Living with others

Sharing a house with friends can be a great experience and give you the chance to live with like-minded people in a fun environment. For many, it’s the first experience of being fully independent and will give you the chance to make decisions about where and how you live. This can be an exciting time but it can pose a number of questions as you will be required to make decisions and compromises for the benefit of the whole house.

It is extremely common to have concerns within the house from time to time when living with others and in most cases these can be resolved quickly and easily by simply working together. However, there might be occasions when you may not be able to find a simple resolution and the following advice could help you to come to an agreement within the house or to find a compromise that suits everyone.

Planning ahead is a great way to reduce the chances of issues further down the line. When you move in it is a good idea to establish who has the responsibility for the essential tasks in the house and to make sure that everyone is happy with their role. For example, who will be responsible for paying the TV Licence or water bill, and who will be the main contact with the landlord or agent to resolve any maintenance issues? It’s also a good idea to think about a cleaning rota for the communal areas so that everyone contributes to keeping the house tidy. And what about the general household expenses such as cleaning products or toilet rolls, decide who is going to pay for them or set up a joint kitty to cover the cost for everyone.

It’s important to think ahead to the holidays. Will one housemate be staying in the property and will they be expected to pay the bills on their own during this time or will these continue to be divided up?

Difficulties in the house can occur as a result of all kinds of issues and most frequently include bill payments, relationship break-ups, cleaning standards, a housemate failing and having to move out, noise levels or living patterns.

It should be possible to resolve most of these by having an open and honest discussion, especially if you have chosen to live with like-minded people. Some tips to remember when talking with housemates include:

- Arrange a mutually convenient time to meet that also has a defined end so that it doesn’t drag on for hours
- Stick to the point, don’t waffle or deviate from the main reason you are meeting
- Avoid accusations such as “you never…”
- Let each other talk, don’t interrupt, make sure everyone has the opportunity to get involved or give their opinion
- Be reasonable with expectations of each other
- Understand that you may not solve everything at once
- Ask one person to summarise the outcome at the end of the meeting so that everyone is clear about what has been discussed
- If you find it difficult to have your say, suggest that only the person holding a wooden spoon, for example, can talk. The spoon is then passed around in turn to give everyone the opportunity to contribute while others listen.


General Advice Team – Living with Others

**Communication** is key in helping to resolve disputes so remember to clearly state the facts and be fair with your requests. It may be necessary to negotiate, or find a middle ground that everyone can agree upon. Remember that the solution you suggest may not be suitable for everyone so rather than giving up, ask for their ideas or counterproposal and find a solution that works.

It can be useful to share your feelings with others so they know how a certain situation is impacting upon you. However, it is important to convey this in a way that others will understand and to avoid an argument so remember to state the facts first and then follow this up by how it makes you feel.

**Occasionally** depending on the nature of your concern it may not be possible to resolve your concerns yourself and you will need to talk directly with the landlord, letting agent or Student Union Home-Let Team. For example, a maintenance issue that has not been addressed by your landlord despite direct contact can be taken up with the letting agent who may be able to offer assistance.

At other times it may be necessary to talk to a General Adviser in the Student Support Centre who will be able to offer advice and guidance on managing your concerns. In exceptional circumstances Advisers will be able to offer a mediation meeting to help all housemates concerned to reach an amicable agreement.

**Living** with others can pose its challenges and it is important to be considerate to those that you are sharing with. The following tips can help to maintain a good relationship with your housemates:

- Don’t leave post-it notes for each other! If you have something to say, talk to your housemates directly rather than leaving a note
- Be a good listener, support each other by talking openly and hopefully they will do the same in return
- Respect each other’s privacy, even though you share a house at times we all need some privacy
- Don’t “borrow” your housemates belongings without their permission, and even when you do, make sure you look after it
- Leave the bathroom and kitchen as you would expect to find it! Don’t leave dirty plates in the sink or hair in the plughole, it’s always worse when it’s someone else’s
- If you share a bathroom remember that others have to get ready in the morning too so don’t take too long
- Let you housemates know if you have friends coming over so they don’t come home to an unexpected crowd
- Earphones were made for a reason, if others are sleeping or trying to work try not to disturb them and use earphones to listen to music or movies instead
- Housemates aren’t mind readers, so make sure you are clear about the boundaries by saying so, this can help to avoid disagreements later on
- Be honest
- And always remember that you should behave with others as you would want them to behave with you