Your guide to living with roommates and within a community.
The University of Ottawa’s Shared Living Guide is inspired by and adapted from University of British Colombia’s “Shared Living Guide: Your guide to living with roommates”.
Living in a shared unit in residence is a great opportunity to meet and get to know people from diverse backgrounds and places, share unique perspectives and learn from your roommates about different living norms and communication styles—whether it's from someone who grew up just down the road, in a different country or on a different continent.

This guide is designed to help you navigate initial conversations with your roommate(s), approaching any differences in a constructive and collaborative way. Each section in this guide addresses a topic that can contribute to a flourishing residence environment for all.

Discuss these subjects with your roommate(s) today to help manage concerns that may come up later.

Belongings · Security · Substances
Values · Sleep · Expectations
Understanding · Noise · Cleanliness
Guests · Communication · Study · Safety
Boundaries · Conflict · Agreement

My Community Advisor (C.A.) or Peer Support (P.S.) is

They live in room ___________ Their email is ____________________

Uottawa.ca/Campus-Life/Housing
When to Use This Guide

This guide can be used at any time while you are preparing to or living with roommate(s).

Outlined below are the keys times of the academic year that this guide should be used, but it can also be used at any moment if conflict or challenges present themselves.

August
As you get ready to move into residence, look through this guide to prepare to live in a shared space.

September
Set yourself up for success by taking time to go through this guide and complete a Roommate Agreement with everyone in your unit as the semester begins.

October & November
With half a semester under your belt, make sure to check in with your roommate(s) to see if you would need to make any adjustments to your Roommate Agreements.

January
With a new semester often comes new roommates! Take some time to revisit your Roommate Agreement with all the people living in your unit.

February & March
Make sure you finish the year strong in your shared space by checking in with your roommate(s) before the end of the semester.

If you need support, your Community Advisor (C.A.) or Peer Support (P.S.) is available to help you and your roommates develop a roommate agreement and mediate any conflicts. Be sure to contact them if you need to talk.
The Additional Notes area of each section in this guide can be used to write down information that is important to you and those living in your unit. This can include allergies to keep in mind, preferences about noise, or any other information important to the shared living environment.

- Complete the Roommate Agreement form with all those living in your shared space to set expectations for the year.
  - When checking-in with your roommate(s) throughout the year, use the Roommate Agreement Check-In form to update the expectations within your unit.

- When filled in, the provided Cleaning Schedule can help establish equitable and clear expectations for the unit.

- If conflict does arise, follow our Conflict and Mediation Guide to navigate the situation and find a solution.

- Use the discussion and reflection questions to get to know yourself and your roommate(s) better.

- The Additional Notes area of each section in this guide can be used to write down information that is important to you and those living in your unit. This can include allergies to keep in mind, preferences about noise, or any other information important to the shared living environment.

Having trouble with the Shared Living Guide? Reach out to your Community Advisor (C.A.) or Peer Support (P.S.) to allow them to help you!
IMPORTANT VALUES

RESPECT

All are deserving of respect and a safe living environment. Treating someone with respect means that you interact with them in a way that shows that you care about their well-being and how they feel in their living space.

EXPECTATIONS

Expecting your living situation to be a certain way when living in residence can lead to some disappointment. It's best to keep an open mind about what your experience might be.

COMMUNICATION & UNDERSTANDING

Honest, intentional and well intended dialogue is the key to a functional roommate relationship. Make time in your schedule to communicate your point of view and be open to receive other people's point of view.

COMPROMISE & FLEXIBILITY

As the song goes "You can't always get what you want". In order to have everyone's needs met to a certain degree, be prepared to compromise on some of your requests. Flexibility towards the agreement reached can go a long way. Sometimes "life happens" and things are out of our control.

These values are shared by Residence Life at the University of Ottawa.
You may be practiced at getting to know new roommates, but in case you’re not, don’t worry if it seems a little awkward at first. The best advice is to try easing into the initial conversation with simple questions and then exchange detailed information when you feel more comfortable around each other.

**Questions to ask**

- Where do you call home?
- What’s your major?
- Why did you choose UOttawa?
- What are your favourite things to do?

