

Roommates



According to Wikipedia, “A **roommate** is a person who shares a living facility such as an apartment or dormitory.” Typically, roommates are not related to each other. Sometimes they are friends and other times they are complete strangers when they decide to live together. The most common reason for sharing living space is to reduce the cost of housing. A group of people living together can lower their individual housing expenses. Other reasons are to share the work and other responsibilities of a household, and to have the companionship of other people. These comes with some challenges, however, such as personal schedules, finances, cleanliness, and personality. It is important to choose roommates wisely.

In this unit, the following will be introduced:

- ◆ Roommates and the Landlord/Tenant Law in Washington State.
- ◆ Compatibility issues— take a quiz to find out what kind of roommate you are.
- ◆ Problem Solving—What would you do?
- ◆ Roommate agreements: what to include.

What are your concerns about having a roommate? What are your expectations for successful living with others? Write your thoughts here, then work through the next few pages.

Personal Goal:
Make a list of expectations with your roommates.
OR
Make up a roommate agreement.



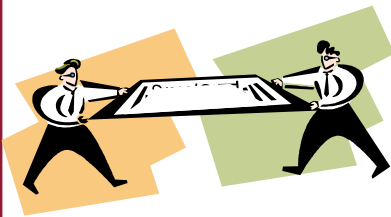
For more information about the Road to Renting Program, contact the coordinator at Transitions 455-4249.



Roommates and the Law

WHAT DOES THE LANDLORD/TENANT LAW SAY ABOUT ROOMMATES AND THEIR LEASES?

EVERYONE SHOULD BE ON THE LEASE. In the State of Washington, one lease covers one dwelling (apartment, house, duplex, etc). This means that one lease should include the names of all the roommates (co-tenants) and each is responsible for the terms of that one lease. Some landlords do issue separate leases, however.



EACH TENANT/ROOMMATE, AS WELL AS THE GROUP, IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RENT. Because there is one lease, each tenant on that lease is responsible for the monthly rent and for damages to the unit. This means that if one roommate moves out, the remaining tenant(s) are responsible for the rent and for fulfilling the terms of the lease. Be sure to ask your landlord about roommates who move in and out.

ALL TENANTS/ROOMMATES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEPOSIT. The landlord often collects one deposit that is the responsibility of all the tenants in one unit. Because there is one deposit, the landlord can choose different ways to return the deposit when everyone moves out. Be sure to talk to your landlord about this when you move in. All agreements should be in writing.



THE LANDLORD MUST APPROVE ALL NEW ROOMMATES. If one or more roommates move out, and others move in, the landlord must approve of the new tenants. They will probably have to go through the same screening as the others in the unit. The landlord will then make an amendment to the original lease. When a new roommate moves in, the landlord can do another walk through/condition report in order to help decide the fair return of the deposit when the tenants all move out. The remaining tenants will have to decide what to do about returning the deposit to the who is leaving since it has already been paid by the original co-tenants. Discuss this situation with your landlord.

EACH ROOMMATE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR FOLLOWING THE TERMS OF THE LEASE. Everyone living together in one unit is a group, not individuals, as far as housing laws go. This means that the group is responsible for the rent, the deposit, the utilities, the basic maintenance and other parts of the lease. If one person is irresponsible, the entire group can suffer. It's important that all roommates live compatibly together and understand their responsibilities to the landlord and to each other.

