

THIS WAS NOT IN THE CONTRACT

A Survival Guide to
Roommate Negotiation

BY
NOLAN KANE

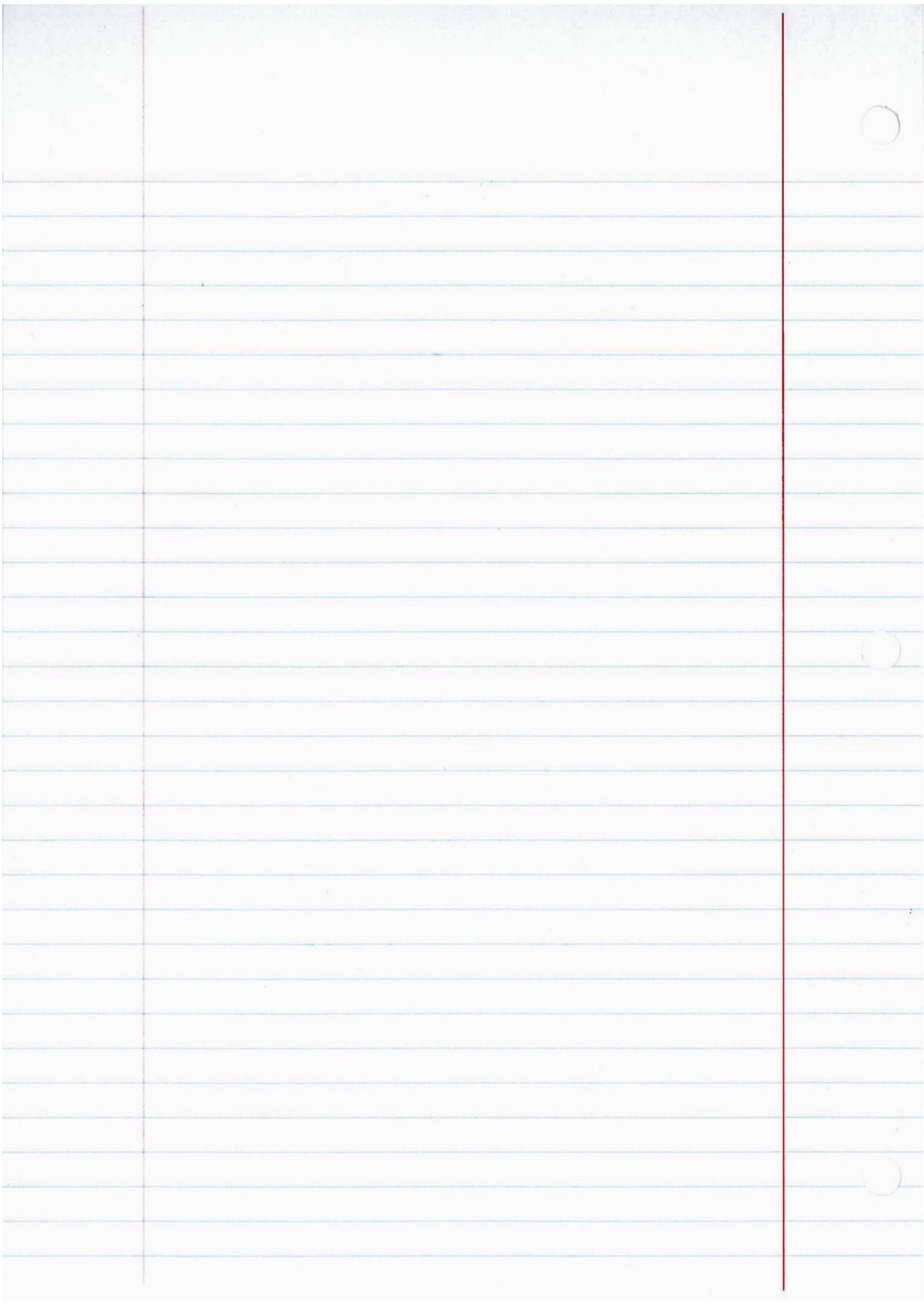


TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Beginning

Introduction	2
Statement of Purpose	3
Expected Outcomes	4

The Problem

Overview of Conflict	5
Types of Conflict	6
Sources of Conflict	7-11
Beneath the Surface Considerations	12
How to Solve Roommate Conflict	13
Addressing Roommate Conflict	14

The Principles

Conflict Styles	15
Emotional Intelligence	16-17
Ladder of Inference	18

The Process

Negotiating the Conflict	19
Interest Based Negotiation	20-21
Objective Based Negotiation	22-23

The Preparation

Preparing to Negotiate	24-26
Degrees of Agreement	27
Recording the Agreement	28

The Negotiation

Roommate Negotiation Guides	29-37
Shared Space	30
Cleanliness	31
Preference of Living Style	32
Missing/Unauthorized Use of Property	33
Cross-Cultural Conflicts	34
Financial Dispute	35
Extended Guests	36
General Negotiation	37

The Conclusion

Last Minute Tips	38
Conclusion	39
Sources/Resources	40
Appendix I	41

IMPORTANT

It is important to note that there are contexts that could not and should not be negotiated

If you are experiencing any contexts that include:

Violence
Abuse
Threats
Stalking
Bullying
Harassment

You need to seek immediate help.
Your safety and well-being are non-negotiable.

