

# Roommate Starter Kit

## *Your Guide to Being a Better Roommate!!*

Welcome to Residence! A major part of university is adjusting to the community living situation. It may be the first time you have lived away from home with anyone other than your family. It can be a scary feeling when you first move into residence and realize that you know little or nothing about your roommate/housemate or floormates. Living with a roommate and even just living within the close confines of residence is a great experience but not without the chance for conflicts to occur. This pamphlet is designed to give you and your roommate some guidance on different issues that may be of interest to you in the upcoming year.



### *Rights and Responsibilities*

A healthy residence community begins with healthy roommate/housemate and floormate relationships. Everyone deserves respect and everyone has the right to:

- Be free from intimidation & harassment
- Access the space freely
- Sleep, study, and socialize without interference
- Expect that Residence Community Guiding Principles will be adhered to
- Personal privacy
- To be treated with consideration
- Reside in a clean space

As much as any of us have rights we also have certain responsibilities if we hope to maintain successful relationships within the residence community. Some of these responsibilities include:

- Treating people as you would like to be treated
- Engaging in honest discussion with your roommate
- Working to compromise

**Brock**  
Both Sides of the Brain

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## Getting to Know Each Other

Asking questions about each other is an excellent way for roommates to get acquainted. The things that can be important to find out are sometimes the things people overlook or don't think to ask at first. Breaking the ice and covering some of these basics can go a long way to helping you and your roommate adjust to each other. Following are some things you may want to ask.

### Background Questions

- Where are you from?
- Why did you choose Brock?
- What will you be studying?
- What hobbies/interests do you have?



### Lifestyle Questions

- What temperature do you like the room to be?
- How often should we clean and who should do what?
- How do you define "clean?"
- What kind of music? How loud?
- Can we use each other's stuff? If so, what can we use and is anything off-limits?
- How do we handle guests?
- How much personal time do you like?
- How will I know when you need some space?



## Communication Questions

- How will we resolve conflict?
- How do you behave when under stress?
- What are your pet peeves?
- How do you approach people when they're annoying you?
- What's the best way to approach you if I have a concern to raise?

## Room Arrangement Questions

- Will we move the furniture?
- Who will sleep where?
- How will we decorate?
- Who's stuff should go where?
- What sleeping habits do you have? Are you an early-riser or a late-sleeper?

## Roommate Conflict

Inevitably there will be some conflict between roommates over the year. The key to successful relationships in the residence community is to identify and address the trouble before it escalates.



### Identifying Conflict

Telltale signs of roommate conflict include:

- The "silent treatment"
- Spending less time in the room when the other is home
- Less considerate of other's needs
- Lack of interest in the other
- Doesn't communicate messages to the other roommate
- Doesn't indicate when he/she will be gone for a while

# Addressing Roommate Conflicts

If you sense trouble between you and your roommate, help is available! The following information can help you make the right decisions toward solving your roommate conflict.

## *Conflict Arises*

- Speak to your Don. He/She can listen, perhaps help you identify issues, give you tips about how to approach your roommate in a positive way

## *Talk to Your Roommate*

Remember it might be difficult to discuss potentially sensitive issues. If you ever hope to live peacefully in your space with your roommate, it's necessary!

- Find a mutually convenient time to talk. Effective communication takes time and can be hampered if other priorities interfere.
- Using ideas generated with your Don, address the concern you have and how it makes you feel.
- Listen and be open to hear feedback about your own behaviour.
- Work together to discuss potential solutions.

If your conflict is not resolved, you can see your Don again. He or she may conduct a mediation wherein issues can be discussed while a neutral third-party moderates. Your Don will encourage good communication skills, ask clarifying questions, and help to relieve tension. Also, your Don will follow-up to see how things are going with you and your roommate.

## *Room Switch Policy*

We endeavour to help students communicate effectively with their roommates not only to ensure healthy community relations but also to help students learn to address problems in a mature and effective way.

On occasion, there may be a roommate problem that cannot be solved despite students having gone through appropriate channels. The Department of Residences has a room switch policy outlined at [www.brocku.ca/residence](http://www.brocku.ca/residence). Students considering a room change should read this policy and be aware of what is required before a move will be granted.

Even the closest of roommates can get on each other's nerves once in a while. When you need your own space, consider some of the following ideas:

- Study elsewhere
- Explore volunteer opportunities
- Visit friends outside of your residence
- Go to a movie or a concert
- Go to the gym
- Take a weekend trip somewhere
- Explore Niagara

*We hope this has been a helpful starting point for you and your roommate. Good luck and welcome to residence!*

