

Roommate Agreement: Topics for Living Together Well



Welcome to Pres House! Whether you and your roommates just met or are good friends,* you'll likely find that sharing an apartment brings surprises. This document is meant to help you plan for possible issues that can arise as you navigate your shared space and the interpersonal relationships within it. It provides an opportunity to discuss what you can do to live well together and have a great year.

New residents may find this tool very helpful, especially if this is a new type of living situation for you! **Returning residents**, the start of a new year is a great opportunity to check in about your living habits.

Conversations in the first month will lay the foundation for a smooth year. Actually sitting down to do this worksheet may feel awkward—trust us, it's much better to talk through these things early on before small irritations become big problems! Ideally, you can anticipate possible conflicts and prevent them altogether.

That said, it's normal to have unexpected sticking points. Resolution takes effort: have conversations that are direct but kind. Ask and request, rather than accusing. Listen. Assume best intentions from and towards each other. Take responsibility for your own actions as well as your own needs. And make it a habit to “nip it in the bud”: address issues early, before they can grow. You can refer back to these agreements throughout the year, revising if necessary, to help resolve issues.

**Yes—roommate agreements are extra important if you are already friends, as your friendship may lead you to overlook issues and avoid conflict longer, and/or feel more hurt if things go wrong.*

This document is not a legally binding contract, and in no way supersedes your lease. It is not required; it is a suggested tool developed by Pres House staff to support your well-being. It is highly recommended and has proven valuable to many residents.

For 2020, topics specific to the COVID-19 pandemic have been added. Given the close quarters of shared apartments, it is more important than ever for roommates to communicate well, and agree upon clear, firm guidelines to help keep everyone safe and healthy.

COMPLETE IT WITH YOUR ROOMMATES, EARN FREE PIZZA & ICE CREAM:

In lieu of our usual Welcome (Back) Pizza and Ice Cream Party, **any apartment group that completes this document together and provides one copy of your completed agreement to Pres House staff no later than Friday September 11th will be treated to free pizza and ice cream!**

You may handwrite your answers on this sheet and submit a scan or photocopy. You can also download an electronic version from our Current Residents webpage: <https://phapts.com/current-residents/>. You may also type your answers separately, making sure to include apartment number, date, and signatures. Please submit one copy per apartment. Deliver copies to Becca Bedell, Coordinator of Residential Programs, 2nd floor office, rebecca@preshouse.org.

Individual and Shared Needs:

For the topics below, start by letting each person voice their own preference (aloud or in writing if desired). Then, having identified where your needs do and don't line up, write group agreements that strive to fulfill everyone's needs as best you can, coming up with solutions and compromises.

1. **Sleep:** When does each person wake up and go to bed? (*Any exceptions? Exams, job, etc.?*) Do you set alarms that could wake up others? Are you a light sleeper (sensitive to noise, light, movement)? How will you handle issues, like waking or keeping each other up?
2. **Studying:** Where and when does each person usually study? Will the apartment's common area be used primarily for studying, leisure, or both at different times? **COVID: Keep in mind that libraries & unions may not be open at their capacities this year.**
3. **Noise:** What do you do that makes noise? (*Music, instrument practice, TV, games, videos...*) Beyond what came up for #1-2, write agreements for keeping respectful noise levels at home.
4. **Temperature:** What temperature does each person like the apartment to be? Day vs. night? By season? What works for the group as a whole?
5. **Privacy:** Discuss how each person feels about others entering their room (or side of the room). Is it allowed? Under what circumstances? What does it mean if your door is closed?
6. **Possessions:** How do you feel about others using your possessions? (*Always / ask me / never...*) Talk through items that might be questionably shared or private: shampoo and soap, kitchen or entertainment appliances, dishes, furniture... What happens if an item gets damaged?
7. **Food & Kitchen Space:** Are there food items we share collectively? (*Milk, eggs, butter, flour...*) How do we designate kitchen & fridge space for collective vs. individual use? Also consider sharing of any kitchen appliances, utensils, dishes, etc. not addressed in #6.

8. **Purchases:** Who buys items that are shared (possibly toilet paper, cleaning supplies, kitchen items mentioned above, etc.)? Do we share costs? Do we rotate shopping?

 9. **Alcohol and Substance Use:** Do we keep alcohol or drugs around? If so, how will we manage the associated risks? *(Note that smoking--tobacco or marijuana--is not permitted in any apartment and violates your lease agreement. If you smoke on balconies, please use a butt can for disposal.)*

 10. **Safety:** When should our apartment door be locked?