**Activities to do**

- Have lunch, take a walk or attend an event together
University of Ottawa is committed to providing a safe living and learning environment. But we can’t do it alone. Your partnership and awareness are critical. It's important to protect yourself by locking your doors and windows. It is also important to recognize that your actions can affect the safety and security of your roommates. Make sure you download the SecurO application.

Protection Services: https://www.uottawa.ca/protection/en
Emergency: 613-562-5411
Non-emergency: 613-562-5499
Resident Safety Ambassadors  insert here

**MYTH**
Talking about our issues in person will only worsen things.

**REALITY**
Addressing things in person demonstrates maturity and a genuine willingness to work through issues.
SHARED LIVING GUIDE

SAFETY & SECURITY

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Are you locking your room and unit door when you leave and when you sleep?

- What will your policy be on letting guests into your unit?

- How will you communicate with your roommate(s) if you are not comfortable with a particular guest being in the unit?

- Have you checked in with your roommate(s) lately, especially if you haven't seen them recently?

MYTH

My intention was not to harass anyone, therefore my behavior is not harassment.

REALITY

Your behaviour could cause harm even if that was not your intention.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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It is important to talk about expectations, so as to avert misunderstandings and tension regarding the use of shared items and space. As for personal property, be sure to respect the boundaries set by your roommates and ask before you borrow things that don't belong to you.
QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How will the unit’s shared space typically be used (i.e., for studying or socializing)?
- How will the refrigerator and cupboards be shared?
- Are you comfortable sharing food? What about dishes and cutlery?
- How will household items like cleaning supplies, toilet paper or dish soap be purchased and used?
- Which personal belongings are you willing to share? Which items are off limits?
- If you noticed one of your belongings is missing or damaged, how would you approach the situation?

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

MYTH
All my friends and family agree with me and so I am right.

REALITY
Subjectivity is very relative. Even if your network agrees with you, it doesn’t mean you are right.
When living in a shared unit, each roommate needs to contribute to the cleanliness of the unit. Roommates are expected to discuss cleaning standards and create a mutually agreed upon cleaning schedule. The schedule should be posted in a common place in the unit for easy reference. Housing staff will schedule inspections of your unit a couple of times per year. Following inspections and upon move-out, if additional cleaning and/or repairs for damage are needed, the costs will be shared between all roommates.

**MYTH**
I would prefer to request a room or unit change rather than address the issue. Another room/roommates will be much better.

**REALITY**
Room changes aren’t always an option as we have a limited room inventory. If you change rooms, there is no guarantee that you will be trading for a better situation.
SHARED LIVING GUIDE

CLEANING

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What do you consider to be a "clean unit"?
- How will you share tasks, such as vacuuming, waste sorting/disposal and bathroom cleaning?
- How often and by when do you expect these tasks to be completed?
- Do your expectations change during midterms or exams?
- What will your unit’s policy be about dirty dishes?
- How will you communicate with each other when you are not satisfied with the level of cleanliness?

MYTH
My roommate is the problem, and so they have to move and whoever remains in the room wins.

REALITY
Room changes are at the sole discretion of the Residence Life Team, no matter how you see the situation.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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UOTTAWA.CA/CAMPUS-LIFE/HOUSING
# Cleaning Your Unit

## Kitchen
- Ensure all dishes and food are clean, stored properly and put away
- Remove all food and build up from the stove and microwave; clean both with cleaners
- Disinfect sink, faucet, and handles
- Clean exterior of fridge, counters, and handles in kitchen area

## Bathroom
- Disinfect the sink, handles, and faucet
- Use the toilet cleaner and bowl brush to scrub inside of the toilet bowl and underside of the toilet seat
- Disinfect the top side of the toilet seat and handle of the toilet
- Spray and wipe walls and base of shower or tub with cleaner

## Surfaces
- Clean highly used surfaces like door handles, switches, counters, tables and desks
- In order to keep them in good working condition, read product information before cleaning electronics like remotes, phones, key cards, etc.

