



### How this guide can help

The following guide provides you with basic information and advice on choosing housemates, living peacefully and resolving conflict. If you would like additional support, you can contact us using the details below.

### The Advice Centre contact details

- **Tel** 023 80 59 2085
- **Email** [advice@susu.org](mailto:advice@susu.org)
- **Website** [susu.org/support](http://susu.org/support)
- **Facebook** The Advice Centre – SUSU

### Wellbeing

If you are concerned about your or a fellow students' wellbeing, you can contact the University's wellbeing team on [studenthub@soton.ac.uk](mailto:studenthub@soton.ac.uk) or by calling 023 80 599 599. They are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### House sharing pitfalls

Problems with housemates are one of the biggest sources of housing enquires in The Advice Centre. Whilst you may be very good friends with each other, moving in and living with someone 24/7 may give rise to some complications.

Different social habits, cleaning, or personal relationships, all may influence how people get along in the house and how easy or difficult living together may be.

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advice and information.*

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## Housemate search – what to look out for?

To help avoid potential housemate problems, we have prepared a few tips:

- 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 about 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 an 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? If you have not signed a contract, it is not too late to change housemates. Do not be afraid to speak out now, rather than suffer later.

## How to resolve a conflict with a housemate

Even when you live together and have good relationships things can sometimes go sour. Different personalities, relationship breakdowns and other issues can all affect the harmony in the house. As most of the contracts that students sign are fixed term and rarely contain 'break-clauses', resolving the conflict may be the only realistic way of avoiding potential contractual or financial issues.

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.



### Step 1

- 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, the right 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. Is 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 the other tenants)

- 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 involves other tenants, 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). State the interventions you have tried to resolve it to date, what you would like to happen and the implications to the household if things do not improve. Then give the person an opportunity to respond and listen to what they say. Talk it out.



### Step 3

#### Get external help - Mediation

If the above steps did not work and the home situation has become toxic and tense despite your best efforts, consider talking to the University Mediation Service.

Mediation is a FREE and CONFIDENTIAL service and offers the 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.

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](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/corporateservices/mediation)

Contact via Mediation email: [mediate@soton.ac.uk](mailto:mediate@soton.ac.uk) or Tel. 02380 597098

#### Being Good Neighbours

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

#### How to ensure you are part of that community

- Introduce yourself to your neighbours
- Speak to the neighbours if you are planning any house parties
- 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 [Link to environmental health](#)



## **SUSU Advice Centre**

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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