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10 Dos and Don’ts for Living with a Roommate (and not going crazy)

Living with another person for the first time can be intimidating, especially if you’re not used to the concept. Here are 10 tools of the trade from someone who’s maintained the same roommate all four years.

1. Do clean up after yourself.
   No one likes a total slob. Leaving dirty dishes to crust and mold isn’t only disgusting; it’s a health hazard.

2. Don’t assume the entire room is yours.
   Respecting the other person’s space is crucial to living with someone else.

3. Do share responsibilities.
   If you’ve never taken out the trash, vacuumed the floors, dusted or cleaned the bathroom, it’s time for you to get up and do something productive.

4. Don’t lose track of your stuff.
   Nothing kills good vibes like accusing your roommate of stealing a sweater or food, only to discover you actually misplaced the item.

5. Do voice concerns to an RA or dorm supervisor.
   Be direct and concise with your RA or building supervisor. They can often address problems in ways that you can’t.

6. Don’t expect your roommate to go above and beyond.
   There’s a give and take with all relationships, and roommates are no different. If you don’t plan on putting effort into a relationship, don’t be surprised when your roommate neglects to do the same.

7. Do realize that your roommate doesn’t have to be your best friend for it to work.
   You’re not married to your roommate. You’re simply sharing a living space. Fretting over them not understanding a “Mean Girls” reference isn’t worth the hassle.

8. Don’t leave passive-aggressive notes everywhere.
   Leaving “subtle hints” for your roommate to take out the trash won’t work, and neither will ranting on Twitter about how messy their side of the room is. Be an adult and talk to them directly.

9. Do try to understand how the other functions.
   Roomie relationships are like dating, and for some, you actually see your roommate more frequently than your significant other. Get to know their likes and dislikes. You never know what you’ll have in common until you actually talk to them.

10. Don’t freak out.
   Panicking never helps any situation, and hyperventilating over not having the perfect roommate won’t solve those problems.
Student enjoys living at home with parents

BY ANNA LAWSON
NEWS@WKUHERALD.COM

During college, most students spend time away from their parents by living on campus or renting an apartment. However, a select few choose to shack in with their mom and dad for a couple more years.

Cana Herron wanted to take part in the full college experience, which for her included living on campus. However, after living on campus for a year-and-a-half, she decided to move back home with her parents.

“I knew that I wanted to be on campus my first year,” she said. “Going to college you need that independence.”

Herron’s parents agreed. Her mother, Sarah Herron thought it was important for her to be on campus.

“It was important for her to be there and learn how to function on her own in society,” she said. “When you’re the only child you tend to be spoiled, but it’s different when you living with other people who aren’t required to love you and put up with you.”

Her father, David Herron, said he wanted her to be able to think for herself.

“We just thought she needed it for growing up experience, and to make her own decisions,” he said.

Cana Herron was born and raised in Virginia, but when she was in sixth grade her family moved to Louisville. Then when she decided to go to WKU, she brought her family with her. Her mom and dad got a home in Bowling Green, 25 minutes away from WKU. She is currently a second-year senior and has one more year at WKU.

As an only child, Cana said she was very close to her parents. However, she also knew that she wanted to experience living in a dorm.

“Being an only child, my parents were my best friends,” she said. “But we needed to see how I would fare on my own.”

Herron lived in Bemis Lawrence Hall her first year at WKU and then in Rodes-Harlin Hall her sophomore year. She said she liked the convenience of being on campus, but there were also some disadvantages to living in the dorm though.

“I’m a homebody, so I spent a lot of time in my dorm,” she said. “My own personal space is where I’m most comfortable. If my roommate wasn’t there I wouldn’t get social interaction.”

Things changed when, in the middle of Cana’s sophomore year, one of her friends dropped out of school. Herron, along with her parents, noticed she was spending a lot of time at home doing laundry and eating dinner. To save money, they decided it was best for her to move back home.

“I left in the middle of my sophomore year and came back home,” she said. “I had been going home for my mom’s cooking, and I had a room there. It was just easier and cheaper.”

Sarah Herron said this decision was purely financial.

“Her second year she was coming home all the time to eat and then she would sleep over,” she said. “It was like ‘Why are we paying for this?’”

Herron said the transition to living at home again was fairly easy.

“I became a tad lazier,” she said. “I didn’t have to do laundry and it was basically like I had caretakers.”

However, it did prove to be somewhat of an inconvenience.

“Finding a parking spot, and then taking the bus was inconvenient,” she said. “When I lived on campus I could walk to all my classes, walk back, and take a nap.”

She also couldn’t see her friends as much as she had when she was living on campus.

“Unless our schedules matched up to where we could get out of class and hang out then I would just go home and do homework,” she said.

Herron also said she used to be involved with Christian Student Fellowship, but the 25 minute drive to the meetings after she had already driven back and forth from school, were inconvenient.