## Flooring
- Maintain tile and wood flooring with a quick sweep
- Spot clean any spills or hard to sweep stains
- Mop any high-traffic areas, including washroom, kitchen, and entryway

## Garbage
- Empty your fridge of any food that has spoiled or expired
- Dispose of garbage, recycling, and composting into your building’s proper bins
- Ensure garbage has been put into a bag and tied before disposing of it in a dumpster
- Wash, rinse, and dry your garbage can, especially if liquids or food have seeped out from a bag

## Cleaning Supplies

Suggested cleaning supplies list:
- Glass cleaner
- Bathroom cleaner
- Toilet bowl brush
- Multi-purpose degreaser (for stove and counter tops)
- Handheld broom and dust pan
- Microfiber cloths
- Roll of paper towel
- Gloves
- Bucket to hold cleaning supplies
**CLEANING SCHEDULE**

There is a printable version of the cleaning schedule on our website in the Roommate and shared living section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 1</th>
<th>WEEK 2</th>
<th>WEEK 3</th>
<th>WEEK 4</th>
<th>WEEK 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROOMMATE 1</td>
<td>KITCHEN</td>
<td>BATHROOM</td>
<td>SURFACES</td>
<td>GARBAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROOMMATE 2</td>
<td>FLOORING</td>
<td>KITCHEN</td>
<td>BATHROOM</td>
<td>SURFACES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROOMMATE 3</td>
<td>GARBAGE</td>
<td>FLOORING</td>
<td>KITCHEN</td>
<td>BATHROOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROOMMATE 4</td>
<td>SURFACES</td>
<td>GARBAGE</td>
<td>FLOORING</td>
<td>KITCHEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROOMMATE 5</td>
<td>BATHROOM</td>
<td>SURFACES</td>
<td>GARBAGE</td>
<td>FLOORING</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

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While sound is a common feature of residence living, it's important to be conscious of the impact of the sounds you (and your guests) create. Excessive sounds (i.e., loud music, loud talk) disrupt the right of your fellow residents to a peaceful learning and living environment.

Be sure to keep things extra quiet during Quiet Hours (11 p.m. to 7 a.m. Monday to Friday; until 9 a.m. on Saturday; until 12 p.m. on Sundays). During final exam season (December, April), Quiet Hours extend to 24 hrs every day. These Quiet Hours are in place to ensure that people can sleep, study, or rest without worry.

Keep in mind that we have different ideas of what “excessive” noise is. The key is to always think of your roommates, your neighbors and your community and consider the impact of your noise on them.
It is very unlikely that you and your roommate will have perfectly matching cohabitation preferences.

Myth: My roommate(s) and I will have the same study habits, sleep schedules, socializing tendencies, noise level preferences, cleanliness expectations.

Reality: It is very unlikely that you and your roommate will have perfectly matching cohabitation preferences.

Questions to Ask:

- Daytime noise:
  - What limits will you have on volume from TV, music, devices, etc.

- Evening noise:
  - What limits will you have on volume from TV, music, devices, etc.
  - Will you have cut-off times for calls/noise that can be heard outside of your bedroom?
  - What time is or is not appropriate for cooking dinner?

Additional Notes:
Being able to sleep and study is important for your health, wellbeing and academic success. Discuss sleep and study habits with your roommate(s) to ensure everyone has the best chance for a successful year.
QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Are you a morning or night person?
- When do you usually go to bed? When do you usually wake up?
- Are you a heavy or light sleeper?
- Do you plan to study in your unit or elsewhere?
- Can you study with music on or with guests present (in your room or in the unit)?
- What are your expectations of roommates coming home late at night/early in the morning?

ADDITIONAL NOTES:
Having guests visit your unit is a privilege that comes with responsibility. First, ensure all your roommates are comfortable with the people who are entering your shared unit. Additionally, remember that you are responsible for the actions of your guests. You must ensure they are familiar with and adhere to the Residence Standards.

Guests = friends, romantic partners potential sexual activity in the room
QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How do you feel about overnight guests?
- Is there a time that guests of other genders cannot be in your unit?
- How do you feel about guests of other genders using the bathroom in your unit?
- How will we communicate when we intend to have overnight guests?
- How comfortable are you with social events/parties being hosted in your unit?
- How much notice do you expect before a social event is hosted in your unit?
- Who is responsible for cleaning in your unit after a social event?