University of Oregon
Police Department

24 Hour Crisis:

9-1-1

Non-Emergency Hotline:

541-346-2919

Eugene Police Department:

24 Hour Crisis:

9-1-1

Non-Emergency Hotline:

541-682-5111

University of Oregon Crisis
Intervention and Sexual Assault
Prevention Services:

24 Hour Crisis:

541-346-7233

University of Oregon
Office of Student Conduct
and Community Standards:

541-346-1140

University of Oregon
Dean of Students:

541-346-3216

Sexual Assault
Support Services (SASS):

24 Hour Crisis:

541-343-7277

Introduction

You just embarked on one of the most fun and exciting expeditions in your life: going to college. University life is exciting, fast paced, and fun. During your time, you will encounter new experiences including: sharing a room.

Now whether you know your roommate before coming to college or not, one thing is almost guaranteed:

**ROOMMATES WILL
DISAGREE**

Roommate disagreement is not a scary thing, but rather a chance to grow in new contexts. Roommate conflict is a pervasive factor in any living situation regardless of if you are living at home, with a friend, or in the dorms. Roommate conflict can show up as passive aggressive texts, heated discussions and even go as far as physical confrontations.

So if we can tell that disagreement will inevitably happen, it is a good idea to prepare for how to solve these disagreements. This is where this handbook comes in handy. By the end of this book, not only will conflict seem much more manageable, but you will also have a strong skill set to handle issues on your own.

Statement of Purpose

Studies show that roommate conflict can affect happiness, stress levels, and student success- So this handbook is here to help navigate the choppy waters of sharing a living space.

Even though nobody likes being in a fight, this handbook will teach you how to do mental kung-fu to get what you want and make your roommate happy at the same time. This book will help make engaging conflict more comfortable by providing you with the tools and phrases necessary to get the process to where you want to go.

There is no problem too big or small that negotiation can't tackle; from cleaning the dishes to figuring out rules on extended guests this book will help you figure out how to reach an agreement.

This handbook will teach you about:

- Types of Conflict
- Sources of Conflict
- Conflict Styles
- Emotional Intelligence
- The Ladder of Inference
- Interest-Based Negotiation
- Objective-Based Negotiation
- Negotiation Preparation
- Agreement building
- Situation specific negotiation



LET'S GET STARTED

By the end of this book,
your roommate negotiations will look like:

Parties working together
to find a solution
that works for
both of them

Parties working to create
new options so
both parties win,
rather than a win/lose
paradigm.

Parties focusing on what
they want, rather than why
they want it.

Parties provide pieces they
can live with to create
a durable solution to the
puzzling problem.

Parties asserting their
needs to create
a solution that
really deals with
their problem.

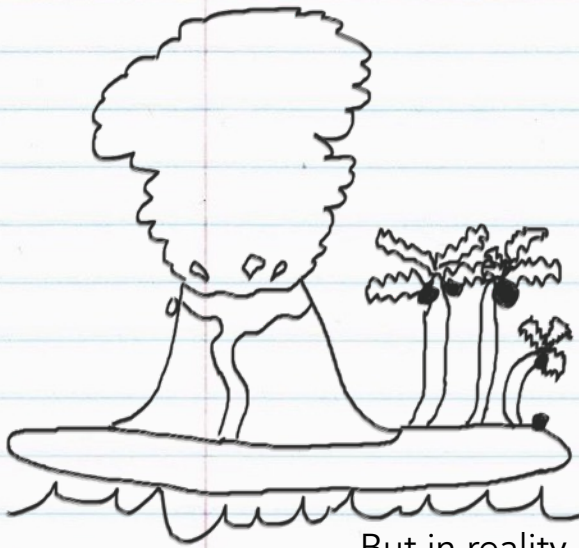
Parties asking questions
to help create a strong
understanding between
roommates.

I may
be able
to...

I could
try to...



Overview of Conflict



Just as an active volcano may present itself as a violent and destructive eruption or as a bubbling under-current beneath the surface, conflicts have different warning signs and symptoms.

The dictionary defines conflict as:
A serious disagreement or argument

But in reality, roommate conflict looks very different depending on the roommate and the situation.
Take a minute to see what stage your conflict is in:



LATENT

Latent conflict is the slow churning conflict that does not show any symptoms.

In this type of conflict you, or your roommate may be ignoring, avoiding, or just brooding over the issue at hand.

This conflict often looks like:

Passive aggressive texts, the silent treatment, or no change in outward behavior.



EMERGING

Emerging conflict is a conflict in its infancy that has not yet become a full blown problem.

In this type of conflict you, or your roommate may not be happy with a certain issue but it does not disrupt your day to day life.

This conflict often looks like:

The issue being brought up occasionally, complaining, moping, or seeing the problem under the rug.



ACTIVE

Active conflict is a conflict that is developed and is an issue that needs to be solved.

In this type of conflict you or your roommate have an issue that interferes with daily life.

This conflict often looks like:

Yelling, door slamming, confrontation, or aggressive behavior

Types of Conflict

To start negotiating, it is important to think about what type of conflict you have.

Whether you are engaged in a screaming match with your roommate over taking out the trash or in the middle of getting the silent treatment for using their stuff without asking, looking at the type of conflict will help you take stock of what is important to solve it.

RELATIONSHIP

This type of conflict relates to some aspect of one of the parties involved.

