

Improving Community Living

Your Rights and Responsibilities as a community member.

You have the RIGHT to:

- A clean, maintained living environment which supports academic success.
- Entertain guests in the privacy of your room.
- Determine with your roommate your own level of noise within your room.
- Develop your own lifestyle.
- Consider all public areas as shared living areas.
- Use lounges for scheduled hall events.
- Form a Hall Council to serve the interests of residents.
- Politely confront another resident with concerns.
- If you cannot agree, an RA may act as a mediator.
- Govern your space maturely.
- A community environment free from harassment.
- No unwelcome touching.
- Not to be subjected to or tell degrading jokes or insults about gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, political beliefs, social class or physical abilities about other HUMAN BEINGS, and to confront others who do.
- A safe and secure living environment.
- An alcohol and drug free living/ learning environment.
- A supportive environment in which to live and study.

and the RESPONSIBILITY to:

- Keep your room neat and clean.
- Place food, garbage and recyclables in correct locations, not in halls or sinks.
- Respect rights to privacy and quiet.
- Accept responsibility for the actions of your guests.
- Not distract those studying or sleeping, no matter what time it is.
- Respect others lifestyles and not impose yours on them.
- Confront those who abuse or/vandalize property.
- Pay for damages to public areas.
- Leave your lounges clean.
- Give input to Hall Council and attend programs.
- Directly confront those who infringe on your rights.
- Listen to another person's concerns before responding.
- Respond politely.
- Refrain from talking about someone behind their back.
- Confront one another with issues before contacting a staff member.
- Understand policies and procedures in the Housing License Agreement you signed, which are in effect at all times.
- Take responsibility for inappropriate actions and accept consequences.
- Address harassment directly and clearly.
- Clearly communicate boundaries.
- Treat community members respectfully regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, heritage, religion or disability.
- Tell no insulting jokes and confront others who do.
- Never let a nonresident enter a building with you, report strangers in the hall, unprop open doors.
- Refrain from burning candles/incense.
- Follow SDSU, Residence Hall and state alcohol, drug and smoking policies.
- Support each other.

Creating a Community Living Agreement

Living Agreement

Our commitment to community is based on sound assumptions:

Living in residence halls is an extension of the classroom learning experience. Residence halls provide a unique opportunity to put citizenship development into practice. We strive to promote human dignity, civility and mutual appreciation for the uniqueness of each member of our community and the basic values of intellectual honesty, tolerance and mutual respect.

The opportunity to live with diverse individuals is central to the mission of the university. Freedom from discrimination, harassment and violence is fundamental to the success of our community. While freedom of speech will be protected, the residential community will speak out against acts of intolerance and abusive behavior.

Conflicts are predictable in learning to live with other adults. Some residents will be "best friends for life," while others live together respectfully without becoming close friends. As an adult, you are expected to discuss, negotiate, and sign a Community Living and Roommate Agreement. Changes can be made at any time. Always discuss problematic issues with each other as a first course of action. Our Resident Advisors and Residence Hall Coordinators can assist with conflict resolution and problem solving.

Growth often results from conflict. Dealing positively with personal differences helps prepare citizens for a diverse society. In group living, it is essential that you actively participate in your own individual growth and the development of your residential community.

Just for fun, imagine this as your first visit back home...

The taxi slowed down in front of your family's home. You were so excited to return, even for a few days! Your parents and sisters and brother were all there.

The first thing you noticed was the living room chairs, surrounded by cigarette butts, sitting on the front lawn. The front door was propped open with an empty beer can.

Mom was in the kitchen when she heard you come in. She gave you a hug.

Dad drove up with your brother John. They hotboxed in the car, then took a STOP sign out of the trunk and hung it up on the living room wall. Dad sat down, loaded his bong, and started smoking weed again.

Your sister Mary had been in her room with her friend Bill. They came downstairs just before dinner time. Mom invited everyone to the dinner table. After dinner, the pizza boxes were left on the floor for someone else to find and throw out.