MYTH
People have to bend to my preferences, I should not have to compromise.

REALITY
When it comes to cohabitation, compromise and flexibility are key.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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If deciding to drink, make sure you are with people you trust and it is your own choice. The legal age to drink and purchase alcohol in Ontario is 19 years old. Even if alcohol is bought legally, you must still be 19 to consume in residence. When drinking in designated common areas use plastic or metal containers and avoid having glass. While drinking, avoid activities/accessories that promote speed drinking & try to limit yourself to approx. 1 drink/hour. Additionally, avoid mixing alcohol with other substances. Drinking games that promote irresponsible intake of alcohol or drugs, such as “beer pong” are not allowed in residence.
ALCOHOL & OTHER SUBSTANCES

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Do you think it’s okay to drink alcohol or be intoxicated in your residence unit?

- How would you describe your drinking and drug consumption habits?

MYTH

Maybe if I ignore a problem, it will magically go away by itself.

REALITY

Roommate conflicts do not just go away by themselves, you need to proactively work at solving them.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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We highly recommend that you set up an initial meeting and go through this guide and then an ongoing roommate meeting every other week to have chat with your roommate(s). This is booked time in your agenda will be reserved for addressing some house related topics. We recommend that even if you have nothing to discuss about your home, utilize that time to connect with your roommate and get to know them a little more each time. Here are some suggested topics and questions for your regular roommate meetings:
DISCUSSING ISSUES & CONFLICT

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How do you react to issues and/or conflict?
- If there are issues or conflict, how would you like that to be communicated to you?
- What are your preferred conflict resolution techniques?
- Check in with your roommate: how are things going at school and their personal life?
- Is there a need to review some items agreed upon in the roommate agreement?
- What is going well in the cohabitation?
- Is the time of this meeting still good or do we need to review it?

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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We hereby agree to the following shared expectations, and we agree these expectations will pertain equally to all roommates. Important for all roommates to remember:

• Keep communicating: Your agreements can always be modified.
• If you feel uncomfortable about something let your roommates know. Don’t assume they will know.
• Try to find a mutually acceptable compromise when you don’t see eye-to-eye.
• Understanding and consideration are the key points to keep in mind.

Safety and Security:

Belongings and common areas:

Cleaning:

Sleep and Study:

Noise:

Guests and visitors:

| Name: ___________________________ | Signature: ___________________________ |
| Name: ___________________________ | Signature: ___________________________ |
| Name: ___________________________ | Signature: ___________________________ |
| Name: ___________________________ | Signature: ___________________________ |
| Name: ___________________________ | Signature: ___________________________ |
CONFLICT WITH ROOMMATE(S)

MYTH
Texting and/or writing notes is a great communication tool when it comes to conflict.

REALITY
In person, face to face conversations is ideal when trying to discuss issues and conflicts.

You and your roommate(s) disagree about something?
CONFLICT WITH ROOMMATE(S)

Step by Step process

- Speak with your roommate and address the issue or conflict. Speak face to face (not by text, online or handwritten notes) and work together at resolving the issue.

- If you haven’t already done so, review the Shared Living Guide and complete the Roommate Agreement with your roommate(s).

- If the issue is not resolved or if you are unable to complete the roommate agreement with your roommate(s), speak with your C.A. (Community Advisor) or P.S. (Peer Support) about the situation.

- The C.A. (Community Advisor) or P.S. (Peer Support) can:
  
  Listen to you and offer guidance on how to resolve the issue yourself Help you and your roommates complete the first version of your roommate agreement Facilitate a mediation by reviewing the existing roommate agreement and what didn't work

- Individual meetings will be conducted with every roommate before the mediation in order to give everyone a chance to explain their perspectives.

- All roommates are required to show up to the mediation.

- Roommates are required to live with the decided arrangement outlined in the Roommate Agreement for a minimum of 2 weeks.

- After 2 weeks, either roommate can contact their C.A. or P.S. to report if the arrangement isn't working.

- The Residence Life Coordinator might step in at any time to assess the situation and guide you and your roommates for alternative solutions.

- Room changes are based on availability, level of severity and at the sole discretion of the Residence Life team. There is a $50 admin fee for a room change. See room change section for details.