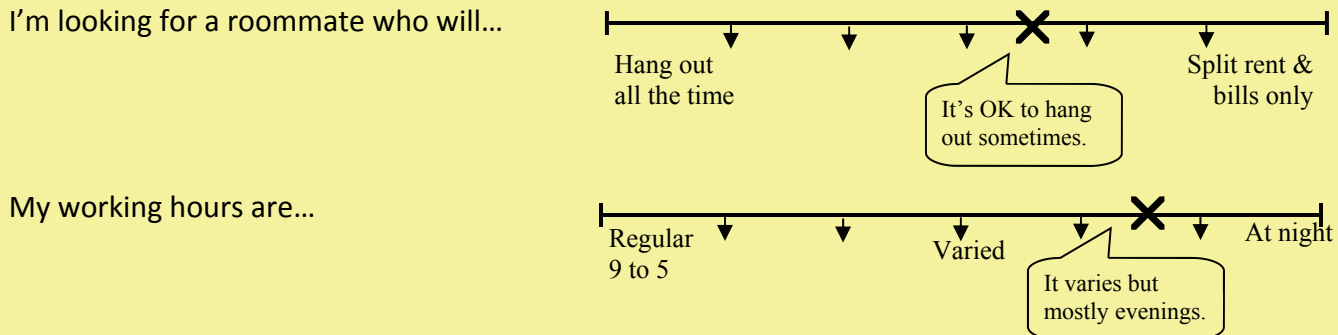


COMMUNICATION WITH THE LANDLORD AND WITH YOUR ROOMMATES IS KEY TO SUCCESS.

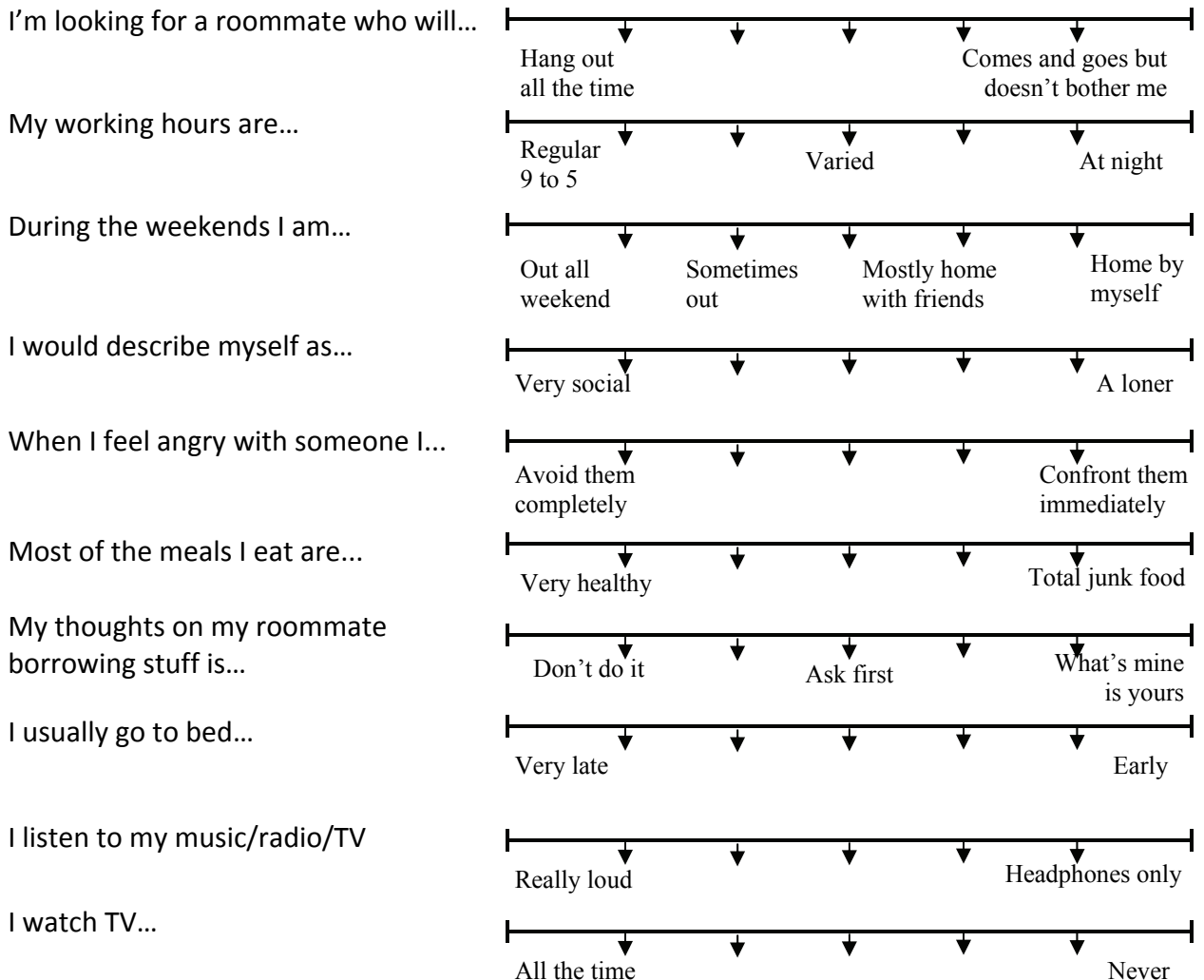
Getting Along

Are you compatible with your roommate?

