



# HOUSING & RESIDENCE LIFE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PEMBROKE

## Roommate Success Guide

### Philosophy

Being a roommate comes with many responsibilities, and the staff in the Office of Housing and Residence Life believes that the experiences shared through being a roommate are valuable and essential to a student's college education and development.

Room changes are permitted for students if and when roommates are having adjustment problems and for other special circumstances. Prior to a room change being approved, students are expected to have made a good faith effort toward resolving the roommate situation. This includes discussing the situation with the R.A. or professional staff member, and completing a roommate conference if requested. Four basic criteria must be met for a change to occur:

1. Student(s) involved have attempted to resolve roommate situation.
2. Vacant space is available.
3. Students affected have consented to the change.
4. The Office of Housing and Residence Life has approved the change.

### Communicating With Your Roommates

Most roommate conflicts are the result of miscommunication or, in some cases, a total lack of communication. If you can communicate effectively, it will be much easier to develop a comfortable living environment for yourself and your roommates.

These tips should help you communicate in a healthy way with your roommate:

- Talk to your roommate directly when something is bothering you. Don't discuss it behind their back because this can cause a breakdown in trust between you.
- Be direct. Be clear about what is bothering you. If you don't tell your roommate that there is a problem they won't be able to do anything about it.

- Remember that communication works two ways: talking and listening. Neither one is effective without the other.
- If you create a win-win situation, then the conflict is more likely to be resolved. Evaluate the needs of both sides before a solution is proposed, and make sure the solution is acceptable to both parties.
- Respect each other's differences. Everyone has different values, lifestyles, expectations, and communication styles. Get to know each other and establish common ground. It is easier to solve a problem with a friend than a stranger.

If you are upset with your roommate, chances are that they are upset with you as well. Being involved in a dialogue means that you need to be able to listen and give everyone a chance to speak. Criticism is bound to happen and your natural reaction is going to be to criticize back, but that is only going to compound the problem. Learning to accept criticism is going to help you communicate and live with your roommate. If you both find that you are approaching the limit and things are not being resolved, agree to take some time away from the discussion to give you each time to process what is going on. This will also give you each time to develop feedback that is not going to be hurtful and won't be fueled by anger.

## **Roommate Conflicts: Confrontation, Communication, Mediation**

Living with roommates isn't always easy. Sharing a living space may be stressful, and conflicts may arise. Sometimes situations that work at the beginning of the year become more difficult as the year goes on; remember that you and your roommate will be constantly growing and changing in your time at UNC Pembroke. It is perfectly normal to have roommate conflicts. In fact, there is a great deal to be learned from handling a difficult situation maturely, respectfully, and creatively.

### **Confronting Your Roommate**

Communication sometimes breaks down and you may have to confront your roommate with an issue that one of you has with the other. If this happens then it is helpful to have some idea how you are going to go about it.

#### **How to address the issue:**

- Approach your roommate in private.
- Confirm that this is a good time for both of you to talk. If one of you feels rushed or blindsided they will be less able to communicate effectively.
- Be direct. Discuss the issue with regard to behaviors rather than personality traits. This tactic is less likely to put your roommate on the defensive.
- Be patient. Listen to your roommate and remember that there are two sides to every story.

- Each person should be given a chance to present what they feel the problem really is.
- Remember that a solution will probably involve each person giving something and getting something. The solution may not be your ideal scenario, but it should be an improvement on the current state of things.

Roommates are encouraged to have continuing discussions in regards to their needs and expectations for the space they share.

## **Roommate Mediations**

In difficult discussions, such as roommate conflicts, it is very helpful to have an unbiased third party to help mediate the discussion. Our Resident Advisors are trained mediators, with good experience helping roommates come up with solutions to their conflicts. If you find that you and your roommate are having difficulty resolving your conflict, you should definitely approach your RA to arrange mediation.

### **How Mediations Work:**

- Contact your RA, either by email or in person, to explain the situation and to request a mediation.
- Your RA will contact all roommates to find a time that works best for everyone. It is very important that you allow enough time for each person to express themselves and to come up with a solution.
- Even if you are the person who contacts the RA, remember that they have a responsibility to the well being of all of their residents. Your RA will give each person a chance to be heard, and they will encourage a solution that is beneficial to all parties.
- Remember, although the RA is a trained mediator, they are not a magician. Some roommate conflicts require a number of mediations before they find a solution. In other cases, you may find that the situation is not working even after you have all made an honest attempt at mediation. In those cases, and only in those cases, a room change may be the best answer.

Below are the steps that the Residence Life Staff will use when assisting residents in a discussion regarding roommate compromises and expectations during the Roommate Mediation.

## **Roommate Mediation Steps**

Despite the tensions that may be present, it is never too late to sit down with all roommates and discuss concerns. Nearly all roommate issues are because of poor communication and poorly conveyed expectations. Set up a time when all roommates can be present, and discuss the things that are causing tension. Let your R.A. know

about the situation, and invite them to be a mediator, if you wish it. Before you start, set up these ground rules:

- Use "I" statements; take responsibility.
- Only one person talks at a time.
- Voices should remain calm and low.
- Maintain eye contact with each other. You may need to develop trust.
- People should only speak about relevant facts. No innuendo or character defamation should occur.
- Address specific behaviors; do not generalize.

After ground rules have been established, the mediation process begins. Each person should make a brief opening statement to define the issues as he or she understands them. Define the issues that need further discussion and negotiation. Each person will be reminded to speak in specifics. The final step of the process will be developing a Roommate Agreement. This agreement should detail the specific responsibilities of all parties in writing and should also include the following:

- It should provide a framework for carrying out the plan.
- It should define how to ensure that all parties are following through.
- It should provide alternative ways of handling the dispute if it should continue.
- The final plan should be acceptable and agreed upon by all parties. If so, it should be signed, and distributed.

## **How to Deal With Continuing Conflict**

The Office of Housing and Residence Life firmly believes that if these steps are taken and adhered to, the majority of roommate relationships can be repaired and blossom further. However, in the case that these attempts do not alleviate the situation, roommates should re-inform their R.A. about the situation. The R.A. and Community Director will decide what further steps to take.

## **Room Change Process**

If your attempt to reconcile your differences are not successful, then you should follow the steps detailed below to complete a room change process:

1. Community Director will notify the Housing Coordinator in the Office of Housing and Residence Life to request a room change for the identified Resident.
2. Resident will go to the Office of Housing & Residence Life located in the Belk Hall, Suite 119 to obtain a Room Change Request form.
3. Resident will then be authorized to change room and will be given a new room assignment and the key to their new assignment.

4. Once authorized, the resident must complete the move to their new room assignment and check out of their old room within 48 hours of authorization.
5. Residents must arrange to turn in the check-out form and key from their old room assignment within 48 hours.
6. Check in to your "new" room. Contact an R.A. in your "new" hall/floor to complete this process.

You will have 48 hours from the time the room change process is initiated to complete the move. Remember, you need to turn in your "old room key" and check-out from into the Housing Office. Otherwise, a lock change fee will be charged for keys not returned within 48 hours.

## **Mediation Request Referral Form**

[Mediation Request Referral Form](#)

## **Other Forms**

[Pre-Mediation Handout](#)

[Roommate/Suitemate/Apartment-mate Agreement](#)

[Roommate/Suitemate/Apartment-mate Agreement](#) (PDF)