A relationship conflict is the most common because it happens when a roommate does something that goes against the values of the other roommate.

Often roommates will get upset about something the other roommate does because it conflicts with their values, preferences, assumptions, or predispositions.

TASK

This type of conflict relates to some task or action that needs to be made.

A task conflict is common because there are tasks that some roommates just don't like to do and because roommates share space, it affects all of the roommates involved.

Roommates will conflict about tasks when the task conflicts with what a roommate is used to doing or what a roommate is not comfortable doing.

PROCESS

This type of conflict relates to how a task is done.

Process conflicts arise when roommates cannot agree on the way something should be done.

Often roommates will rely on their preferences or familiar ways of doing things and see any new methods as threats to the way that they do things.

PREFERENCE

This type of conflict relates to the personal preferences.

Preference conflicts surface when roommate preferences conflict.

In most cases, preference conflicts when one roommate's preference is not compatible with the other roommate's. This incompatibility creates friction and tension between roommates.

STATUS

This type of conflict relates to who makes decisions or has the power.

Status conflicts occur when one roommate makes decisions that impact one or more roommates.

Status conflicts arise when one roommate asserts themselves as the one in charge over another roommate, or when a roommate makes large impact decisions without asking any other roommates.

Sources of Conflict

So now that you have an idea about what conflicts look like and the types they can arise as, it is important to know where they come from.

RELATIONSHIP

Relationship conflicts come from when roommates interact and their views or values do not line up.

Here is a list of potential areas that may cause relationship conflicts between roommates:

Differing views about lifestyle choices

Not feeling validated by the other roommate
(Appreciated, Respected, Valued, etc.)

Differing values (Honesty, Integrity, Trust, etc.)

Communication styles- (Yelling, Shouting, etc.)

Feeling avoided by the other roommate

Feeling attacked (through name calling, verbal abuse, etc.)

Feeling bullied by the other roommate

Here are some examples of how these conflicts appear in conversation

"Didn't you think of how this impacts me?"

"I really wish you would treat me with more respect"

"If only you would think about someone besides yourself sometime."

"Why don't you ever talk to me?"

TASK

Task conflicts come from when roommates do not agree about the task that needs to be done

Here is a list of potential areas that may cause task conflicts between roommates:

Disagreement about the task's importance (i.e.: doing dishes)

Disagreement about the task's relevance

Disagreement about how the task should be done

Disagreement about when the task should be done

Disagreement about who should do the task

Disagreement about the frequency the task should be done

Here are some examples of how this conflict appears in conversation

"If it bothers you so much you should do it."

"We just did that we don't need to do it again."

"I think doing that is a waste of time"

"At my house, someone else takes care of that."

"Since you're better at it, I think you should do it."

"No way. It's your turn."

PROCESS

Process conflicts come from when roommates decide on how things should be done.

Here is a list of potential areas that may cause process conflicts between roommates:

Disagreement about which method to use to do a task

Inability to collaborate about completing a task

Disagreement about if the process is necessary

Disagreement about what process is right

Disagreement about what process is most efficient

Disagreement about who should participate in the process

Here are some examples of how this conflict appears in conversation

"At my house, that's not how we do that."

"Whoever said to do it like that is an idiot."

"I think this way is a waste of time."

"What do you mean? I thought I was doing this."

"I can't believe you would even think to do it like that."

"Doing it like that does not make any sense."

PREFERENCE

Preference conflicts come from when roommates choose to do (or not do things.)

Here is a list of potential areas that may cause process conflicts between roommates:

Conflicting Preferences

Only one roommate able to express preferences

Roommate tries to change other roommate's preference

Roommate disregards the roommate's preference

Roommate invalidates other roommate's preference

Roommate criticizes other roommate's preference

Here are some examples of how this conflict appears in conversation

"Liking it that way is stupid."

"With all due respect, we should do things the way that I like because my preference is right."

"I don't really care how you like it, we are going to do it like this from now on."

"I see that you like that but you should try what I like. It's so much better."

"Before you judge it, let's give my way a try for a while."

"Since this is such a small space, I think we should do it my way."

STATUS

Status conflicts come from when roommates decide who makes decisions and handles the power.

Here is a list of potential areas that may cause status conflicts between roommates:

Disagreement about who makes decisions that impact other roommate(s)

Disagreement about why a certain roommate gets to decide

Disagreement about how a roommate makes decisions that impact other roommate(s)

Here are some examples of how this conflict appears in conversation

"Who died and made you king/queen?"

"We are equals after all, so I think we should have an equal say."

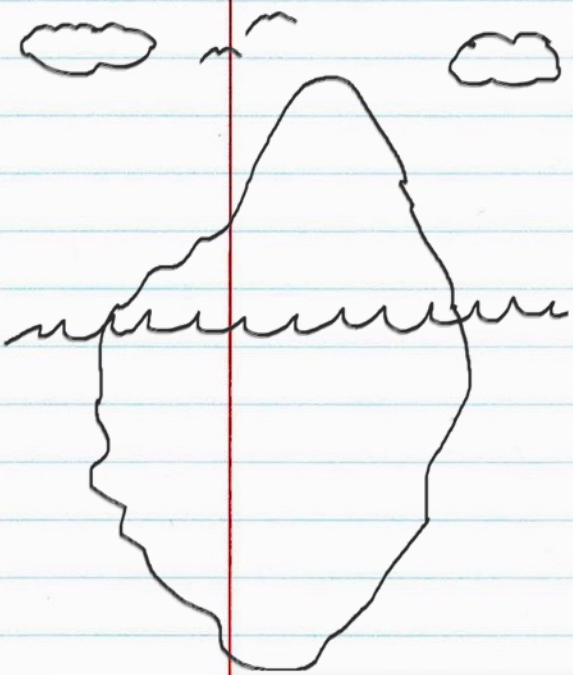
"What made you think that you could make this decision without me?"