Mary and Bill each downed a six pack during dinner, and afterwards headed off to play music in her room. The bass boost from her stereo vibrated the walls, causing the lamps to slide off the end table in the living room. No one could hear what was happening on "American Idol."

You needed a shower and a shave, but noticed your shaving creme and shampoo were missing from your bag. You had planned to get three chapters of reading done, but Angie, your other sister, invited several of her friends to party in your room. You decided to head off to the library. You needed to use the bathroom before leaving, but Bill had thrown up on the floor in there and left it. You said your good-byes and headed out the door. Your brother threw a bottle at you from upstairs but missed. Then he set off the smoke detector for a joke.

Seriously, now...Is it okay to have this environment at home?

Well, this is your home for the next nine months. In signing your Student Housing License Agreement, you are indicating that you are an adult who is mature and capable of handling the opportunity of living in a community, and handling the responsibilities which include confronting someone who is violating your rights, being accountable for your behavior, and recognizing the compromises necessary in living with other people. **In adult life, all rights have corresponding responsibilities.**

Keeping in mind that policies and procedures in your *Student Housing License Agreement* are in effect at all times, what are some additional guidelines you would like to create in order to have the most positive living experience possible? Try to phrase your wishes in positive terms. At the conclusion of your community meetings, your floor will create a Community Living Agreement which you will be asked to sign.

It is to your benefit to participate in the process since all members will be held to the agreement.

Here's what we need to decide on and commit to:

1. What do we want the mood and attitude of our community to be?
2. How will we make it happen?
3. How will we react to gossip?
4. How do we want to be confronted by each other if we are too noisy?
5. Do we wish to add additional quiet hours?
6. How will we deal with residents under the influence of alcohol and other drugs?
7. How will we approach unaccompanied strangers/guests?
8. How will we respond to residents who often violate policy or negatively affect our community?
9. What type of language will we use when confronting someone who is infringing on our right to a positive living and learning community?
10. How will we respond if someone confronts us?
11. How will we handle vomit, food in the sinks, or chewing tobacco?
12. How will we handle unflushed toilets?
13. How will we handle hair in the sinks?
14. Who will clean up public areas if there is a problem?
15. What written, active commitment will we make to our custodial community member?
16. What written, active commitment will we make to our maintenance community member?
17. How will vandalism be dealt with? Are we willing to confront the vandal? Report it to the staff? Correct or repair the damage?
18. How will our community respond to insulting or degrading jokes or comments about gender, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, disabilities, religion?
19. What positive behaviors will be practiced to make sure everyone feels a sense of membership and belonging in our community?
20. How will we help each other academically?
21. How will we recognize or celebrate academic achievement?
22. How will we recognize our birthdays?
23. How will we recognize national and cultural holidays?
24. What type of community service will our floor be involved in?
25. How will we support our Hall Council?
26. How will we handle skipping hall/floor meetings?
27. How would we like our community to be thought of as part of the larger community?
28. How will we know when this is a good community for us? What behaviors will be present?
29. Additional _____

Getting Ready for a Roommate

Sharing a room and living in a community are learned skills.

There are benefits to developing good relations. Relationship skills you build now will serve you later in other relationships. College students are mature and capable of handling the responsibilities of this opportunity: responsibilities including confronting someone who is violating your rights, being accountable for your own behavior, and recognizing the compromises necessary for living with other people. In order to do this, communication is a necessity!

Differences are normal.

And are an opportunity for growth and learning about different people and

their styles. **Some roommates will become close friends—many will never be close, but will live together respectfully.** Each roommate owes the other the courtesy of speaking to him/her first.

The basis of every new relationship is communication.

Don't put off problems! By communicating openly, directly, and immediately as issues arise, they are more easily resolved. Don't assume that relationships will be conflict-free. All real relationships have conflict! Conflict can even be a tool of interpersonal growth!

Use the following tips to prepare a living agreement with your roommate.

- Being honest and open now can set the stage for future conversations about how your relationship is changing as the weeks and months go by. Try to push yourself beyond making a good impression!
- Spend adequate time to go through this exercise alone before negotiating with your roommate.
- Then, verbally share results with each other.
- Next, all roommates must negotiate and sign a Roommate Agreement provided by your RA.
- Remember, agreements can be re-negotiated at any time; your RA and RHC can help mediate disagreements.

