

Dating flatmates - Dating someone who is your flatmate often disturbs the dynamics and balance of a household. Should the romantic relationship founder (and they often do) this can result in tension, disharmony and unpleasantness for all. As a rule, seek intimate friendships outside the flatting situation. This greatly increases the chance of you and your friends enjoying a comfortable flatting environment. There will be enough issues for you to “iron out” without dealing with this one.

Personal privacy and study time - Agree on how you will give each other personal space and privacy when it is needed. A “Do not disturb” sign on the door means just that! Respect each person’s need for solitude and study time. Using a whiteboard to record messages is a great way to keep effective communication going.

Keeping the neighbours (and the landlord) happy - When we are having a good time it is easy to forget those people who live next to us – the neighbours! Be respectful of their needs as well as your own when playing music or creating noise. A formal complaint about loud music can result in a visit from Noise Control who will issue you with a warning. Should a second visit be necessary on the same occasion, the offending equipment could be confiscated and taken away from you.

Your neighbours may look after young children or elderly folk who do not need their lives disturbed by thoughtless behaviour from your flat. A complaint by neighbours to your landlord is not helpful to you; neither does it develop positive relationships with those living nearby.

Managing conflict in the flat - Even with the best of intentions, you and others may have different opinions and ideas on matters which negatively affect one another. This may lead to a conflict situation where individuals feel angry, upset, confused, misunderstood or helpless. Do not blame anyone, but identify the problem as a joint issue and keep focussed on the problem, not the person or people it involves. The goal is to find a solution that works for all parties concerned. Massey Health and Counselling Services produce a brochure titled “Conflict resolution” to guide you through the management of conflict, towards a successful resolution of any troublesome issues.

For additional information, see

- MUSA Accommodation Service information
<http://musa.org.nz/accommodation/>
- Residential Tenancies Act 1986
- All about Tenancy Bonds brochure
<http://www.dbh.govt.nz/about-tenancy-bonds>
- Discrimination in Tenancy Matters brochure
<http://www.familybudgeting.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Tenancy.pdf>

STUDENT COUNSELLING SERVICES
SKILLS – INSIGHT - SUPPORT

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

If you would like to make an appointment to see a counsellor to learn more about this topic, please contact the counselling service on your campus.

Distance students can contact any one of the campuses. Please tell the receptionist if you need an urgent appointment.

CONTACT DETAILS

ALBANY

Health and Counselling

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (09) 443 9783

Email: Studenthealth@massey.ac.nz

MANAWATŪ

Student Counselling Service

Turitea Campus, Palmerston North

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (06) 350 5533

Email: s.counselling@massey.ac.nz

WELLINGTON

Student Counselling Service

Hours 8.30am - 4.30pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (04) 801 2542

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<http://health-counselling.massey.nz>

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THINKING ABOUT SHARING A FLAT?

STUDENT COUNSELLING



Sharing a house or unit or flat with other people can be fun and really rewarding! It can also be a nightmare when things go wrong!

CHOOSING FLATMATES

Preferably:

- Flat with people you know
- If you need to choose a flatmate whom you don't know, make a checklist of things to discuss with them to see if you are compatible on key issues. Topics suggested in this brochure are a good place to start.
- Flat with people who are committed to successful study. Party animals can be fun to have around but constant partying and study don't mix well!
- Make a list of additional things that are important to you and your other flatmates. For example, a non-smoker, clean & tidy person, no pets, similar goals and aspirations. You need to feel comfortable with the person you are about to share with, as asking an unsuitable flatmate to leave can be an awkward business.
- Be prepared to discuss issues that are bothering you. People may not know something is concerning you unless you tell them. As in all relationships, effective communication is the key!

We suggest you discuss the following issues openly and carefully with your prospective flatmates, so that your flat is a pleasant and harmonious place to be for everyone during the day and also during the evening.

It is a good idea to hold regular flat meetings, so that any issues giving concern may be discussed.



THE FOLLOWING POINTS HAVE THE ABILITY TO GROW INTO HUGE ISSUES IF NOT ADDRESSED VERY EARLY IN A FLATTING SITUATION.

Money, bills - Flatmates need to negotiate an acceptable way of managing shared financial commitments such as rent payments, electricity bills, telephone accounts including toll calls, international calls and Internet costs, renting furniture or acquisition of major items needed in the flat.

Cleaning - Nobody enjoys cleaning up other peoples' mess! A cleaning roster can be helpful if you can't agree on a system which works. Discussing "who is to do what" and "when" and then all sticking to the agreement should help.

Buying groceries - What foodstuffs will you buy and how will you cater for individual tastes? Who will do the shopping and how will the food money be collected? Will you have a "kitty" for shared expenses where you all contribute an agreed amount weekly or fortnightly? Or will each person be responsible for his/her own meals (and the washing up?)

Today, with so many different cultures offering a wide variety of foodstuffs, it may be difficult for you to reach an agreement! However, your food budget may restrict you to basic products. It is wise to consider eating healthily, and buy goods from the food groups of fruit, vegetables, pasta, meat, grains and dairy products, rather than takeaways.

Cooking - For some households establishing a cooking roster works well. For others, budding chefs may offer to prepare meals, with the dishes and cleaning up being done by others. You need to negotiate this, as eating out regularly can become expensive. Also, eating packet noodles every night can become monotonous!

Sharing space - Most households only have one refrigerator, often there are not enough cupboards, and there may be only one garage or carport and finding adequate storage can be an issue. Talk to each other and negotiate fairly.

Maintaining gardens and lawns - Occasionally tenants have to maintain gardens and mow the lawns regularly as part of the lease agreement. If flatmates cannot agree on "who is to do what and when" consider setting up a roster or pay a professional gardener to do the work for you.

Music, TV and noise - For students who are committed to successful study, the issue of an acceptable noise level from stereos, TV, musical instruments during certain times of the day or night needs to be discussed. It is also a good idea to set guidelines for how often you will entertain and hold parties.



Pets - Cats and dogs can be great company, but a whining puppy or a moulting cat that scratches both you and the furniture, can become a household problem for you and sometimes for your neighbours! A "house policy" regarding the keeping of pets can be useful.

Friends staying the night - What may meet the needs of one person, may become an imposition and an inconvenience to others. It pays to check out how your flatmates feel about your friends or partner staying over, especially if they do so on a regular basis. It is courtesy to ask and be prepared for a negative response if this has been occurring a lot!

Telephone & Internet - Local telephone calls are free but toll calls and international calls aren't! Establish a system where people either record their calls in a book or pay for calls as they make them. Having your own cell phone is a good idea.

Discuss times for Internet access, because it ties up a telephone line. "Surfing the net" for hours can also lead to conflict. Check the costs of Internet provision as there are some excellent packages around.

Cultural issues - Sharing a flat with a student from another cultural background can be fun and an interesting learning experience. Flatmates need to be culturally sensitive about such things as the selection, preparation and cooking of food; dress; customs and rituals and beliefs. This enables an international flatmate or flatmate with different customs to make a more comfortable transition. These issues are important when you are sharing a flat with others from a different culture and need to be discussed.

Parties and illegal substances - We all need to socialize and students are no exception! However excess alcohol consumption and partying are not helpful to students trying to stay focussed on a degree course and a future career path. The legal age for drinking alcohol in NZ is now 18 years and there is a clear government policy on the use of illegal drugs. Flatmates will need to discuss the issue of drugs and their use in your flat.

If individuals are found guilty of a drug-related offence, the consequences can be most unpleasant for everyone living in the flat. Being convicted of a drug offence has wide reaching implications for overseas travellers and people seeking careers in government agencies.