



Support Advice Centre

Living in Harmony

Want to live in a Happy House? Here are some top tips:

Did you know?

Smaller groups of housemates (3-4) allow for better communication, as well as fewer cliques and fewer visitors.

Housemates

Problems with housemates is one of the single biggest source of housing enquires in The Advice Centre. To help avoid potential housemate problems, we advise the following:

- Take time to get to know the people you are about to enter a binding legal contract with
- Do your lifestyles clash? Do your personalities align? Are they too messy? You can't live with everyone: you may have friends from halls, from your course and from all over the place. It is difficult choosing but be realistic, who will it be easier to live with for a whole year?
- Before you decide to live together, socialise a few times as a group. See what your future housemates are like in different social situations. Are they talkative with you? Do they respond well to challenging situations?
- Think before living with people with whom you have intimate relationship. A year is a long time, and you can't guarantee you will stay in relationships for the length of your contract. Living with an ex is probably a situation you would prefer to avoid...

If the stress of looking for a house is causing problems in the group, what will it be like living together? As long as you have not signed a contract, it is not too late to change housemates. Do not be afraid of speaking out now, rather than suffer later.

What to do when you are in conflict with a housemate?

Here is a simple guide to help you from the University of Southampton Mediation Service:

STEP 1

- Firstly examine your own behaviour honestly. Have you acted reasonably and fairly? Have you become the house nag? Consider how the other person may be feeling.



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- Do not speak on behalf of unspecified others or use 'we' without consulting housemates.
- Do not let things fester. Talk things through with the person involved but before you do consider what sort of compromise would work for you both potentially.
- The right time, place and the right way – Choose your moment. It may be better to speak outside of the house in a more neutral space. Watch your tone of voice – keep it calm, reasonable and civil. Do not point, shout, dominate or demand.
- Remember your way does not necessarily mean it's the right or only way.
- Discuss and refer to the behaviour, rather than the person.

Example: John, something's going on in the house that I'm unhappy about and I'd like to talk it through with you to see if we can sort it out. That OK with you?

If Step 1 has not resolved the issue then:

STEP 2

(Firstly decide whether this is an issue between just you and another housemate or is it something that involves/impacts on everyone)

- If it is just you – ask to talk to them again. Open with a clear statement of the problem behaviours, why they have become an issue for you and what you feel needs to change to make things better and that you would like to hear their side of things. Then stop and listen.
- If it is all of you, convene a house meeting. If it is the behaviour of one person that is causing the problem, check in beforehand if all the others are thinking alike but do not make it a witch hunt. Pick a good spokesperson, state the behaviours that are problematic and why (do not overstate them or exaggerate), the interventions tried to resolve it to date, what you would like to happen and the implications to the house if things do not improve. Then give the person an opportunity to respond and listen to what he/she says. Talk it out.

STEP 3

Has the home situation become toxic and tense? If the problem behaviours still continue despite your best efforts consider talking to the University Mediation Service. Mediation is a FREE and CONFIDENTIAL service and offers you an opportunity to try to resolve any conflict between people who live together. It is a voluntary process where both parties must agree to take part.



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Mediation allows you to have difficult conversations within a safe environment where a trained impartial mediator will facilitate the discussion to help both parties to listen to each other and will support them as they identify areas of commonality and difference.

To find out more, go to: www.southampton.ac.uk/corporateservices/mediation

Contact via Mediation email: mediate@soton.ac.uk or Tel. 02380 597098

Being Good Neighbours

Being a good neighbour is not only virtuous it also can be of benefit for you – who is going to keep an eye on your house when you go home for the Christmas holidays?

As well as studying at University you are also part of a wider community; a street, a neighbourhood and an entire city. To be a part of that community:

- Introduce yourself to your neighbours
- Remind yourself of your contractual obligations regarding noise and any shared areas (most Assured Shorthold Tenancy agreements will have a clause relating to it).
- Find out when the bins are collected <https://www.southampton.gov.uk/bins-recycling/bins/>

If you are suffering from noisy neighbours take appropriate action by contacting Environmental Health <http://www.southampton.gov.uk/environmental-issues/environmental-health/>

Further guidance

For further help on living in harmony, contact the Advice Centre.

- 02380 592 085
- advice@susu.org

You can also visit us in Building 40, Highfield campus. Our opening hours are Monday–Friday 09.00–17.00.

Disclaimer: While care has been taken to ensure that information contained in the Advice Centre publications is true and correct at the time of writing, changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of this information. The Advice Centre and SUSU cannot accept responsibility for any actions taken as a result of advice given in this publication.

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