Roommate Self Assessment

A little bit about my background...

- What I would like to tell you about my family... My friends back home...
- What I was involved in before coming to college...
- What I'll miss most when away from home... What I'll miss least!...
- The grades I hope to earn while I'm here and how important they are to me...
- What I like to do in my spare time... The kind of music I like the most... The kind of music I like the least...
- What I'm like when I'm down or upset about something... How I am when things are going pretty well...
- Times when I prefer to be left alone... My idea of relaxing after being tense... Something that is likely to annoy me...

Cleaning Issues:

(Residents are held jointly responsible for all cleaning, including during check-out time.)

How important it is for me to have a neat, clean room:

- Actually, pretty important
- Moderately important
- I function fine in a messy room

I prefer that we:

- each take care of our own half of the room
- alternate cleaning tasks
- don't clean

Cleaning includes:

- vacuuming emptying trash dusting
- food clean up clothes put away Other _____

Personal Possessions:

How I feel about use of my private property by my roommate or roommate's guests

- Stereo/MP3 yes ask first no
- Food yes ask first no
- TV, DVD yes ask first no
- CDs yes ask first no
- Cell Phone yes ask first no
- Car yes ask first no
- My bed yes ask first no
- Computer yes ask first no
- Clothing yes ask first no
- Hairdryer yes ask first no
- Printer yes ask first no
- Toiletries yes ask first no
- Other _____ yes ask first no

Study Times, Quiet Times, Sleep Times:

- I generally go to sleep by _____ and get up around _____.
- During the day, I like the room dark light
- I can cannot sleep with lights on.
- I can cannot study with music on.
- I can cannot sleep with music on.
- I can cannot study with the TV on.
- I can cannot sleep with TV on.
- Study times I would like to be observed in our room in addition to quiet hours _____
- I generally like the window open closed

Social Behavior:

Residents are responsible for guest's behavior, whether residents or non-residents. Nonresident guests must be signed in and be with their host at all times. Overnight guests are permitted only with a roommate's written permission. Guests are permitted on an occasional basis only with a maximum of two consecutive nights and no more than four nights per month. Guests need to be signed in at the front desk.

- Noise means different things to different people. For me, it's too noisy when...
- If any of your guests are here when I need privacy or quiet time, how would you like me to let you know?
- I am comfortable uncomfortable with guests of the other gender visiting our room.
- These are the times I prefer other gender visitors not be in our room...
- I do don't feel it's okay if a woman spends the night in our room. If OK, how often? Whose bed?
- I do don't feel it is okay if a man spends the night in our room. If OK how often? Whose bed?
- The illegal sale, possession, distribution or use of drugs or paraphernalia is prohibited, as is underage alcohol use. Policy violations are treated seriously. Regardless of my opinion, I plan to honor the policy. yes
- No smoking is allowed inside any residence hall. I plan to honor the policy. yes

Security Agreement:

(Note: lending of keys or cards is not permitted)

- The staff strongly recommends that our room door be kept locked at all times. I agree

When We Disagree or are in Conflict:

Below are some examples of acceptable, varying styles of communication regarding differences. They are possible ways to be approached or to approach another resident when something needs to be discussed or changed, or if this agreement or hall policies have been violated.

- simple assertion**, a direct and basic statement such as
"no"
"could you please lower the volume on your stereo"
"please don't use alcohol or other drugs in our room"
- empathetic assertion**: shows understanding for the other person's perspective or circumstance
"I realize it's taking you longer on your paper than you expected when you asked to use my computer, but I need it now in order to complete my work."
"I know you don't like going outside; however, it's important to me that you not smoke in the room."

negative feelings assertion

"I feel... when you...because; I would prefer that you..."

Example: "I feel angry when you don't lock the door to our room, because we agreed to, and I feel vulnerable when you don't follow through. I would like you to please make an effort to keep it locked."

