

Tips for Helping Your Student through a Roommate Conflict

So how can parents help?

- Remember that this is your student's problem to solve, not yours!
- Help your student determine if the problem is just a misunderstanding instead of an intentional dispute.
- Sometimes students just want to vent. Ask if they are asking for your assistance or simply getting some frustration off their chest.
- Your student and her roommate may have completed a roommate agreement. Ask if the roommates created some expectations and if they have reviewed them lately. In the stress of college life, they may have forgotten some of their initial compromises. If they have not worked out an agreement, there are some resources on this site to help them with those conversations.
- Ask if the roommates have talked about their problem—really *talked*. The emails, chats, and text messages that students are used to is probably not going to help them resolve an issue the same way that an honest face-to-face talk will. Encourage your student to approach his roommate directly to work things out and remember that living with someone else requires ongoing communication.
- A successful conflict resolution requires compromise on both roommates' parts. Help your student brainstorm several options for resolution. It will be helpful to go into the negotiation with multiple ideas for a workable compromise. The roommates will have a starting point for conversation and ultimately have more options and better dialogue.
- Remind your student that every conflict has two sides. Encourage her to consider how her roommate might see the situation from a different point of view and even what actions she may have taken to contribute to the problem. (Try not to criticize her, but support her through some self-examination.)
- Remind your student to seek the assistance of his Resident Assistant or Residential Coordinator! Residence Life staff can provide your student some tips for approaching his roommate or mediate the conflict if an initial face-to-face conversation did not solve it. Many students wait to mention an issue until they want to move out. If your student and his roommate are committed to a resolution, Residence Life staff can help ease the process of working through difficulties.
- Encourage your student to whole-heartedly pursue other means of conflict resolution before considering requesting a new room. More often than not, students can successfully work through their roommate problems.