as you do. Understand and work to respect differences in attitudes and people.
- Cooperation** – This joint experience requires honesty and attempts to make the relationship work. When you collaborate, your chances of mutual satisfaction are increased greatly.
- Compromise** – Living with another person challenges you to find ways in which all involved can be winners. It does not mean that you have to be less satisfied.
- Communicate** – Express yourself clearly – especially your needs – in a direct, assertive manner avoiding sarcasm or exaggeration. Learn to deal with conflict so that minor issues or irritations do not escalate into major arguments. Confront concerns as soon as possible, preferably as they occur. Learn to identify and confront while remaining pleasant. The key is to be assertive rather than aggressive.

If you need help with your roommate – contact your RA, the Building Director, or the Assistant Director for Residence Life (852-6636). If you don't like staying in your room, ask for help. Don't suffer in silence!