

Living With Humans

Preview Chapter

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF LIVING WITH HUMANS

Behold! The most essential commandments of shared housing success. Follow these and enjoy painless housing (well, as much as possible). Ignore them and suffer from terrible utility costs, drama, and stress!

1. Thy food is thine. Their food is theirs. Eat not what is not yours.
2. Decide the 'house rules' together as soon after signing the lease as possible.
3. All roommates must agree to all rules.
4. Conflicts will happen. Talk them out.
5. Pay thy bills, on time, every time.
6. Thou art responsible for damage you inflict upon the property.
7. Pick a parking spot and stick to it.
8. All roommates shalt respect one another.
9. Thy roommates must know when you invite guests over.
10. Never assume a roommate will clean something if they are not required to.

How Many Roommates Should You Get?

How many roommates should you aim for? It's a balance between cost savings and number of people crammed into the property. Some people can't stand more than one person around; others need a crowd lining up outside the bathroom each day. I don't understand the latter group, but have seen enough of you to know you exist.

Over 15 years of shared housing, I'd have to say that the best mix I've found is 2 roommates, plus you. That's three people total.

Why? Well, let's break down a list.

1 Roommate (2 People Total): The fewest number and the easiest way to split bills. However, the roommate's unavoidable. The slightest issue makes the whole place uncomfortable.

2 Roommates (3 People Total): Relatively easy to balance out bills and common area (kitchen/bathroom) time between three people. If there's drama, you can avoid one person to cool down. You're splitting rent three ways, which lessens the impact if someone moves out and you have to cover rent until finding a new roommate.

3 Roommates (4 People Total): Can be OK, but you need a bigger property to accommodate, which means expensive rent. You're talking a 4-bedroom house or a mega-apartment. It needs an over-sized kitchen and an extra-large garage for everyone's cars. Not too many places like this available for rent.

4 Roommates (5 People Total): It doesn't matter how big the property is. You WILL have a clogged kitchen. You will never have enough available bathrooms. Plus, you'll encounter the "silent mooch." This is someone who pays their bills and rent, but will sponge off everyone else.

Either they'll 'forget' to clean, or they'll help themselves to roommates' food. Or both.

Why? Because you have a bunch of people in the house. They think nobody will notice them doing it. Even if you do, they believe you'll blame others first. They're not entirely wrong either. It's like a child seeing what they can get away with.

5+ Roommates (6+ People Total): This is a cluster of chaos waiting to explode. It requires an enormous property, very high utilities, and lots of maintenance. The sheer number of people makes drama a certainty. People will screech, and back-stab, and steal from one another.

You might think, "But rent's cheap!" Maybe so, but that's the **ONLY** advantage. It's not worth it.

Roommate Types To Seek (and to Avoid)

Let's talk about those Other Humans. Whether or not you know a roommate before you share a property doesn't matter. How they act within the property could be vastly different. Usually in a bad way.

Can you handle it? Yes, in most cases, if you're prepared. So let's prepare.

Roommates, Housemates, Squatters, Crashers: How to Categorize the Humans Sharing a Property

A little categorization to start us off. To a landlord, you're a "tenant." To the Other Humans under the same roof, you could be any of the terms in this section's title. Clarifying these then, will help us determine the basics of the relationships.

A Housemate and a Roommate are basically the same thing: another Human, in the same role as you, with the same obligations under a lease. I will use 'Roommate' for this book going forward.

Roommates are legitimate. They've paid a deposit, have to pay rent & bills, and have the right to use the property as a result.

A 'Crasher' is another story. I use 'Crasher' to refer to any Human dwelling in the property with you, who is NOT legally authorized to be there. These take the form of:

- Guests who've overstayed their welcome.
- Relatives of tenants.
- A down-on-his-luck buddy on the couch.
- Tenants' significant others.

Now, are these "bad" for the living environment? Not necessarily. They may just be there for a few days/weeks. But they can quickly become a problem...which is something we'll address later in the book.

That leaves 'Squatters.' In most states, a Squatter is someone who enters an unoccupied property and stays there, without any legal right or permission to do so.

For purposes of this book, I'll use 'Squatters' to identify a Crasher who refuses to leave. They aren't on the lease and don't have legal right to stay. But hey, screw you, they're not leaving and you can't make them!

Bit of a pickle, isn't it? Don't worry; I'll address what to do with a Squatter later as well.

11 Types of Potential Roommates (and What to Expect from Them)

1. The Loner

Doesn't have much in the way of social skills. They'll say hi now and then, but otherwise keep to themselves. Usually remembers to pay bills on time. Will only engage in conversations less than 5 minutes before they run back to their room.

HOW TO HANDLE: Stay pleasant, but respect their time. If you need to talk about something, keep it short. You're not likely to have many problems (if any) with a Loner.

2. The Chatterbox

The Loner's opposite. This person never shuts up and always wants to hang out. Everyone's their friend, and they're absolutely sure you need to hear every single detail of their day.

