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Hunting for your own pad

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Ames offers students a variety of housing options—the trick is choosing the one that's right for you.

by Kathleen Carlson

Students come in all sizes: some are tall, short, fat, thin, hairy or not-so-hairy. Students also come in different ways: some are loud, quiet, busy, lazy, lonely or private. With all these different students, student housing must come in varying fashions as well. Luckily, it does. To aid the confused souls looking for a place to call their own, the story briefly explores student housing options. Also, some Iowa State students relate a few of the pros and cons of each living arrangement.

Residence Halls

Many Iowa State students have had the experience of stealing a food service lunch tray or two, enduring loud (usually bad) music throbbing from the room next-door and grudgingly trampling outside for a 3 a.m. fire alarm. The place where all of those dreams come true? The Iowa State residence halls, of course.

Dorm life is an option for many Iowa State students and, at one point or another in their academic careers, most have taken advantage of it. Approximately 70 percent of Iowa State freshman and a great deal of upper-class students call the residence halls home. However, living in the dorms isn't always ready-made meal magic and quiet hours during finals week. Imagine coming home from a long day of classes, work, and socializing only to hear a crying baby in the room next door. While not a common scenario, some days this is what Heather Shaffer gets to experience.

Shaffer, a senior in microbiology, lives in old RCA in a room next to the hall director who has a 17-month-old baby.

"I hear her cry at about 1 or 2 when I'm trying to go to bed at night," Shaffer said.

Shaffer said it can be difficult at times because she doesn't know if music or having friends over will disturb the child.

"Sometimes it's frustrating because I'm afraid to wake her up and I can't just call to ask her to quiet down because you can't just make a baby be quiet," Shaffer said. "But it can also be funny to see..."
her walk down the hall, or have her walk into your room.”

Shaffer has lived in the residence halls for her entire time at Iowa State, but this is the only semester she has had an experience like this.

“Sometimes [residence hall life] is frustrating, but sometimes it’s fun,” she said.

### The Greek System

Greek Week, VEISHEA and Homecoming are a few of the many events that define life at Iowa State. The people responsible for a large part of these events are students who live in the Greek system. Approximately 13 percent of the campus population fills the 54 Greek houses at Iowa State.

Farmhouse member Devin Sires, a sophomore in marketing, said one of the biggest advantages of living in a fraternity is all of the campus and house activities.

“There is always something to do and people around,” Sires said. “And, it’s nice to have things in common with the people you are living with.”

But that same advantage can be a disadvantage as well, he added.

“Sometimes there is almost too much to do.”

Ty Henderson, the Farmhouse President, said privacy in the 62 person house capacity isn’t too much of a concern.

“We’re allowed to have guests over and most people just use good judgment. It hasn’t been too much of a problem,” he explained.

Alyssa Purdy, a former Gamma Phi Beta house dweller, said there are advantages and disadvantages to living in the Greek system. Purdy, a senior in public relations, said she liked how her house emphasized scholarship.

“We had study hours and there was always a person to talk to. We had a scholarship chair to talk to,” Purdy said. “There is a big support structure that you don’t have when you live off-campus,” she added.

Purdy now lives in an apartment and said she enjoys having her own room and kitchen to cook in. She said likes the privacy she has now, which was sometimes difficult to find while living with 55 other people.

### Off-Campus Living

Of course, it is possible to escape any trace of University life. These places come with water bills, they provide lots of space for friends to shack and they often have yards with lots of green grass. Off-campus living can provide quiet for the tired, space for the private and responsibilities for young adults proving themselves to the world.

But, with responsibilities come hassles and sometimes a few interesting creatures.

Rachel Bender, a former apartment renter and a current house dweller, said living in a house has certain advantages that living in an apartment doesn’t bring.

“There’s a lot more room and character to a house whereas an apartment can feel like an enlarged dorm room,” she said.

Bender, a senior in landscape architecture, said it’s also nice to be able to go directly outside to find out what the weather is like, as opposed to an apartment in which you have to make more of an effort.

There has also been a difference in dealing with landlords, Bender said. In the apartment, the landlord was always available if something needed to be fixed, but living in a house, the landlord can be difficult to get a hold of, she said. However, the landlord with the apartment was a part of a big corporation and tended to not be as flexible.

To balance out the benefits that come with an off-campus place, there are also unexpected pitfalls, such as those creatures who are living in your place and not paying rent.

Discovering mouse poop in the silverware drawer, watching bats fly around the room and hearing the crunch of a squashed cockroach underfoot could grate on anyone’s nerves. But these occurrences have been the facts of life for off-campus dweller Emily Dertz.

“Right when I moved off-campus, I had mice in my house. We called the landlord for three weeks straight and finally he brought over a little petri dish of mouse poison,” Dertz, a senior in chemistry, said.

The landlord’s home remedy didn’t work, and Dertz and her roommates decided to let the mice roam. They just moved their silverware and other kitchen items into some Tupperware containers because it didn’t seem like they were going to be able to get rid of the mice, she said.

“At first, I was upset because you get used to a certain standard of living, but then it just became more of an annoyance,” Dertz said.

Dertz has also lived in a duplex where bats were the friendly animals of choice, although she has heard the problem has been taken care of since then.

“The funny thing is that the girl next door actually worked somewhere catching bats,” Dertz said. “So, she came over with her bat gloves and caught our first bat.”

Dertz now lives in a place where cockroaches are a problem when she first moved in, but most of that has also been taken care of, she said.

Students may search the papers, call Cy-Com and talk to friend in different living situations, but the ideal housing situation isn’t always easy to find. The trick to locating the best pad for your needs is to be flexible and ready for an adventure.

### Cough Up the Dough, Pal

#### The Residence Halls (1996-97)
- Non-continuous housing: $885 per semester
- Continuous housing: $947 per semester

#### The Greek System

According to a 1995 Inter-Fraternity Council survey, the average greek housing cost was $1585 per semester.

#### Off-Campus Housing

Rent usually ranges from $310 to $1200 per month. Utilities can be included or separate.