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Foolproof Bachelor Budget

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The popularity of the cooperative living system known as the Bachelor Apartment seems to be growing rapidly. It claims at least two advantages: economy and complete freedom for those who feel that peaceful coexistence with a member of the opposite sex would be impossible or impractical.

However, many a dedicated bachelor finds it equally difficult to live peacefully with one or more members of his own sex. The main problem: money matters!

Many a happy bachelor abode splits at the seams from an end-of-the-month disease known as financial fallout. Most of my apartment-dwelling career has been spent with three roommates, and the biggest problem in our family of four has always been the food bill. How do you divide the food costs when every member eats a different number of meals in, and has a different number of friends constantly raiding the refrigerator?

Opinions on the method to employ vary greatly, especially at the end of the month. I had a roommate once who thought he should pay a smaller portion of the rent, since he earned less than the rest of us. We promptly informed him he was not only living in the wrong apartment, but also the wrong country.

We decided it was time to sit down and devise a democratic budget system for bachelors. The advantage of our system is its fairness—no matter how many there are in the group, no matter how many meals you eat, guests you invite, or bills you pay.

The procedure is simple. During the month each of us will pay part of the expenses—food, rent, utilities, telephone—we try to keep it about equal. When you buy food or pay a bill, you sign the receipt and put it on one of two spindles.

One spindle is for "fixed costs"—items such as rent and utilities—to be divided equally among the four of us. The other spindle is for items which will be divided by the point system.

The point system is the unique part of our method. Point values are allotted to different meals; one point equals approximately twenty-five cents. The average breakfast of rolls and coffee is worth one point. Soup and sandwich for lunch will cost you two, and a full course dinner sticks you for four, or eight if you should invite a guest. Bringing your date over after the movie will cost you another four points for the drinks and potato chips.

Points are recorded daily on a chart which has a space for each person. At the end of the month, points are added.

If the total should come to 648, and you accumulated 219 of them, you pay 219/648ths of the total for the variable costs spindle, plus one-fourth of the fixed costs. The total of the receipts with your J. H. on them is subtracted from what you owe.

The only difficulty comes in calculating 219/648ths of the total variable costs, but if you have one roommate with a slide rule your problem is solved.

Before you initiate this system, it should be clearly determined just what items will be included. Obviously, many personal items such as cigarettes, laundry and postage stamps have to be left off. However, four bars of soap and four tubes of toothpaste overburden a bathroom, so if all parties can agree on a brand, you might as well include these items on the fixed costs spindle. They are used in nearly equal amounts by everyone, and can be more easily purchased while buying the groceries.

With the invention of our unique and foolproof budget system, we have eliminated the need for women in our lives—to handle the money matters. However, we are still in the market for good cooks.