She said living with her parents doesn’t take away some of the independence that she had when living in the dorm.

“I am not a big party or big social gathering type of person,” she said. “But when I lived on campus, if my roommates wanted to go to Waffle House at 2 a.m. I could go. Now, my parents would be like ‘Where are you going?’” she said, laughing.

Her mother admitted that she can be a bit controlling.

“I might be a little on the controlling side,” she said. “It drives me nuts when she procrastinates. We’re best friends so I know what she has coming up that’s due and I worry for both of us.”
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Plentiful joys found in on-campus housing

Throughout my time at WKU, I have encountered many friends and classmates who have jumped at the chance to move off campus as soon as they were juniors.

But I really don't understand the desire to fly the on-campus coop. It's not that bad.

Sure, having a roommate from hell and those 5 a.m. fire drills can take away from the experience, but all in all, living in a dorm is not a death sentence.

For starters, it's like living in a huge neighborhood condensed into a building. You have the potential to meet so many wickedly awesome and interesting people by spending time in the dorm. I've spent countless hours chatting with people in the lobby or behind the front desk of my dorm simply because I spotted them playing a game of Madden or Magic: The Gathering.

Living on campus also means that you're closer to the action that happens on WKU's campus every day. Whether it is watching a game of pick-up basketball in the Preston Center, sledding down the hill in front of Van Meter Hall in the winter or sitting down on South Lawn to relax, there is always something happening on WKU's campus.

Living on campus also means that parking isn't a big concern, if one at all. Day in and day out, I hear several of my commuter friends complain about the parking problems they encounter. Although I agree that parking at WKU could be handled better, I simply can't empathize with their troubles as I only drive my car a couple of times a week.

Throughout my three-and-a-half years of living on campus, I've seen and experienced so much. I've created so many memories that I'll remember for quite some time. If I had moved off-campus once my junior year began, I would have missed out on so much. It's an experience of my life that I wouldn't trade for the world.

Off-campus housing better for students

Going into college, I was psyched about living in a dorm.

I scoured the WKU Housing and Residence Life website to find out what my concrete cell, excuse me, room in Minton Hall would look like. My Pinterest game was unbelievably on point as I searched the Internet for tips and ideas for how to make my half of the dorm the best it could be.

After a year in Minton and another one in the slightly more luxurious (with a private bathroom!) Bates-Runner Hall, I was ready to end my dorm days.

Sure, it was kind of fun. I had two different, but good roommates. The community in Minton made the transition to college all the better, and the fact that I could wake up five minutes prior to a class starting and still make it on time was incredible.

However, a move to a cozy house apartment (it's an apartment in a house) on College Street has been the best housing decision I've made during my tenure at WKU.

Granted, it has its quirks. For example, the apartment has a staircase that leads to nowhere—but it's quite the conversation piece. The shower's water pressure is lacking. Living across from Hilligans can be...interesting. But hey, it's college!

The good by far outweighs the bad. My two roommates are great, but having a room to myself and being able to close a door is great as well. My horrific, habitual snoring doesn't have to bother anyone anymore. (I am so sorry Jake Pope, my sophomore year roommate who for some reason still lives with me.) I don't have to show anyone my WKU I.D. when I walk in with bags of groceries and make a fool of myself trying not to drop everything. The house isn't too far from campus either, although its location at the very bottom of the Hill has really strengthened my calves.

There's also the fun stuff that comes from having a house. I can have a slow cooker now, and have gotten back into Pinterest to find recipes. If anyone needs a slow cooker vegetarian chili recipe, call me. Decorating has been fun, although the living room might need some HGTV help.

The character you get from an old house downtown is something you can't really find on campus. There's the ugly linoleum floor in the kitchen that I love. The mixture of old, peeling wallpapers scattered throughout the house is fun. Oh, and let's be honest: I love the stairs that lead to nowhere.

Although I had reservations about leaving the safe and secure arms of HRL (not so safe and secure if your power goes out I suppose), I'm thrilled with my decision to live off-campus. Who needs functional stairs anyway?
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The 1355 WKU Kentucky Street apartments, which offer one and two bedroom options for upperclassmen, opened this fall and remained filled throughout the year.

Full-time and approved part-time students who have more than 60 credit hours can lease the apartments, which contain a kitchen, living room and private bedrooms.

Taylorsville senior Chase Thomas has lived in the 1355 WKU Apartments with a friend since December and said he enjoys having his own space.

“It’s a really comfortable, nice place to live, especially if you have roommates who you like,” Thomas said. “And it’s been nice to have my own room and bathroom.”

Thomas said he also enjoys the apartments’ proximity to campus.

“Being close to campus is nice,” he said. “It’s like five minutes away.”