"You wouldn't understand. I will just choose for us."

"Since it impacts me I should have a say too."

"I don't care what you say, we are going with my decision."

Beneath the surface considerations for status conflicts



In a conflict that is rooted in status, it is important to understand that there are very complex assumptions and perceptions that influence status.

Although your roommate may be upset about the power dynamics, understand that there are factors beneath the surface that you should consider:

IDENTITY

Identity is a complex term that describes what someone is. Identity focuses on different indicators of what people are to help people of the general population. Society treats some identities differently than others, creating tough situations for identities society doesn't value equally.

Some of these factors are:

- Race**
- Gender**
- Religion**
- Age**
- Mental Illness**
- Family Dynamics**
- Education**



PRIVILEGE

Privilege is the rank that society gives based on different social identities, ranging from ethnicity, religion, to gender.

Your roommate may be experiencing negative impacts created by not conforming to the privileged majority.

POWER

Power is the authority that society normalizes based on different social identities, ranging from ethnicity, religion, to gender.

Your roommate may be experiencing less power due to the discrimination against their identity.

How to solve a roommate conflict

To solve a conflict with your roommate, there are two paths you can choose to go down:

**IGNORE
THE
CONFLICT**

OR

**ADDRESS
THE
CONFLICT**

Sometimes conflicts happen when tempers flare or something outside of the room puts a roommate in a bad mood.

In times like these, it is okay to bury the hatchet and forget that it happened. Hopefully it was just a one time situation.

HOWEVER, be warned that ignoring a conflict without any conversation about the issue may allow the conflict to boil under the surface and erupt as something bigger later on down the road.

It is important to name the issue and find a way to solve it. Addressing the conflict involves working together and creating a solution that allows you to continue living without worrying about this conflict.



Continue Reading

Addressing roommate conflict

Confronting your roommate about the conflict is a one or two step process depending on how big the conflict is.

STEP 1. TELL YOUR ROOMMATE ABOUT THE CONFLICT THAT IS TROUBLING YOU

On occasion, this is all it takes. Your roommate may not have known that their comments or actions were troubling you, and this is exactly what they needed to hear. You may hear a commitment to changing or an apology but after that the conflict may be solved.

STEP 2. INVITE YOUR ROOMMATE TO HELP RESOLVE THE CONFLICT

If both you and your roommate acknowledge there is a conflict that cannot be ignored, you should invite your roommate to help work with you to find a solution. This invitation shows a commitment to the problem and to making the roommate relationship work.

Before moving to resolve the conflict, you should consider how your roommate handles conflicts and how you will need to act to get a resolution that works for you.

While some people see conflicts as situations where there is only one winner and one loser, others see conflicts as opportunities for both parties to win. So it is important to know where you land, and where you think your roommate lands so you can reach the agreement that solves the conflict.

Conflict Styles

A conflict style is the general approach that a person handles their problems with.

Thomas-Kilmann mapped conflict styles based on understanding of assertiveness and cooperativeness and it looks something like this:

COMPETING

Only one party can win. Anything less than winning is not acceptable.

COLLABORATING

Both parties can be happy. Working together will create best solution

COMPROMISING

Finding the bare minimum that each party can live with. A solution can preserve the relationship.

AVOIDING

Staying out of it maintains the status quo and keeps relationships intact.

ACCOMMODATING

Giving in to keep the peace and maintain the relationship regardless of personal interests.

Assertiveness
(The scale for how forward someone is about their ideas.)

Cooperativeness
(The scale for how willing someone is to work with someone else.)

From this chart, people handle conflict very differently, ranging from aggressively one-sided to push-overs, with problem solvers sprinkled in.

As you can see, the more assertive and cooperative someone is, the more they can work together. However,

So when it seems like your roommate is being very pushy or very reserved, it is not a sign that they do not want to help solve the problem, they just handle conflict differently than you do.

Lets take a look at a couple other mental processes that are important to consider when negotiating conflict.

Emotional Intelligence

Recent studies show that some of the best negotiators understand the role that emotions play in conflicts and use them to their benefit. Here is a brief explanation of emotions and how they relate to negotiation

It is important to consider that different people handle their problems and emotions differently. Since most conflicts can have emotional implications, it is important to know that sometimes emotions can spill out into conflicts.

So, when you are engaging in a conflict that triggers emotions, it is important to know that some people are more perceptive to emotional changes than others.

John Mayer and Peter Salovey describe the ability to be emotionally intelligent in four major categories:

Perceiving Emotions

This relates to your ability to see the impact emotions are having on the other person and the situation.

