



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA SHARED LIVING GUIDE

Your guide to living with roommates and within a community.



uOttawa



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The University of Ottawa’s Shared Living Guide is inspired by and adapted from the University of British Columbia’s “Shared Living Guide: Your guide to living with roommates”.



Important information

For reference purposes, please take note and keep this information on hand.

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

My Community Advisor (C.A.) or Peer Support (P.S.) live in room

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



Introduction to the Shared living guide

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 | • Sleep | • Cleanliness | • Safety |
| • Security | • Expectations | • Guests | • Boundaries |
| • Substances | • Understanding | • Communication | • Conflict |
| • Values | • Noise | • Study | • Agreement |



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 key 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.

Ultimately, the most successful roommate relationships are based on a shared commitment to engage in a respectful, active listening and honest, intentional dialogue.

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 term begins.

October & November

With half a term 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 term 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 term.



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.





How to use this guide

Designed to be a self-lead discussion and reflection guide, going through the different sections and questions in this guide should help create a great shared living environment.

- **Discussion and reflection questions:** use them to get to know yourself and your roommate(s) better.
- **Notes:** use these sections 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.
- **Cleaning schedule:** Fill-in the sample provided on page 15 can help establish equitable and clear expectations for the unit.
- **Conflict and issues management:** If conflict does arise, follow our mediation process on page 22 to navigate the situation and find a solution.
- **Roommate Agreement:** Fill-out the form on page 23, 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 to update the expectations within your unit.



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

These values are shared by Residence Life at the University of Ottawa.

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". 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.





Get to know your roommate(s)

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.

Discussion and reflection questions

- Where do you call home?
- What's your major?
- Why did you choose uOttawa?
- What are your favorite things to do?

Activities to do

- Have lunch
- Take a walk
- Attend an event together



MYTH: Roommates are meant to be best friends and hang out all the time.



REALITY: If you are very lucky, you may become friends with your roommate. However, most of the time, a roommate is just someone you cohabitate with.



Safety and security

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 uOttawa safety app SecurUO to receive emergency alerts on your mobile device. It also contains a wealth of other safety and emergency information, along with some handy tools.

For safety and security purposes, please take note and keep the following information on hand.

uOttawa Protection Services Website: uottawa.ca/protection/en Available at any time, day or night (24 hours/7 days) Emergency line: 613-562-5411 Non-emergency number: 613-562-5499	Resident Safety Ambassadors for Thompson, Henderson, Leblanc & Mann Available 8 p.m. – 4 a.m. daily 613-799-4795
Resident Safety Ambassadors for 90U, Stanton & Marchand Residences Available 8 p.m. – 4 a.m. daily 613-301-4806	Resident Safety Ambassadors for Rideau, Friel, Annex, Hyman-Soloway Available 8 p.m. – 4 a.m. daily 613-799-4953
	Residence life team Available 8 p.m. – 7 a.m. daily
Phone number for the residence Community Advisor (CA) on duty, for my residence	



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.



Discussion and reflection questions

- 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 roommates if you are not comfortable with a particular guest being in your unit?
- Have you checked in with your roommate(s) lately, especially if you haven't seen them recently?

Notes



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



REALITY: Your behavior could cause harm even if that was not your intention.



Belongings and shared space

It is important to talk about expectations, 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.

Discussion and reflection questions

- How will the unit living room 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?

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.



Cleaning

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 and post it in a common place in the unit for easy reference. Use the cleaning tasks sample from page 14 to guide you and fill-in the cleaning schedule on page 15.

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 or other 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.



Discussion and reflection questions

- 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?

Notes



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.



Cleaning tasks sample

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 approved cleaners
- Disinfect sink, faucet, and handles
- Clean exterior of fridge, counters and handles in kitchen area

SURFACES

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

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

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

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

Suggested cleaning supplies list

- Glass cleaner
- Bathroom cleaner
- Toilet bowl brush
- Multi-purpose degreaser (for stove + counter tops)
- Handheld broom + dustpan
- 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 on the “Roommate and shared living” page, under the Tools and resources section. Fill-in this schedule and post it in a common place in the unit for easy reference.

CLEANING SCHEDULE					
Roomate(s) Name(s)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
	Kitchen	Bathroom	Surfaces	Garbage	Flooring
	Flooring	Kitchen	Bathroom	Surfaces	Garbage
	Garbage	Flooring	Kitchen	Bathroom	Surfaces
	Surfaces	Garbage	Flooring	Kitchen	Bathroom
	Bathroom	Surfaces	Garbage	Flooring	Kitchen

Notes



Noise and quiet hours

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 (Monday to Friday from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.; Saturday until 9 a.m. and Sundays until 12 p.m.). 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.





Discussion and reflection questions regarding daytime noise

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

Discussion and reflection questions regarding evening noise

- What limits will you have on volume from the 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?

Notes



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.



Sleep and Study

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.

Discussion and reflection questions

- 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?

Notes



Guests and visitors

Having guests visit your unit is a privilege that comes with responsibility.

1. First, ensure all your roommates are comfortable with the people who are entering your shared unit.
2. Remember that you are responsible for the actions of your guests.
3. You must ensure they are familiar with and adhere to the Residence Standards.

Guests = friends or intimate partners

Discussion and reflection questions

- 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?

Notes



MYTH: People must bend to my preferences; I should not have to compromise.



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



Alcohol, drugs and other substances

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.

Residents are prohibited from using, possessing, selling, or distributing drugs or controlled/prohibited substances in residences. You are also prohibited from smoking or burning any substance in residence, including but not limited to cigarettes/tobacco, cannabis, vaporizers, e-cigarettes, incense.

Discussion and reflection questions

- Do you think it's okay to drink alcohol or be intoxicated in your residence unit?
- How would you describe your drinking, drug consumption and other substances use habits?

Notes



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.



Resolving issues and conflicts

We highly recommend that you set up a regular day and time 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:

- 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?

Notes



MYTH: I shouldn't have to communicate my needs and what bothers me, it should be obvious.



REALITY: Nobody is a mind reader. Unless clearly communicated, you cannot expect someone to know what you want / need / feel.



Follow this step-by-step process for conflict resolution

- 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. or P.S. 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 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 an admin fee for a room change. See room change section in your residence agreement contract for details.



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.



Roommate Agreement

Date:

YEAR	MONTH	DAY	

Room and Unit #: _____

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

All roommates must sign this agreement.

Name: _____
Name: _____
Name: _____
Name: _____
Name: _____

Signature: _____
Signature: _____
Signature: _____
Signature: _____
Signature: _____

HOUSING AND RESIDENCE LIFE



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