

Dorm Life 101

Living on your own in college often means moving into the dorms and having a roommate. Find out what to expect when you live in campus housing.



Sharing a room may seem odd at first, but you'll get used to it quickly as you settled into your dorm. Dorm life is probably one of the most iconic college experiences. You make friends, ease into living on your own by taking advantage of shared housing and, it can be really fun!

Dorms are often separated into categories on campus, with first-year students grouped together. Here's a look at the different types of dorms and what you can expect from college dorm life.

Types of Dorms

- **Freshman dorms:** Campuses might have only enough dorms for freshmen, or they might have dorms set aside just for freshmen to avoid unwanted interaction with upperclassmen.
- **Single gender:** Some colleges separate males and females into their own dorm buildings. Members of the opposite sex are allowed to visit but typically only during visiting hours.
- **Coed by floor dorms:** Some dorms are coed by floor, which means that males and females live separately on different floors. For example, floors 1, 3, and 5 might house males while 2,4, and 6 house females.
- **Coed by room:** Other dorms do not separate floors by gender. This means that a male rooms are right next door to female rooms and vice versa. Male/female cohabitation, however, is not typically allowed in dorms and residence halls.
- **Sexual orientation:** Depending on the school, dorms or floors may be set aside for students identifying as lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual or other.
- **Quiet floors:** To encourage good study habits, some floors at some schools are designated as quiet floors.
- **Substance-free:** Students who don't drink or do drugs may choose to live in substance-free housing, where students who are drunk or under the influence are not allowed to enter.
- **Special college dorms:** Students with disabilities might have dorms that allow disabled access. Special dorms are also sometimes set aside for honors students or international students.

Unfortunately floor bathrooms can get crowded and disgusting really quickly, so be sure to invest in some "shower shoes" or flip-flops.

Types of Dorm Rooms

During your first year on campus, it is very unlikely that you will have a room all to yourself. So get used to the idea of sharing it with at least one other person.

Shared rooms are generally known as doubles, while rooms for three are known as triples and rooms with four roommates are quads.

In addition to sharing a room, you will also have a communal bathroom, which may serve just you and your roommates or an entire floor of students.

Some dorms are "suites," which are more like apartments than traditional dorm rooms. Suite-style dorm rooms have multiple bedrooms with a shared bathroom, a common area and sometimes a kitchen area.

College Dorm Bathrooms

If you're lucky, you won't have to share a bathroom with anyone but your roommates. But most first year residence halls have floor bathrooms. Unfortunately floor bathrooms can get crowded and disgusting really quickly, so be sure to invest in some "shower shoes" or flip-flops.

When you head to the store to pick up your flip-flops, you're also going to want to get a shower caddy to transport all your grooming essentials to and from the dorm room to the bathroom.

Moving in to College Dorms

The first person you meet in the dorm will likely be the RA, or resident assistant. The RA will help guide you to your assigned room and show you around the dorm, including the location of the bathroom, laundry room and kitchen. Some schools, such as [Centenary College](#) in New Jersey, have volunteer students to help make moving in easier.

Once in your room, choose your bed, desk and any other furniture as well as which side of the room you prefer. Make it your first roommate activity to decide what goes where. Agree to switch the next semester if one of you gets the "better" side and remember to be flexible and honest with your roommate.