Understanding Emotions

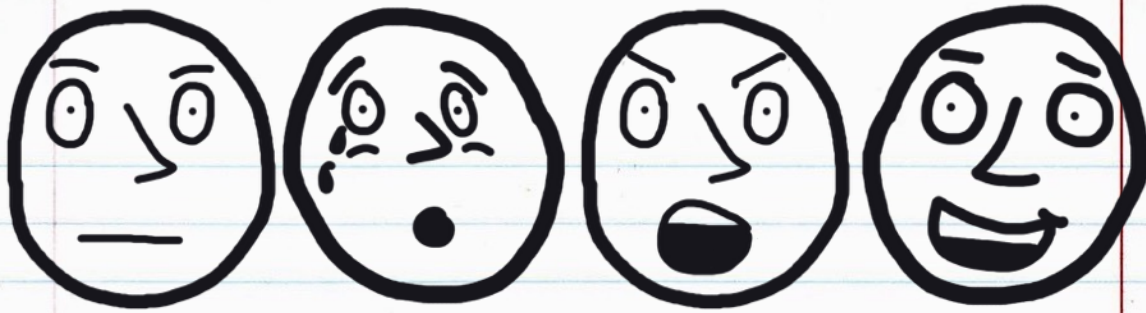
This describes your ability to comprehend why you or the other person are feeling the way they do.

Utilizing Emotions

This idea draws from your ability to use your emotions to create the solution that satisfies your current needs.

Managing Emotions

This alludes to your ability to control your emotions in a situation that has emotional triggers and implications.



When addressing conflict, you may encounter a range of emotions. You can assume your roommate will do the same, so the more you can recognize these emotions, the better your negotiation will go.

So now that you know the importance of emotions in conflict and the four competencies needed to deal with them, how do you use this information in your personal context?

Seeing Emotions

See how the situation impacts your roommate's emotions to try to get a sense of the big picture issue(s).

Using Emotions

Use your emotions and your roommate's emotions to create solutions that satisfy material interests and emotional interests.

Controlling Emotions

When you are addressing the conflict, be mindful of your emotions and make sure that they do not influence harsh reactions.

Everyone's proficiency is different in those categories so someone may be better at perceiving emotions than managing emotions. That is not to say that someone is more intelligent than the other, just to say that they understand the pieces of the puzzle a little differently.

So, even though your roommate may have a stone wall face when describing emotional issues, that is not to say that they do not see the other issues affecting you. Or not to say that someone that uses their emotions more than you cannot manage their emotions. It is important to understand and accommodate to make sure that no one is being hurt or offended in the process of solving the problem.

The Ladder of Inference

When you are engaging with someone it is important to see how they come to their conclusions. Here is a general framework for how people jump to their conclusions.

Regardless of if your conflict is based on a bold conclusion, here is the ladder of inference and how you should use it to negotiate your issue.

Actions based on the beliefs created by conclusions that were informed by assumptions rooted in understanding of selected reality.

Widespread belief based on conclusions derived from assumptions found in selected facts.

Conclusions based on the assumptions created based on selected facts.

Creating assumptions based on the personal understanding interpreted from selected facts.

Reading into and creating personal understanding of the selected facts observed.

Selected reality based on picking and choosing facts observed.

The current reality and facts that exist as they are

To the left is an adaptation of the ladder of inference created by Chris Argyris describing how people use the world around them to create their own understanding.

Just as with any ladder, you start from the bottom and work your way up. On this ladder you see how a person starts with the world around them as it is, and ends up building their own thought and action processes based on the things they choose to see and understand.

You're probably thinking right now, "That is a great ladder, but what does this have to do with my conflict negotiation?"

When negotiating with someone, your goal should be to keep all parties low on the ladder. Rather than using a roommate's skewed understanding of the situation and the world as they see it, you should try to keep the conversations grounded firmly in the facts and truth as you both see them.

So how do you do that?

You do this by searching for shared truths that you both agree on relating to this issue.

Start by sharing your understanding and ask them for theirs. Look for where your stories line up and take those as your shared reality. That will be the bottom rung of your ladders and you can try to stay low to prevent anyone from jumping to any conclusions.

Now that you have a better understanding of the internal processes to watch for, let's move on to the type of negotiation you are going to utilize.

Negotiating the Conflict

This is where we transition from the "why am I having this problem?" to "how should I resolve this problem?" and the answer is **Negotiation**.

Negotiation is an informal process driven by parties to create solutions to resolve conflicts.

Negotiation is perfect for roommate conflicts because it:

- Doesn't require outside help
- Each roommate has an equal say in the outcome
- The agreement is customized and can be as elaborate or simple as the roommates see fit

Negotiation takes many forms; see below which form works best for your needs.

INTEREST BASED

Interest based negotiation uses the needs and interests of the parties involved.

Interest based negotiation focuses on the needs, wants, and concerns of one of the parties

OBJECTIVE CRITERIA BASED

Objective criteria based negotiation focuses on fair, recognized policies that are published and respected.

Objective criteria comes in all forms from policies to established rules or laws.

Now let's take a look at what each of these methods look like.

Interest Based Negotiation

If you and your roommate are in conflict, and it stems from not seeing eye to eye on an issue based on values, assumptions, or actions, then interest based negotiation is the method you need.

Interest based negotiation focuses each roommate's needs equally and strives to create a new solution that satisfies everyone's needs.

This means that you may not be frustrated with your roommate, but rather with their interests and you can collaborate to create a solution.

