

Choosing Housemates

Before Looking for Housing

The process of looking for off-campus housing can be stressful. One of the most difficult tasks in finding a home is deciding who you would like to live with. Ask yourself the questions below making commitments to live with specific friends.

Define Your Limits and Preferences Beforehand

- How much rent can you afford to pay?
- Are you willing to share a bedroom?
- Are you willing to share a bathroom? With how many people?
- Do you want to live with people of the same sex or in a co-ed household?
- Will you supply furniture, utensils, etc. that can be shared?
- Do you walk, bike, ride the bus, or drive to school? Do you need to be close to a bus stop? Do you need parking?

Living with Others

Even the most ideal property can be miserable to live in if shared with someone you find difficult. Seriously consider the following factors that influence the success of sharing responsibility and personal space, even with a long-time friend:

- Noise. Do you need peace and quiet to study? Do they?
- Cleanliness. Are their habits going to conflict with yours?
- Who are their closest friends and significant other? Perhaps the potential roommate comes as a package deal. Who else will be spending time in your home? Do you enjoy their company? Do you feel safe around them?
- Schedules. When will you be home? When will they?
- Responsibility. Can you trust them to pay their portion of the utilities every month and not stick you with the bill?
- Major personality conflicts. Can you handle living with them 24/7?
- Do they respect you, your privacy, and your belongings?
- How well do you know them? Did you only meet once? Are you being pressured to live with your friend's friend who you hardly know?
- There is a big difference between being neighbors and being housemates. Will you be able to share space with them?

Joining an Existing Household:

If you are seeking to be a new addition to an existing household, you'll want to ask even more questions. Invest more time than a quick tour of the place and five minutes of introduction to increase your odds of making an accurate assessment. Make sure to meet everyone, and perhaps see the place twice, before making the final decision.

After the initial rush and awkwardness of the first meeting wears off, your observations of them and presentation of yourself will be more reliable. When dazzled by someone you immediately like you're more likely to soft-pedal your questions and a lot of crucial information can fall through the cracks. Listen to your gut instincts while you're interviewing; they are often right. Write down your observations so you can reevaluate them when you will be thinking more objectively.

Questions they may ask you:

- What is your schedule like? What are typical hours you study work and sleep?
- How much time do you spend at home?
- What are your personal habits regarding food, cleanliness, noise, smoking and alcohol use?
- How much privacy do you need?
- How often do you have visitors- overnight guests, group meetings, friends and relatives?
- What do you do in your spare time and for recreation or relaxation? What kind of music or TV do you enjoy, how often and how loud?

Questions you may want to ask them:

Remember, you are also interviewing them! Don't be afraid to ask them the questions above, as well as the following:

- Is there a principle tenant? Who signed the rental agreement? Will you sign the rental agreement? Is it a lease or month-to-month? Does the landlord know you are moving in? How will your security deposit be handled (go to landlord or previous tenant)?
- To whom do you pay the rent- landlord or principal tenant? How are utility bills paid?
- Who would you be writing checks out to for rent and utilities?
- Do they use a Housemate Agreement? Are they willing to use one?
- What are the house rules? How are household decisions made? How is conflict resolved?
- How do you pay for shared items such as toilet paper and dish soap?
- Is cooking done collectively or independently? How are housekeeping chores divided?
- How did they find themselves with a vacancy?