HOW TO HANDLE: They don't mean harm, but you'll have to stock up on good excuses to get away from them. For example, "Yeah, that's great, I need to go to the store." Or, "That's OK, let me get back to my emails."

3. The Responsible One

Always pays bills on time. Does their share of cleaning. Only complains if there's a real issue. Needless to say, you rarely see this type.

HOW TO HANDLE: If you happen on one of these, treat them well!

4. Absent-Minded

This person never remembers anything. When bills are due, whose turn it is to clean the bathroom, where they're supposed to park...none of it sticks. They rely on you to remember those things for them. It's not done maliciously; they're just that absent-minded.

HOW TO HANDLE: Use a scheduling system to keep everyone (not just the Absent-

Minded one) aware of cleaning & bills. Something as simple as a calendar in a common area with the “Rent” and “Utility Bill” dates marked should do.

If they keep missing bills, try this. Tell everyone that you're instituting a bill pay reminder. Anyone who doesn't pay bills on time has to pay an extra fee. Said fees go to cleaning the property. Make it a high fee, so it hurts when it comes up.

5. The Gamer

Everything's about gaming. They stay in their room, playing games (sometimes at high volume). Dishes can disappear into their room. They may or may not suffer from a lack of hygiene. Generally good about paying bills. Not so good about cleaning (that takes time away from gaming you know).

HOW TO HANDLE: If cleaning's the issue, ask them if they want to pay for a cleaning service to come in. They might jump at the chance, just to take cleaning off their plate.

If hygiene's the problem, use gentle reminders about 'standards' in the lease. Maybe try spraying Febreze outside their door a few dozen times, so they get a whiff when heading for the bathroom.

If nothing gets through to them, and you share an Internet connection, well...connections drop sometimes...

6. The Socialite

This person has to socialize. They're equally likely to leave for hours at a time, as they are to show up at the property with three people in tow. They will not respect anyone else's desire for quiet. It's all about chatting, catching up, hanging out.

You need to study? Too bad, Ms. Socialite's invited six people over for a little party. You didn't need any advance notice for a bunch of strangers wandering around the kitchen did you?

HOW TO HANDLE: Don't. Don't rent with anyone like this. They're nothing but a giant pain. The good thing is, they can't hide their nature, so you'll know up front.

7. Dramatist

Loves drama and grabs any chance to stir some up. This person will talk loudly, make huge assumptions, and vehemently express outrage if you ask them to pay their share of the power bill.

HOW TO HANDLE: Same as above. Don't rent with them. If you got stuck with one, keep your cool, but use the 'late fee' option above.

8. The Influencer

Social media fanatic. Everything's about their next post, how many likes the last one got, how they just got a new contract from Company X. They might buy expensive furniture for the house (to use in their posts). If you're thinking, "This person's stuck on themselves 24/7" you're on the right track.

HOW TO HANDLE: Tell them you don't mind their activities, just remember that they're not the only person living there. If they try to block off half the living room for a photo shoot, just wander in with sweats on and plop down to watch TV. You'll get a stink-eye and snide remarks, but they should back off.

9. The “Romantic”

Sleeps around. Has a revolving bedroom door. A new girl/guy every week. You get the idea. This person's life is all about getting laid. They may keep things clean (to impress the next partner), or they may not. Bills could be a struggle.

HOW TO HANDLE: If you can avoid them, do so. Talk about getting awkward fast. However, you can't always see this one coming.

Here's a tip—a “Romantic” can't handle judgment. The second they miss a bill, or cause an uncomfortable moment on the dining table, you judge the crap out of them. It's somewhat like pouring salt on a slug—watch them shrivel up and run away.

10. The Hermit

Stays in their room, almost never comes out. Does not socialize. Generally good about bills. Reasonable on cleaning schedules...if you can find some way of reminding them.

HOW TO HANDLE: Ask them up front what kind of reminder they'd like if something slips. A former Hermit roommate would only respond to texts. Notes, verbal reminders, even email didn't work. Texts did.

11. Absentee

Are they actually living here? They moved stuff in, but you have no idea if they're actually there most of the time. Could be someone who travels for work a lot, or only rents a room for a couple days a week.

HOW TO HANDLE: Count your blessings, and remind them when bills come up.

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This is part of Section 1 in “Living With Humans.” The full section includes:

- Finding a Place to Rent
- Visiting a Potential Property: Signs to Watch For
- Applying to Rent a Property
- Legal Matters
- The Lease
- Moving In
- Pandemic Considerations

Not to mention Section 2: “How to Live With Other Humans.”

Section 3: “Problems and Solutions.”

And Section 4: “When & How to Move Out.”

Ready for the rest?

Head over to the website for a copy: <https://livingwithhumans.info>

Feel free to share this preview chapter with anyone who can use it.
(It can even work as a subtle hint for misbehaving roommates...)