How do you know that you and your potential roommates are compatible? Knowing what kind of roommate you are will give you a good idea about the kind of person you want to live with. Answer these lifestyle questions by marking an **X** on the scale according to how you feel. For example:



Daily Life Questions



Getting Along

Are you compatible with your roommate?

Daily Life Questions

My thoughts on hosting house parties are... Party On! |-----| Never

I believe that overnight guests are... No problem |-----| Not allowed

My feelings on a roommate having a pet are... Great! |-----| No way!

Obligations and Chores

The best way to describe my cleanliness is... Things must always be clean |-----| I clean only if I have to do it

I pay the bills... As soon as I get them |-----| When I get around to it

I do my dishes... Right after I finish using them |-----| When they smell and grow things

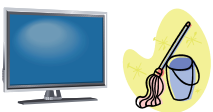
The amount of time I spend in the bathroom is... In and out quickly |-----| My 2nd home. I never want to leave

Substances

I drink alcohol... Never |-----| A lot

I smoke cigarettes... Not at all |-----| Regularly

My feelings about smoking in the house... Take it outside |-----| Feel free to smoke anytime



BE SURE TO SHARE YOUR ANSWERS WITH YOUR ROOMMATES.



A Problem Solving Blog

What would you do?

**Communication with your roommates is key to success.
Here are some conversations to have BEFORE you move in together.**

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. When I am upset about something I usually... | 10. I get tense or stressed when... |
| 2. Something that will usually cheer me up... | 11. You'll know I am tense/stressed because I usually |
| 3. When things are going really well I'm usually... | 12. What makes you tense or stressed? |
| 4. I would prefer to be left alone when... | 13. How will you let me know when you are tense/
stressed? |
| 5. When do you need time alone? | 14. Something that is likely to annoy me is... |
| 6. How will you let me know when you need time alone? | 15. How will you let me know what annoys you? |
| 7. You'll know when I'm angry because I usually... | 16. We will communicate feelings or frustrations by... |
| 8. What makes you angry? | 17. To me, relaxing is..... |
| 9. How will you let me know when you are angry? | |

What concerns do you have? Write them here. _____

Do you have a roommate problem? Read this blog and find out how others have solved their problems.

I have FIVE roommates and there's something wrong with every one of them. One of them is always borrowing something of mine without permission. Another one eats whatever food is in the fridge and the cupboards—even if it belongs to someone else. Then there's the one who never takes a shower or changes clothes. Half of my roommates never pick up after themselves. They are so messy. The worst ones, however, are the ones who don't respect my personal space. They just come into my room anytime they want, without knocking or asking. What can I do? *(Posted by Spacey)*

I used to live with a bunch of people when I got my first job and left home. We had problems like yours until we sat down and made some rules. First, we all agreed to listen to each other and we took turns saying what kinds of rules we wanted. Then we talked about the ones we could all agree on. We wrote down the rules and we all signed the paper. Things were better after that even though we had to have several of these talks to straighten out all the problems. (by Listener)



Living with people you don't know is really difficult. Here's what I learned from my experience.... First, don't complain about one of your roommates to another one. This will always come back to you as back stabbing. Second, don't write notes to the people you have problems with. Even though your intentions are good, they can be misunderstood in a note. Third, don't wait until you're really mad before doing something. Everyone you live with probably knows there's a problem so just get together and talk about it. It's always nice to become friends with the people you live with. (Posted by Frantic Friend)

What would you do? Write about it here. _____

A Problem Solving Blog

What would you do?

Do you have a roommate problem?
Read this blog and find out how others have solved their problems.

