

# ROOMMATE CONFLICT SCENARIOS

## SHARING FOOD

*When it comes to food necessities, you and your roommate have decided to take turns buying the common items, such as milk and bread. But lately you've noticed she has been snagging some of your personal items. What do you do?*

**Heckman:** Communicate at the start of the school year whether or not you would like to share food or if you'd prefer to only share certain items. There might be items you don't mind sharing, like popcorn or milk. If you decide not to share certain items, put labels on your food. You can also create a shelf in your living room that is specifically for nonperishables you don't mind sharing. Create a system and use it.

**Roberson:** Start the year by having a conversation about the collective use of food and other items in your suite. Oftentimes I hear students say, "I don't mind sharing food, eat whatever you want." Take it from me, that opinion almost always changes. Even if you don't feel like a conversation about sharing food is necessary, have that conversation – it will benefit your relationship with your roommates in the long run. Communication is essential in dealing with these sorts of situations, so start practicing communication now!

**Ware:** Communication is key! Before automatically agreeing to sharing food, talk through specifics with your roommates. We often see residents dividing their shelves based on shared food versus personal food. Always make sure to be open and honest. Don't assume that your roommate is consciously eating your food and give them the benefit of the doubt! Most often, it is a simple miscommunication issue and not one that should negatively impact your relationship.

## HAVING VISITORS IN YOUR DORM

*Your suitemate's girlfriend is visiting your dorm room – for the fifth time this week. You would like some space to work on projects for classes. What do you do?*

**Heckman:** Take time to speak to your suitemate in a non-threatening tone about the impact the situation has on you. Discuss developing a scheduling of when your suite agrees to have visitors, and don't forget to discuss this idea with your other roommates and suitemates. Once everyone is on the same page, edit your roommate contract as needed.

**Weeks:** Although Grand Canyon University has designated visiting hours, it is a good idea to set specific guidelines for your suite. Understand flexibility is the key in this situation. Express that it makes you uncomfortable, but be willing to compromise. In addition, find other places on campus you can study and hang out when he is spending time with his girlfriend in the common room.

**Ware:** Boundaries need to be communicated at the onset of the semester. Understand that your roommates may have different preferences, and they won't know yours unless you communicate with them. Make a point to discuss boundaries concerning visitors and the use of common space. My advice would be to have that conversation as soon as you move in!

## KEEPING YOUR SPACE CLEAN

*After two years as roommates in the residence halls, you and your roomie move into an on-campus apartment, but the extra kitchen and living space has brought out the slob in them. What do you do?*

**Roberson:** Dirty dishes are my pet peeve, so I get it; however, they may not bother her as much. If that is the case, communicate how you feel about the cleanliness (or lack thereof) of the common areas. If your roommate knows how you feel about a messy apartment chances are she'll work harder at keeping the common spaces clean. Communication is key in these sorts of situations, so make sure that you vocalize how you feel in a respectful and understanding manner. Remember that being passive aggressive is not the same as being communicative.

**Weeks:** Take the time to reflect on the last two years and what worked for you as roommates and what did not work. With the extra space, address the situation in a calm manner and be ready to present a solution. Create a chore list and rotate bi-weekly or monthly. If she is not taking care of her hygiene, let her know you are concerned she may not be taking care of herself, and because you care for her, you wanted to tell her respectfully out of love.

**Ware:** If this behavior is completely out of character, check in with your roommate to see if there is something bigger going on than what you are seeing. She may be struggling with something deeper. However, if it is just a cleanliness issue, you can set up a cleaning schedule which divides responsibilities equally. Make sure you're open to the possibility that you will have differences in opinion in regards to what is considered "clean." Sometimes it can be challenging to find a middle ground. Communicate reasonable expectations with one another openly and honestly. Helpful tip: Do NOT leave Post-It notes or any kind of written message such as, "take out the trash" or "your turn to clean." These conversations should happen face-to-face.

# ROOMMATE CONFLICT SCENARIOS

## BORROWING PERSONAL ITEMS

*You're living in a triple occupancy, and the small closet is an eye-opener that you and your roommates each have a lot of clothing. One of your roommates has started wearing your clothing without asking. Sometimes she washes it and hangs it back up, but other times you find your clothing in the corner of the bathroom on the floor. What do you do?*

**Heckman:** Sharing is caring, right? Not necessarily. If this becomes a perpetual issue, it could lead to some more serious problems. Not to mention, using your valuable time to pick up after your roommate probably isn't ideal. That being said, maybe they come from a background where sharing clothes is a normal thing. Maybe they haven't thought twice about wearing your clothes. In order to fix the situation you will have to communicate your expectations with them. Just assuming that they know your expectations isn't going to fix anything. Talk about the sharing of items in your room, and then fill out the roommate contract at the onset of your time living together.

**Weeks:** If this is becoming a trend it is important to establish some ground rules when sharing or not sharing clothes. If you do not mind sharing but want her to wash it and return it in a timely manner, clearly communicate those expectations. If you don't want to share clothes, then make that clear and ask her kindly not to use your clothes.

**Ware:** At the beginning of the semester resident assistants will talk through some of these common problems that can arise. Make sure that you are open and honest from the very beginning regarding your preferences in sharing clothes. You may think that you wouldn't mind sharing clothes, but think through what would happen if the item of clothing was damaged or ruined. Be clear in setting those boundaries and expectations. If your roommate ignores these boundaries that you have put in place, or she is doing this without your permission, set up a time to discuss your comfort level with borrowing clothes.

## VIOLATING THE COMMUNITY STANDARDS

*Midway through the semester, you realize that your roommate has been using vape pens in your room. Sometimes they even bring alcohol and marijuana into the room. You feel like these may be violations of the Community Standards, and they make you uncomfortable. What do you do?*

**Heckman:** Remind him or her of the rules at Grand Canyon University. Inform him the fire alarm could go off if he smokes in the room, and if alcohol or paraphernalia are in the suite, everyone in the suite could get in trouble for it. Confidently and respectfully tell your roommate, "If you want to smoke or drink, do it off campus." If you are aware that your roommate has these items, it is expected that you will report it to Residence Life or Public Safety.

**Weeks:** Everything should start with healthy communication. This is a touchy topic, but if you communicate your feelings on illegal substances, and on breaking GCU standards, your roommate is less likely to bring that behavior into the room. Understand too that not every student at GCU will hold the same moral beliefs as you. If someone in your room does not share the same beliefs as you, address this sort of situation with an attitude of understanding instead of a condemning one. Your roommate will be much more likely to work with you if you can keep the communication open and respectful. That all being said, make sure you read the GCU University Policy Handbook so that you know what your responsibility is in these sorts of situations.

**Ware:** It is important to come to GCU without expectations that your roommate will be your friend or even someone that you would hang out with by choice. Your roommate can become your best friend, or can simply be an acquaintance you share space with, but always remember that their choices may not be your choices. GCU is a dry campus (no alcohol) with no tolerance for drugs, including marijuana. You should call Public Safety and report illegal items in your room.