Interests are needs, values, and ideas that a person holds. Here are some common roommate statements with their interests decoded:

STATEMENT

TRANSLATION

"I just need to get enough sleep"



"I need a sleeping schedule"

"I need you to respect my need to sleep"

"We should figure out what to do about all of these dishes."



"I would like to establish a routine"

"I prefer more cleanliness than we are currently living in"

"This is a tradition my family does every year for the holidays."



"I value my tradition"

"I would like you to respect my tradition"

"Our traditions can co-exist"

"You can't have someone stay with us for that long!"



"Our expectations do not meet"

"I would like to find a new arrangement that respects both of our values"

Guide to Interest based negotiation

Here is a guide to interest based negotiations if this is the way that you see your negotiation going.

Tell your roommate that you would like to discuss the _____ issue.

This is the start of the process, you are opening up the conversation so you can address the conflict together.

Sit down to discuss the issue

Sitting down and discussing the issue starts the road to resolution and shows commitment to the problem.

Tell your roommate your understanding of the issue.

At this step, tell your roommate what you think they should know about the issue.

Tell your roommate about how the issue affects you and what you believe your interests are

Here, illustrate how the conflict affects your day to day life and what you need to change to be successful.

Listen to your roommate's understanding of the issue and how it affects them and their interests.

Actively listen to your roommate(s) side of the story and try to pick up on the information beneath the surface that you didn't know.

Agree to negotiate a solution that satisfies everyone's interests

Agreeing to negotiate suggests that the problem can be solved and that you and your roommate(s) are committed to finding a solution that works.

Work together to collaborate and generate options that work for all roommates involved.

Work together to create pieces of the agreement that you can live with.

Look at the options and find the best options that solve your problem.

Evaluate the pieces you and your roommate(s) can live with and put the most applicable pieces together to create a durable solution that will last.

Come to an agreement about the options that create the suitable solution.

After you put the pieces together, ask each other if there is anything missing or forgotten.

(Optional) Write down your agreement.

At the end of it all, find the best way to keep track of the agreement either verbally or written down.

Objective Criteria Based Negotiation

If you and your roommate have a conflict and there is a fair policy or rule that is already widely used, then you may consider just framing an agreement based on that preexisting criteria.

This form of negotiation is procedurally heavy on the policies and/or laws that you and your roommate agree on as it relates to your issue.

Objective criteria are fair policies/ rules/ laws/ codes and procedures that treat all parties equally.

Notable criteria for conflicts you may be experiencing are:

The UO Student Conduct Code

<http://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-3-administration-student-affairs/ch-1-conduct/student-conduct-code>

The UO Social Misconduct Code

<https://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/SocialMisconduct.aspx>

The UO Housing Conduct Code

<https://hou.uoregon.edu/hou-includes/duckweb/15-16/uoh-rhcontract-2015.00.pdf>

The City of Eugene Housing Standards

<https://www.eugene-or.gov/index.aspx?NID=1356>

Guide to Objective Criteria based negotiation

Here is a guide to objective criteria based negotiations if this is the way that you see your negotiation going.

Tell your roommate that you would like to discuss the _____ issue.

At this point, you are opening up the conversation so you can address the conflict together.

Sit down to discuss the issue

Sitting down to discuss the issue symbolizes both of your commitment to resolving the issue.

Tell your roommate your understanding of the issue.

At this point, be sure to tell your roommate what you feel and think

Ask your roommate(s) about their understanding of the issue & listen to what they have to say.

This opportunity gives you the chance to hear what they think and hopefully find reasoning for their actions.

Agree to negotiate a solution based on existing policies/rules.

This step symbolizes the start of collaboration to move to find a solution.

Brainstorm applicable policies and/or rules that exist and relate to your situation

Work together to find the best rule or university policy that applies to your problem.

Agree on the applicable criteria and create a relevant version that is applicable to your issue.

Once you find the right criteria, make sure you both agree and adapt it to your issue.

(Optional) Write down your agreement.

Depending on your preferences this is the part where you can write down your agreement or just stick to a verbal agreement.

Preparation

Whether you choose to do negotiation based on interests, it is important to prepare yourself by taking stock of all of the important parts of your interests and your roommate's interests. Here is an adapted guide based on Robert Bordone's published work in 2005.

INTERESTS

When you are breaking down what you want to get out of a negotiation, you should always start with your interests. Interests are the needs and values that inform how a person acts.

When accounting for interests, it is important to ask yourself three major questions:

What is each party hoping to get out of the negotiation?

What are my interests?

What are my roommate's interests?

When you are preparing for a negotiation, sometimes it is hard to know exactly what your roommate is thinking/wanting. So in those contexts, just make educated guesses about what you think they may want.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives are important to consider because these inform your roommate's decision making if negotiations do not work. Your roommate may not care about negotiating doing dishes because alternatively they may favor just buying disposable dishes.

To determine alternatives, ask yourself these three questions:

What could each party do to solve this without negotiating?

What are my alternatives to negotiating?

What are my roommate's alternatives to negotiating?

OPTIONS

Options are crucial because these mark the points where you and your roommate will find agreement. Options are the pieces of agreement that you feel comfortable with doing to fulfill your side of the agreement.

To guide your option generation, ask yourself these three questions:

What parts are needed to create a solution to this conflict?

What am I comfortable doing to help solve this conflict?

What could I reasonably ask of my roommate to help solve this conflict?