Here's our problem. Three of us are roommates and we don't all share the work equally. Right now we have no system, and people just clean when they feel like it, but that seems to always lead to one person doing most of the chores, and then that person starts to resent being the house maid, and the other people start to resent being nagged to take the trash out, etc. etc. What can we do? (Posted by naggingned)

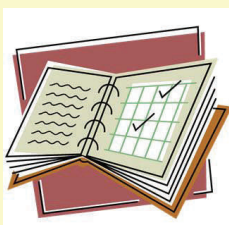
When I lived with two other people, we made a graph-style chart on a white board with all the chores that needed to be done down one side and our names across the top. When you do a chore, you write the date in the corresponding box below your name, and erase the date that the last person wrote. For things like taking the trash out, it's useful just for knowing who's turn it is, but for dusting/ vacuuming/etc. it also lets you know how long it's been since someone did it so you can say (with proof), "Hey, I vacuumed two weeks ago and it's your turn." It tends to be really easy to lose track of things that only need to be done every so often. (Posted by MessyMel)

	Mel	Jesse	Pat
Vacuum	May 1		
Take out trash			April 29
Clean bathroom		May 4	



We used to have a schedule of weekly chores that everyone had to do. But, it became clear that some people hated vacuuming but didn't mind cleaning the bathroom, and some people hated to take out the trash, but didn't mind vacuuming. We ended up going half and half. Everyone picked one thing they didn't mind doing all the time, and put it on a schedule when they'd do it. The other things, the ones that people really didn't want to do, we divided up as equally as possible. (Posted by divvydavid)

Here's what my roommates and I did. First, we figured out the rules. How late can one person be before we tell them to do their chore? What about chore trading? Will there be penalties? Do chores have to be done on a certain day or by a certain day of the week? My last set of roommates decided on Thursdays, so that the house would always be clean before the weekend. Several of my roommates also talked their boyfriends into doing yard work on their scheduled weeks. Not everyone is going to be cool with this, so it's important to chat about it. After deciding the rules, we came up with a schedule. Here's some advice...if it's not working, do something different! The worst times I've had, have been when everyone's agreed on a plan, and then it didn't work and no one talked about how to fix it. (Posted by rulingrita)



We wrote down all the things that had to be done every week. Then we went around the table and chose ones to do until they were all picked by someone. We would change the job schedule about every three months. That way, if someone prefers to clean bathrooms, and someone else likes laundry, they can do what they like to do. By letting everyone pick, we noticed that the jobs were more likely to get done. (Posted by pickypete)

What would you do? Write about it here.

Roommates

What's in an agreement?

Now, you are ready to think about how you will live together. Many people put together a Roommate Agreement so that everyone understands what is expected and so that everyone can comply with the terms of the lease. The following is a worksheet with the terms of an agreement. With your roommate(s), decide the terms by answering the questions. Then sign it and give a copy to your landlord.

Question	Answer/Terms		
Rent			
How much will each person pay for the rent?			
When is the rent due to the landlord?			
Who is responsible for giving the rent money to the landlord?			
Where will the receipt for the rent be put so that everyone can see it (to show that the rent has been paid).			
(other)			
Bills and Expenses			
What shared utilities will there be? (electricity, land line, cell phones, cable, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Electricity <input type="checkbox"/> Land Line Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Cable TV	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____	
Are the utilities split evenly? If not, how will they be split?			
Who is responsible for arranging for <u>utility</u> service and paying the bills and <u>when</u> are they due?	<u>Utility Company</u>	<u>Due</u>	<u>Who</u>
When should roommates give their payment to the one paying the bills? (For example: 2 days before the due date)			
Space			
Who shares bedrooms?			
How will the bathrooms be scheduled for use?			
Do you need a designated study/quiet space? Where?			
What activities can and can't take place in the common areas?	<u>OK</u>	<u>Not OK</u>	

Tip:
Late payments mean late fees. Always pay your bills on time.

Roommates

What's in an agreement?

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Question	Answer/Terms			
Furniture and Household Goods				
Who will buy what? (furniture, kitchen supplies, cleaning supplies, paper products, etc) <div data-bbox="256 491 667 606" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> Tip: You'll avoid arguments about ownership if each roommate is responsible for some of the expenses for furnishing an apartment. </div>	<u>Item</u>		<u>Who</u>	
How will you keep track of what each roommate buys? (So that you know who gets it when you leave)				
(other)				
Chores				
How often will the shared areas be cleaned?				
How will chores/house cleaning be scheduled?				
Who does the yard work/snow removal and how will that be scheduled?				
What happens if one or more roommates don't do their chores on time?				
(other)				
Food and Meals				
What food is shared?				
Where is the shared food kept? (Designated shelves, cupboards, etc)				
Where will roommates keep their unshared food?	<u>Roommate #1</u>	<u>Roommate #2</u>	<u>Roommate #3</u>	<u>Roommate #4</u>
(other)				

Roommates

What's in an agreement?