Taylorsville senior Arden Gregory, who has lived in the 1350 WKU Apartments for two semesters, said she likes having her own kitchen for cooking. She said she also enjoys the inclusion of a washer and dryer in her apartment, so she doesn’t have to pay extra to wash clothes or wait for others to finish.

“I’ve enjoyed it,” she said. “It’s a nice alternative.”

Gregory said the apartments include cable and Wi-Fi, and she doesn’t pay for electric and water unless she goes over the set limit, which is $40 per person.

Thomas, who lives in a two-bedroom apartment with a roommate, said he pays a “pretty fair” price.

A one bedroom single-occupancy apartment costs $515 a month and a one bedroom double-occupancy apartment costs $600 a month.

Apartments lease for 11 months and the cost of rent is charged to a student’s university account with tuition and fees. Loans, grants and WKU scholarships can be used to pay rent.

Gregory said she chose to live in the apartments this year because she wanted an option where she could use her scholarship money, which pays entirely for her housing, but have more freedom than at the residence halls.

“I like living there better because there’s more freedom and they don’t close for breaks,” she said.

Thomas said he lived in the Fiji fraternity house last year and then traveled to China to participate in an exchange program last semester.

He said he chose to move into the WKU Apartments for the spring semester because they were the only choice available when he returned.

“I miss the social interaction at my fraternity house,” he said.

Gregory said she previously lived in Minton, Bates-Runner and McLean Halls, and she misses the intimate atmosphere dorm life provided.

“There’s a loss of a sense of community (at the apartments),” she said. “It’s not unlikely to come and go and never interact with another person.”

Gregory said there are certain events, such as an ice cream social, held monthly for the apartment residents, but she has never been able to go.

Gregory shares a two-bedroom apartment with her sister, who will be getting married next year and moving into the WKU Apartments with her spouse.

“I’m really, really glad WKU has these, because it was the only university who didn’t have something like this,” she said. “It’s a really great alternative for students who are married.”

The wait list for the apartments is currently closed and assignments for the 2015-2016 school year will be decided toward the end of March.
ONE-ON-ONE

Living a RA life: Sumra Kanwal

BY ANDREW HENDERSON
LIFE@WKUHERALD.COM

WKU’s resident assistants can be found from the bottom floors of Gilbert Hall all the way to the tip-top of Pearce Ford Tower. RAs, like graduate student Sumra Kanwal, serve as the backbone of WKU’s housing community.

Kanwal is a Pakistani graduate student. She has been a RA in PFT since last semester. Kanwal said she was timid at first being offered the position because it seemed difficult to handle all the associated responsibility.

“I thought it would be really difficult for me being RA, it is not too difficult—it’s just kind of a 24/7 job,” Kanwal said in an email.

Being able to serve as a RA has allowed Kanwal the opportunity to build a community with the people on her floor and in PFT. She cited being a RA as “the best opportunity to be a part of this community and learn new experiences”.

Kanwal also said her identity as an international student was a driving factor in what inspired her to serve as a RA.

“I am an international student so sometimes it’s hard to fit in and be a part of the community,” she said.

Sumra Kanwal, graduate student from Pakistan, serves as a resident assistant for Pearce-Ford Tower. In her two semesters as a RA, Kanwal remembers helping her residents through the little things like homesickness, exams and first-year questions. “I mean all these small, small things are my favorite [parts of being an RA] and memorable for me,” Kanwal said. PHOTO COURTESY OF SUMRA KANWAL

Photo of Sumra Kanwal

Kanwal said many of these new experiences have been memorable to her, and she has difficulty narrowing them down to a one singular memorable experience. She recalled an instance when her residents provided her with comfort when she did poorly on an exam. Another time was when her fellow RAs and colleagues offered solidarity to her to let her know they’re they to help her.

“I mean these small, small things are my favorite and memorable to me,” she said.

To Kanwal, being a RA is a great way to have a positive impact on the lives of your residents. She said that serving as a role model for your residents and being a shoulder to cry on in hard times is important in the role of being a RA.

“It always feels so good to help your residents in their hard times or celebrate their success,” Kanwal said.

Kanwal closed saying she has made really good memories and shares her love for her residents and colleagues, and strongly encourages other students to serve in the capacity of a RA.
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How to design on a dime for dorm living

BY SAMANTHA WRIGHT
LIFE@WKUHERALD.COM

One of the first things people do after they decide what college they’re going to attend, and sometimes even before, is shop for dorm decorations. Whether it’s a rug, a poster or organizational bins, students plan immediately on how to decorate and utilize the small space they’ll be living in for the next nine months.

It’s a bit of shock for most people when they see the 14x11 foot room they’ll be staying in. There are several ways, however, that a student can make their room look nice despite the size.

Alina Zahra, resident assistant and interior designer student, suggests putting the beds on top of the other.