RELATIONSHIP

Whether you went to high school with your roommate or were assigned randomly when you got to college, it is important to evaluate how you want your relationship to look after your negotiation. You may be looking to maintain a strong relationship or just keep a minimal contact relationship, it is important to express that in your negotiation.

While exploring your relationship trajectory just ask yourself:

How do I want this relationship to be in the future?

COMMUNICATION

Going into a negotiation, you often times do not know the exact needs that inform what the other side is asking for. In a way, part of the negotiation requires being a detective to help you understand the other party so you can both get what you want. This means you need to think about the things you need to know and the questions you need to ask.

When preparing for your negotiation, use these questions to inform what you need communicated:

What do I need to know about the other party so I can solve this conflict?

What questions do I need to ask to understand my roommate's interests?

OBJECTIVE CRITERIA

Whether you are going to use negotiation based on interest or on objective criteria, it is important to brain storm fair policies or guidelines already in existence to make sure that every receives the best possible outcome.

When brain storming fair objective criteria, just ask yourself:

Are there policies/laws/rules out there that relate to our conflict?

What policies/laws/rules relate to our conflict?

COMMITMENT

When you are getting ready to negotiate and construct a solution, you need to think about the foreseeable future and if there is anything that will stop your roommate from negotiating or honoring your arrangement.

Use these questions to determine if there are any issues that may affect the solution you create.

Are there any events that may affect our negotiation?

Are there any events that may affect our negotiated solution?

After reflecting on these different pieces you should be officially prepared to work with your roommate to solve your problem.

A prep chart with all of this information can be found in the back of this book titled: Appendix I.

Let's take a look at the degrees of agreement

Degrees of Agreement

Whether it is an agreement about dishwashing or an agreement about shared space use, different roommates like to record their agreements differently. Using this chart you can identify how in-depth you want to go with your agreement.

The spectrum spans from formal to informal agreements.

Informal

VERBAL

Sometimes a roommate agreement is sealed with a handshake and a smile. In these situations, both roommates agree to the basics of the agreement and believe that it is simple enough that it does not need to be written down. These agreements mainly consist of roommates verbally agreeing and understanding.

When using this option, consider:

This option is informal, dynamic and never really rocks the boat. However, when someone falls through on their end of the solution, this option is very difficult to enforce any real change.

WRITTEN

When roommate agreements require a little bit more formality because of agreed timelines or commitments, written agreements are used. Written agreements mainly consist of the bare bones principles written and both parties have access to the agreement either as a note on the fridge, a text conversation, or an e-mail.

When using this option, consider:

This option is easy, straightforward and never really imposing. Beware that some people may take offense to being asked to write the agreement down because it calls into question their ability to follow through.

DOCUMENTED

Either for preference or purpose, a formal document is used to show the commitment to the issue and to create accountability for roommates involved. Formal documents created by roommates are not legally binding but they do show a strong agreement between roommates.

When using this option, consider:

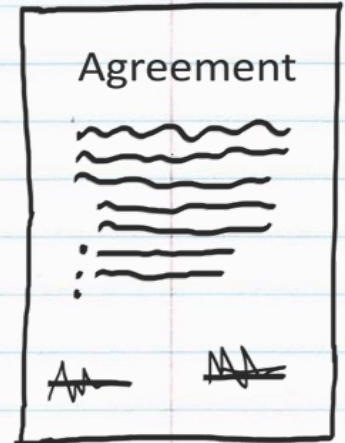
This option is perfect for informing all roommates about the goals, expectations, and future plans agreed upon. Be sure to consider that this is a time consuming option that does not have any enforceable legal implications.

Formal

Recording the agreement

If you choose that you want to document your agreement here is a guide of what to include.

Although informal roommate negotiations do not have any legal bearing, they do provide a strong reference point if any issues come up in the future.



Here are some things to include in your agreement:

The Date

Including the date creates a time frame so you can look back on what you decided.

Who is involved

Make sure to include the parties involved in this agreement so that it is very clear who is responsible.

What each party agrees to

Include what each party agrees to so that way each party is directly accountable for what they agreed to do.

When each party will act on their part

For time sensitive agreements that need to happen by a certain time or agreements for activities that happen consistently, it is important to include when each party will follow through with their part of the agreement to create enforceability and accountability.

Signatures of parties involved

Although this formality is not required since this agreement has no legal bearing, it is a symbol of agreement and closure that will provide a positive feeling moving forward.

Negotiation Guides

Now that you know what to expect and what to do to be successful in negotiation, you are ready to start the negotiation conversation with your roommate.

These guides will walk you through how to start the conversation, what issues you may want to sort out, and possible solutions.

For further advice, please look up the issue area that you are currently experiencing for more information.

Shared Space **30**

Cleanliness **31**

Preferences of lifestyle **32**

Missing/Unauthorized use of Property **33**

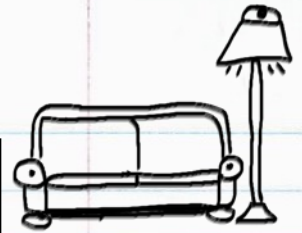
Cross Cultural Conflict **34**

Financial Dispute **35**

Extended Guests **36**

General Negotiation **37**

Shared Space Conflict



Shared space problems are issues that occur when more than one person shares a space with one (or more) roommate(s). In shared space conflicts, incompatible views can occur based on interests in use, management, and maintenance preferences.