 11. **Cleaning:** Who cleans shared areas (bathrooms, kitchen, living room)? How often? What does “clean” mean? Should we set up a chore chart / schedule? Address possible pet peeves like food on the counter, spills, hair in shower drains, empty toilet paper rolls, etc. *(Note that PH Apts. will bill you for professional cleaning services if the apartment gets too dirty.)*

 12. **What is the best way for us all to communicate?** *(Group chat, weekly meetings, etc...)*
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COVID-19 Health and Safety:

Several of these topics are relevant in a normal year, some are new; all have increased significance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of these questions include information from government health agencies. Of these, only the current Dane County and State of Wisconsin mask orders are mandatory and legally enforceable. CDC recommendations are provided as a suggestion, to help you formulate guidelines that are practical and safe for your group.

13. **Social Distancing in the Apartment:** Are we going to practice social distancing from one another in the apartment? *This may be impossible to do completely, and it is best to assume that some risk is shared among roommates. However, distancing may be worthwhile among roommates taking very different levels of precaution, if someone has a high-risk job, or temporarily after someone is exposed to particularly high risk.*
Or, are we acting as a “family unit,” assuming that germs and exposure risk of each member are passed on to the others by association? If so, are we committed to acting safely (within our abilities) not just for our own health, but the health of our roommates? What does that mean to each of us?

14. **Sanitizing:** How often do we sanitize high-touch surfaces such as lightswitches, door knobs, countertops, and faucets? How does this fit into our cleaning responsibilities? *The CDC (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recommends sanitizing high-touch surfaces daily.*

15. **Ventilation:** Weather permitting, do we want to have windows open when possible? *The CDC recommends use of windows and fans, as well-ventilated open spaces are lower risk than closed, stuffy spaces. You might consider this especially if socially distancing in the apartment, and/or if guests visit.*

16. **COVID-19 Testing:** Do we inform one another if we test positive for COVID-19? *This is not required, by health privacy laws, but disclosure to those you are in contact with is highly impactful in mitigating spread.* How often are we planning to get tested?

17. **In Case of Illness:** What is our plan if someone becomes sick, possibly with COVID-19? *The CDC recommends isolating the sick person to one bedroom and an assigned bathroom, monitoring symptoms and seeking medical care if they worsen.*
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/
How will the sick person get food and do laundry? Are roommates in a position/willing to deliver food and assist, or should the sick person plan to meet their needs independently?

18. **Guests:** Are guests allowed? If so, who? How many? For how long? *By current Dane County and Wisconsin order, masks (over mouth and nose) are required in any indoor space where people outside your household may be present. This means all guests and roommates would be required to mask up when guests are present.* How do we communicate with each other effectively about plans to host guests that maximize advance notice, health safety, and comfort levels? Are there other ways to arrange to see people, like visiting outdoors or in larger common indoor spaces?

19. **Social Bubbles:** Are we forming a mutually exclusive “social bubble” or “quarantine pod” with anyone outside our apartment? *(Socializing with fewer precautions, but all members agree only to see each other. Helps ease isolation but may require especially clear communication, and the larger the bubble, the higher the risk, especially given jobs, classes, etc.)*
20. **Significant Others:** How do significant others / partners (if applicable) fit into guest rules, if not already addressed? If your partner lives alone, can you visit them instead of vice versa? If a partner visits, how long or how often can they stay? Are there noise limits? If you share a room, can roommates request alone time—if so, how and when?
21. **Behavior outside the Apartment:** *COVID-19 makes roommates’ behavior outside the living space far more impactful than usual. It may not be realistic to expect perfectly isolated behavior from everyone. Open communication, without blame, shame, judgment, or secrets, will help mitigate risk.* Are we on the same page as roommates about our approach to precautions (masks, social distancing, limiting contact with large groups of people, etc.) in our daily lives? Will any roommates be attending large social gatherings/parties (more than 10 people)? To what extent do we keep each other informed about what sorts of activities and gatherings we are each engaging in?

We agree to communicate openly and promptly with each other about needs, concerns, disagreements or frustrations.

We agree to respect each other’s privacy and autonomy.

We agree to hold our own and each other’s best interests at heart and work to maintain a positive, healthy living space.

Signed by the residents of Apartment # _____: Date: _____

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_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

This agreement is for your benefit. If you provide a copy to Pres House staff for the **free pizza and ice cream incentive** (see first page), make sure to keep a copy for you and your roommates! Ginger (ginger@preshouse.org) and Becca (rebecca@preshouse.org) are available to help you communicate if you need outside mediation for conflicts, or just a listening ear. We hope you have a happy, stress-free, nourishing residential experience this year at Pres House Apartments.