“You can increase space in a small dorm room by bunking beds,” she said. “This gives more room for extras, such as a small couch.”

She also suggests using favored color schemes for pillowcases and comforters. A rug with a color or design that stands out adds to a room. A rug also provides a soft spot for students to land on as they roll out of the bed in the morning, instead of cold, hard tile.

Zahra suggested coordinating with the roommate beforehand. Scott County freshman Emilee Benton did just that.

“We went shopping together before we moved in,” she said. “This gives more lived-in. Such items can also help prevent homesickness. Even a poster of a favorite movie can make a concrete wall seem more comforting.

“Bring personal things to make it feel homey,” she said. “I brought some pictures from home.”

Creech and Benton advised against bringing too much stuff, which can clutter the room, making it feel messy and taking up valuable space.

They recommend that students focus on bringing seasonal items that can be swapped out throughout the year. Anything brought in will have to be taken home, however, and wall space is limited, so that large painting from IKEA might not be the best idea.

Some other space-saving ideas include hanging a mirror on the back of the door, or raising the bed as high as possible, so that bins and other items can be stored underneath. Items can also be stacked on top of closets.

Plants can add color and life within those white, drab walls. Succulents are especially nice, since these hardy plants don’t require much water, just sunlight. Electric tea lights in mason jars can add some soft light for when a roommate wants to sleep, but the other isn’t ready. Since these lights don’t have an actual flame, they comply with Housing and Residence Life regulations.

Some retail stores, such as Target, provide lists of the most important items to bring, which can help with deciding what to take and what to leave behind. Other stores might hang pictures with unique ideas of how to decorate dorm rooms.

Several sites, such as Pinterest and Instagram, can help provide inspiration and helpful tips. Some of these suggestions include the use of a shoe organizer on the back of the door to hold snacks, or a shower caddy hung on the wall to hold school supplies. Students should always check with HRL to make sure what’s appropriate to use, but plenty of ideas that comply with regulations can be found online.

So, when students face their small living quarters, they shouldn’t panic. There are plenty of ways to decorate and furnish their room to make it seem cozy and inviting, while still showcasing their sense of style.
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On-campus housing requirements need to change

BY LASHANA HARNEY
LIFE@WKUHERALD.COM
MARCH 24, 2015

I remember move in day. I was excited—the typical freshman yearning for that taste of freedom and adult-like responsibility. I looked around my dorm room, made my bed and settled in. Two weeks later, I was ready to move out.

Dorm life is not for me. I would much rather have an apartment to go back to after a long day of classes and work, but I can't just yet: I'm an upcoming sophomore.

I just sipped the taste of freedom I yearned for as a dorm resident. We still have dorm policies to abide by, such as visitation policies for guests and quiet hours.

While I understand the need for certain policies, I would much rather take on the responsibility of renting an apartment or house where I have my own room, my own bathroom and for the most part, my own rules.

College is meant to give students more freedom and responsibility, but for the first two years students are dictated where to live and required to stay on campus freshman and sophomore years. This takes away from the concept of freedom.

However, there are some exemptions to this rule. According to WKU’s Housing Policy and Exemptions web page, the following can bypass living on campus for the first two years:

- Veterans of military service (181 days or more)
- Married
- The primary caregiver for dependent children
- 21 years of age or older
- Members of fraternities or sororities living in the chapter house (sophomores only)
- Commuting from their parents’ permanent home and primary residence (50 miles or less).

Most students don't fit the criteria and are stuck on campus. The dorms may be a step up from living with parents, but the dorms are anything but exemplary.

Not to mention, if a student wants to pursue financial freedom and responsibility, we're punished for it. If a student chooses to ignore the exemptions and decides to live off-campus anyway, they must pay a $1,000 per semester fee. A student can request special circumstances in order to be exempted from the policy, but average, ordinary folk, like me, don't tend to have a reason other than not liking living on campus.

Forcing students to live on campus may be a ploy to squeeze every penny out of students and plunge us further into a debt or a way to increase retention rates, but whatever the case may be, some students aren't happy with the policy.

It needs to change, and we need to be given the option to live off campus all four years. Or, if the university is intent on imprisoning students, perhaps it should consider making our housing arrangements better. We have dorms with mold, multiple instances of flooding and two-day long electrical outages. I'm forking out around $4,000 to live here—at least give us quality.

Another option is to follow the example of the Ohio State University. According to the school's newspaper “The Lantern,” the university is introducing a pilot program to require sophomores to live on campus, but with a potential reprieve. In the article, “Ohio State on-campus living requirement elicits mixed responses,” it states that “Students who complete the pilot program will be eligible to receive a $2,000 fellowship to use toward educational opportunities.” I might be a little less bitter if I received a stipend to accommodate for the overheated dorm rooms and germ-ridden community bathrooms.

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