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Choosing/Finding a Roommate

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Most of us have seen the movie "Single White Female" and the idea of searching for a roommate can be challenging, scary and stressful. The thing is, you can't afford to live on your own, the idea of staying at home with your parents is just not something you can handle any longer or you're in a new city and rental costs are a little more than what you've bargained for. What to do? The experts at Apartments.com have put together a couple ideas for you to help make this decision a little less intimidating.

Although your roommate might not instill a curfew on you, lock you out of the house if you break it or make you baby-sit, there are still some challenges with living with another person that you will need to overcome. If you're not really a people person, or you really need a lot of privacy, or you have trouble talking through disputes, having a roommate might not be for you. Even if you live with a friend, your roommate's problems may become yours. You'll still need to share responsibilities (cleaning, bills, grocery shopping, etc.) and there may be the times that there's never enough privacy. If you're ready to face the challenges and make a commitment to developing this relationship, you're ready to choose your roommate.

The first thing you'll need to decide is if you'll live with a friend or a stranger. Although the idea of living with your best pal is quite appealing, living together can break the strongest bonds. Are you ready to lose the friend you've known since kindergarten or have you been through enough to know that any obstacle can be worked out? The little things that bother you now about your friend (she's always whining about her boyfriend, he can't go out without creating loud bodily sounds, she has a problem with borrowing things and never giving them back) will only get worse when you're with each other 24/7. Even if you have the most fantastic relationship, there are things that go on behind closed doors that you will become all too privy to. Do you really want to know?

If you're new to a city or you don't have a friend that is ready, or who wants to, move into a new place, finding a "stranger" may be your only option. To avoid the crazy, stalker, moocher, leech type; approach this search in the same way you would approach a new job or finding a college. Ask questions, ask a lot of questions, both to your potential new roomie and to yourself:

- Are you a morning person or a night owl?
- What kind of music do you like?
- Do you party or do you like relaxing down time?
- What kind of people does your roommate hang out with?
- Do you like the same sports teams?
- How do you feel about visitors?
- Are you in a serious relationship? Are they?
- Do you share the same ideas about cleanliness? Are you a pig? Is your roommate neat freak?
- What are your hobbies? (If you play a musical instrument, for example, this information is a need to know for any potential roommate.)
- Do you or your potential roommate have or want pets? And if so, what kind are they? You probably wouldn't want to bunk with an owner of a ferret if you're an owner of a Doberman.

Think also about what you're looking for in a roommate. You shouldn't settle for the first person that shows interest and, on the flip side, you also shouldn't wait for the "perfect" match, it just might never come. Ask yourself the following questions (yes, more questions):

- Do you smoke, if not, are you willing to live with someone who does?
- Are you willing to live with a person of the opposite sex?
- Are you willing to live with a person with an alternative lifestyle?
- What is the age range you're looking for in a roommate?
- Where does your potential roommate work and is there potential for a carpool or rideshare?
- Will your potential roommate have the financial means to pay rent and utilities? This one is imperative, you **MUST** be completely upfront with how much rent will be paid and what utilities are to be split.

Things you should **EXPECT** from a roommate:

- Neatness
- Common courtesy and respect for personal space
- Safe living habits (this means the apartment key doesn't get copied and given out to all his/her friends)
- Timely payment of rent and utilities

Let's be honest here, it would be great if the person you select to live with you becomes a friend, but often, its more of a business relationship. If the friendship doesn't develop, don't be disappointed. As long as your roommate meets the minimum expectations, you're still lucky!

And just how do you go about finding this person? Post notes in local coffee shops? Place an ad in a local paper? Go door to door like an encyclopedia sales person? NO!!! There are many online resources you can easily use to peruse thousands of potential roomies. Basic membership is usually free and you'll be able to not only see photos of candidates, but determine the answers to many of the above questions before you even meet him/her face to face! Our favorite site is Roommates.com. It's quick, easy and free and you can access it right through Apartments.com. Click [1] [HERE](#) to start looking now.

Even though you might think that you've found the perfect person on line, you should still meet him/her in person before you make any commitments. When you do begin to interview potential roomies, have a friend or family member with you, for two reasons. One - for safety. Two - to offer a second objective opinion. If you're in a hurry to find someone, sometimes you'll be more apt to pick the first person that crosses your doorstep. Another opinion should always be welcomed.

The most important thing to keep in mind is to listen to your gut. Your instincts are usually right so stay in tune to them.

This is an exciting time in your life, be prepared, be safe and most importantly, relax and have fun!

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