Example: "I feel uncomfortable when you don't talk to me or you seem upset but don't talk to me. If it's me or something I'm doing that's making you uncomfortable, I prefer that we talk about it as soon as possible."

Example: "I feel angry when you turn on the stereo/use the hairdryer in the room early in the morning because the noise wakes me up before my alarm. I'd prefer that you be as quiet as possible on those mornings."

Which style above would be the most comfortable communication style for me to use? To hear?

Getting Ready to Negotiate an Agreement:

- It appears to me that an important similarity between us may be _____
- I think some important differences between us may be _____
- These are the items we may disagree on. The compromise I want to suggest for each item for now is: (Be specific)

Cleaning Issues:

Security Agreement:

Study Times - Quiet Hours - Sleep Times:

Visitors and Guests:

Social Behavior:

Personal Possessions:

When we disagree or are in conflict:

Another thing we might have to compromise on is:

One thing I believe I can learn from living with you is...

I think something I came to realize more clearly about myself in this discussion is...

If you approach me with a concern:

- I'll listen carefully and respond politely.
- I'll try to understand your concern even if I don't agree.
- I will ask for clarification if I don't fully understand.
- I'll try to act positively to improve the issue.
- I'll be defensive and angry.

Now take time to review each other's responses verbally. After both of you have shared your responses, begin filling out and signing your roommate agreement.

Your RA will be glad to help if you have difficulty.

Respect: Community Standards for Living

With freedom come duties
and responsibilities

A student who exercises his or her freedoms as a private citizen and member of the academic community – whether individually or as part of a group – must assume full responsibility for his or her actions. Living in residence halls is an extension of the classroom learning experience. Residence halls provide a unique opportunity to put citizenship development into practice. Part of being a member of a community means being afforded certain rights, such as the right to express one's uniqueness and individuality in a group setting. At the same time, being a member of the residence hall community means demonstrating a willingness to abide by community standards. We promote open expression of individuality and diversity within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity, and respect. The residence halls at SDSU have policies and regulations that govern group living. By signing the Student Housing License Agreement, you agreed to abide by these community standards.

We do not accept alcohol or other drug use, or peer pressure as an excuse or reason for abuse, harassment, intimidation, violence or any unacceptable behavior. Ignorance or "it was just a joke" is also not an excuse. Pranks, practical jokes, vandalism or any form of disruption have no place in our campus community. Offensive language, name calling, discriminatory remarks, lewd or obscene behavior and other such acts of incivility have NO place in a university residential community. Just as such incivility is inappropriate in addressing a professor, it is inappropriate in addressing any other member of the community, including residential staff. **It is important to understand that Resident Advisors are required to document all violations of policies and procedures stated in the License Agreement. Students must comply with directions of university officials, including Residential Education Staff.** You will be directed to meet with a Residential Judicial Officer to review any incident report to determine its accuracy and clarify your level of involvement.

The university discourages the abuse of alcohol and other drugs. This abuse disrupts the community, risking the health, safety, and academic success of the abuser and others who come in contact with him or her. Those who violate alcohol and other drug policies are subject to judicial disciplinary action, criminal prosecution, eviction, and/or referral to treatment/intervention programs at their own expense. **At a minimum, a first alcohol or other drug offense will result in judicial action, creation of a judicial record, and a requirement to attend an intervention program at a cost of at least \$100.** Tampering with fire safety equipment and violating the weapons policy, including the possession of "air-soft" or pellet guns may result in eviction after the first offense.

A violation of any community standard and/or SDSU Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities has implications on your status as a student. Violations will result in judicial disciplinary action.

If your Student Housing License Agreement is revoked for conduct reasons, you will be held financially liable for rent charges (liquidated damages) equivalent to the balance of your contract.

Conduct that is in violation of the law will be referred to University Police for prosecution, if warranted.

We expect you to read and comply with the following policies, and to take an active role in the well-being of your community. The SDSU Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities can be found online at www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/statement/index.html

We want you to stay with your community all year. Making an ongoing commitment to abide by community standards and the SDSU Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities can make your on-campus living a positive experience.

