

# Finding the perfect roommate

*“It drives me crazy when people cut their nails and leave it on the carpet”*

**F**inding an ideal living partner can be a challenging task. If the thought of finding a housemate makes you want to give up before you start, and the thought of living with strangers seems even more daunting, then this guide is for you.

Opting for a roommate can provide great benefits. It gives you the opportunity to socialise with other people, and saves on the cost of rent, says Swinburne’s Housing Advisor, Beth Graham.

Graham recommends before meeting prospective roommates to know your own priorities and the type of housemate you are.

“What are my ideal living arrangements?; ‘To what extent do I like my own space?’ and ‘How much noise is too much?’ are just some of the questions you may need to ask yourself before advertising for a roommate.

You know the saying, ‘I was looking for love in all the wrong places?’ That same line of reasoning can be applied when looking for a roommate. Jonny Tanoto, who has seven years experience living with roommates, understands the struggle facing housemate-hunting university students.

“Finding a housemate is much more of a hassle compared to finding a girlfriend. With a girlfriend, you don’t need to see them everyday, whereas with a housemate you come home to them.”



The first step in finding the perfect roommate is to tailor your advertisement to the type of person you are hoping to live with. If you are on the quiet side and spend most of your nights at home, curled up with a good book, then it would be wise not to advertise at the next punk rock gig in your area.

When deciding what qualities are important in a roommate, keep in mind that these are not necessarily the same set of characteristics

you look for in a friend. While ‘not a chainsaw-wielding psychopath’ is common to both, qualities like ‘tidy’ and ‘has good finances’ should win over ‘excellent drinking partner’.

Finally, use an interview as an opportunity to get to know each other better. Remember the question-asking should be a two-way street.

“I always explain to potential housemates what type of apartment it is,

because it’s important for them to know what they’re getting into,” Tanoto says.

“One of my housemates likes to practice her violin at close to midnight so it’s only fair to have any new housemates aware of that.”

No matter how much you get along in the interview and cannot stop talking about Carrie’s wardrobe in *Sex and the City*, make sure to check their references before you welcome them into your living quarters.

When you have found your place, it is important to abide by the household rules. If one of the conditions is to clean up after yourself, then it would be wise not to leave your dishes in the sink to start growing mould.

Ada Koteng, who has been living in shared accommodation for two years, says she values cleanliness, especially in communal rooms like the bathroom, kitchen and lounge.

“It drives me crazy when people cut their nails and leave it on the carpet,” Koteng says.

But being a good housemate does not equate to keeping quiet about household issues. After going through such a long process looking for the residence of your dreams, it is only fair that you are able to make the place a stress-free environment. It is vital for you to be vocal with your opinions – just be sure to do it in a more civilised manner than the kids in the *Big Brother* house.


Even though Koteng and her housemates do not hold formal meetings, they still try to address an issue by having a quick chat or leaving a note. And this type of open communication seems to work.

“With the roommates I’ve got now, we’ve gotten along so well that no one wants to move out,” Koteng says.

On the other hand, not speaking about an issue you are having with your fellow housemates can make for a nightmare situation like in Tanoto’s case.

When a former housemate did not agree with the level of noise in the house, instead of asking Tanoto and the other housemate to keep it down, she simply left without paying rent.

Should there be conflict arising from living together, and sitting down over coffee or scribbling on post-its does not help the issue, then pay a visit to the friendly (and impartial) housing advisor at your campus.

They will be able to help you best resolve the situation. In circumstances where it is not a marriage made in housemate-heaven, moving out may be your only option though, Graham advises. 

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