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How Do You Rate
As a Roommate?

by Mary Alice Halverson

Before you came to college, you made up your mind that living with a roommate was going to be wonderful. You knew you wouldn’t be content living alone. You’d get fed up talking to yourself and talking back to a radio soon loses its charm. The only answer, of course, was a roommate. The college sent you her name and you probably spent hours composing a witty, friendly letter to her. But now, after several weeks of living together, you’re not so sure that the next nine months will be as swell as you’d hoped. You two just don’t seem to get along together.

If your roommate situation is flat, better sit down and analyze it right now. The fault may be yours. And since you’ve at least a quarter, probably a year, to live together, it might as well be fun.

Every roommate has good points, but these are often over-shadowed by the little faults that add up to misunderstandings and quarrels. Do you always have to know where your roommate is going, whom she’s going with, and why? Not content with this, do you offer sage advice and quickly say, “I told you so,” if things go wrong for her? If you do this, why should you be angry because she constantly borrows and is slow to return. It’s certainly convenient that you both wear the same size, but maybe you’d better have an understanding right away about what can be borrowed and what can’t. If you do borrow, always return it in as good a condition as is when given to you.

“Ah,” you may have gloated when you arrived in your room this fall, “first come, first serve.” And then you took the biggest closet for yourself and left that drawer without one knob for your roommate. It wasn’t your fault her train was 3 hours later than yours. By the time she arrived you were settled contentedly at the desk near the window, the light socket and the warm air register. Is that cooperation?

Does dirt worry the daylights out of her while you can live cheerfully in the midst of clutter? On page 10 there is an article on cleaning your college room. This too, is a job for cooperation. There are few of us in college with a positive yen to dust and sweep and pick up clothes. There are few of us with time to spend 2 hours a week doing the job, but with a roommate who’s willing to help, it’s done in half the time.

The same rules that govern the “conduct of ladies” apply to two women living together. Be considerate, first of all, of the needs and wishes of those around you. Respect privacy without being told. Be a staunch advocate of the Golden Rule, but never talk about it.

Your room is the place to study. There is no substitute for it. If, and it won’t be often, you have no work to do, keep the room quiet so your roommate can study. She may have an all-important foods or history test in the morning. If you are thought-ful of her tonight, she is sure to be the same when you are cramming for that English exam. Study habits probably cause more rifts between roommates than any other single problem. Some of you study best late at night, while others would rather rise with the birdies to study at 5:30. If you are one of the stay-up-till-the-wee-small-hours roommates, why not study in the parlors if your roommate can’t sleep with the light on? Early risers who keep the alarm clock under a pillow are adored by the roommate who wants to sleep.

Laundry bags have a way of containing cookies, cakes, candy or fruit as well as clean sheets and clothes. Share your food treasures with your roommate. You’ll be glad you did when she offers you some of her mother’s specialty—thick, creamy fudge. And your mom’s cake may score a hit with her, too.

To be happy roommates there are so few things to remember—cooperation, the Golden Rule, respect of privacy—and, if all else fails, heavens, woman, where’s your funny bone? A sense of humor can settle almost any difficulty.

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