Question	Answer/Terms	
Moving Out		
What is the landlord's policy about roommates who move out?		
Who finds a new roommate?		
How will rent/utilities be covered with fewer roommates?		
How will the security deposit be returned to the roommate who moves out?		
(other)		
Disagreements		
How will roommates communicate dissatisfaction with broken rules?		
What are the consequences for not following the agreement?		
Who will be asked to mediate disputes, if needed?		
(other)		
Pets		
Will pets be allowed? (Check with the landlord.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
What pets will be allowed?		
Where will the pets sleep?		
Where will the pets be allowed to go in the apartment/house?	<u>Can Go</u>	<u>Can't Go</u>
Who will take care of the pets? (clean up after them, buy food, feed the animals, take to the vet, etc)		
(other)		

Roommates

What's in an agreement?

Question	Answer/Terms	
Guests and Noise		
How many guests can each roommate have and for how many nights?		
Are there quiet times and noisy times? What are they?	<u>Quiet Times</u>	<u>Noisy Times</u>
What are the rules around music and parties?		
(other)		

Tip: Check with the landlord and your lease for rules about guests, noise, and moving out.

Note: Be sure to tell your roommate(s) if you use legal or illegal substances.

We, the undersigned, agree to the above stated terms.

Date _____ Print Name _____ Signature _____

Date _____ Print Name _____ Signature _____

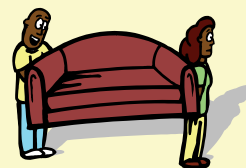
Date _____ Print Name _____ Signature _____

Date _____ Print Name _____ Signature _____

Don't forget to give a copy of your agreement to your landlord.



Congratulations
Now you're ready to move in.



Roommates

Resources

www.WashingtonLawHelp.org

Provides a wealth of information in several languages on all Washington housing laws, including a link to easy-to-read Landlord/Tenant Law.

www.RentLaw.com

Provides information by state on topics such as renters insurance, household mold, tenant screening, Housing Vouchers, etc. Also provides downloadable documents such as condition reports, landlord/tenant booklets and checklists.

How to find a roommate.

<http://spokane.craigslist.org/roo/>

***Warning:** When answering craigslist ads, do not give out too much personal information and be sure to meet potential roommates in public places. Don't send rent money through the mail and beware of landlords who can't meet you in person.*

How to get along with your roommate.

http://www.ehow.com/how_8071_along-with-roommate.html

<http://apartments.about.com/od/roommatesneighbors/a/bestroommates.htm>

<http://www.suite101.com/content/getting-along-with-roommates-a139394>

Self-Sufficiency Calculator

www.thecalculator.org

Using your overall budget, see the self sufficiency cost-of-living for your family, and learn about resources that can assist you in planning and making progress toward economic self sufficiency.

Project Share

212 S. Wall Street

Spokane, WA 99201.....**456-7164**

Offers emergency assistance to those who have received a disconnect notice from Avista.

Energy Assistance

Offered through SNAP.....**242-2376**

Online appointments: **www.snapwa.org**

Use this seasonal hotline to apply for long term assistance with energy bills. This is for non-emergency situations. Call 456-7111 to see when phone lines open or for emergency situations.

Locations for Computer Access:

Spokane Public Libraries

For info call 509-444-5300.

Spokane County Library District

See branch locations in the phone directory for details.

Coalition Of Responsible Disabled (CORD)

To schedule an appointment, call 509-326-6355

YWCA

930 N Monroe St Spokane, WA 99201
509-326-1190

TinCan

1317 W 2d, Spokane, WA 99201,
509-744-0972



Northeast Community Center

4001 N. Cook, Spokane, WA 99207
509-487-1603

Goodwill Industries

130 E. 3rd Ave, Spokane, WA 99202,
509-838-4246

Northeast Washington Housing Solutions (NEWHS)

55 W. Mission Suite 104 Spokane, WA 99201, 509-328-2953

Women's Hearth

920 W. Second St. Spokane, WA 99201,
509-455-4249
Call for hours.

Emmanuel Family Life Center

631 S Richard Allen Court
509-535-1645
Call for hours