Below are suggestions for ways to start, what to talk about, and how to keep negotiation going

OPENING THE CONVERSATION

Opening the conversation may be as simple or elegant as you see fit. You can start the conversation with a question or a statement.

Question

- "Do you have the time to talk about our shared space?"
- "What are your thoughts about how our shared space is being used?"
- "Can I tell you about how our shared space use is affecting me?"
- "Have you been noticing a little bit of tension created by our shared space?"

Statement

- "I think we should talk about our shared space use because it is affecting me."
- "It seems like our shared space use is creating a bit of a problem."
- "In my opinion, it is in our best interest to sort out our shared space use."
- "I think we need to talk about our shared space when you have the time."

POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES TO DISCUSS

Substantive issues are the process issue areas that make up a conflict.

Substantive issue areas to discuss to solve shared space conflicts are:

- Use Expectations
- Use Schedules
- Dividing the space
- Cleanliness preferences

Here are examples of how to address these issues:

- "I think we can solve our conflict by discussing the (insert substantive issue)."
- "In order to serve both of our interests, we should try sorting out (insert substantive issue)."
- "It is really important to me that we talk about the (insert substantive issue)"

KEEPING THE PROCESS GOING

Sometimes the road to resolution is long and bumpy, so these are suggestions to keep the negotiation and resolution going forward.

Continuing Collaboration

- "I really like that solution, lets keep that going."
- "We are doing great, do you think there is anything we are missing?"
- "That's a great idea. Maybe we could add..."

Taking a Break

- "I really like the way we things are going but I think we should take a break to stay fresh."
- "I appreciate the start, but it seems like maybe we should take a break and gain some traction when we come back"



Cleanliness

One person's dream may be another person's nightmare. When neat freaks and slobs collide, the argument will always be messy. With this in mind, it is important for roommates to negotiate standards and schedules that may satisfy these different needs.

Below are suggestions for ways to start, what to talk about, and how to keep negotiation going

OPENING THE CONVERSATION

Opening the conversation may be as simple or elegant as you see fit. You can start the conversation with a question or a statement.

Question

"Do you have the time to talk about the cleanliness of our room?"

"Do you have any opinion about how clean our room is/should be?"

"Can we talk for a second about how our dirty room affects me?"

"Do you think our cleanliness preferences are the same?"

Statement

"I need to talk to you about how our room's lack of cleanliness."

"In my opinion, we should make some changes about our room's cleanliness."

"It seems like the room cleanliness is creating a bit of an issue."

"I think we need to address our room's cleanliness to help us down the road."

POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES TO DISCUSS

Substantive issues are the process issue areas that make up a conflict.

Here are some substantive issues to address to try to solve your conflict:

- Cleanliness preferences
- Rotation of cleaning
- Trash
- Shared Space
- Dishes
- Vacuum

Here are examples of how to address these issues:

"I think we could solve our issue by figuring out (insert substantive issue)."

"How do you feel about working together to (insert substantive issue)?"

"I think we both will feel a lot better moving forward if we talk about (insert substantive issue) to help solve our issue."

KEEPING THE PROCESS GOING

Whether you choose to keep the process going or take a break, here are some suggestions to keep moving forward.

Continuing Collaboration

"That is a great point, we should run with that."

"I agree completely. To build on that I think we could also (insert suggestion)"

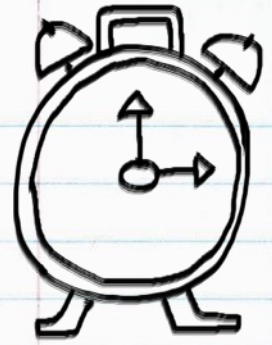
"I think we are making great progress, but do you think we are overlooking anything?"

Taking a Break

"I like where this is heading but I think that we should take a break and pick it up again later today."

"I think we are both committed to helping, but I think we should take a break and come back to this with momentum later today."

Living Style Preferences



Whether you are a night owl or an early bird, arguing with roommates about lifestyle preferences is for the birds. To preserve harmony of living, roommates often have to negotiate the rules of engagement.

Below are suggestions for ways to start, what to talk about, and how to keep negotiation going

OPENING THE CONVERSATION

Opening the conversation may be as simple or elegant as you see fit. You can start the conversation with a question or a statement.

Question

- "Do you have a second to talk about our different lifestyle preferences?"
- "Have you noticed a little bit of a clash between the way we live?"
- "Can I tell you about how our different preferences in living styles is affecting me?"

Statement

- "I need to talk to you about our different living styles and how its impacting me."
- "In my opinion, I think we can work together to help both of our living styles work together."

POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES TO DISCUSS

Substantive issues are the process issue areas that make up a conflict.

Here are some of the issue areas to address that may help solve your conflict:

- Music Volume
- Limits on Noise
- Sleep Schedules
- Study Times
- Respecting needs

Here are examples of how to address these issues:

- "If we can address (insert substantive issue), I think we can help meet both of our interests."
- "Do you think we can talk about (insert substantive issue) so we can solve our conflict?"
- "I think it would help both of us if we talk about (insert substantive issue) to move in the right direction."

KEEPING THE PROCESS GOING

Here are some tips to help continue progress even if you take a break first

Continuing Collaboration

- "That is such a great idea. I think we can do even more along that line."
- "Good point! I also think we could.."
- "I really think we have some great stuff here but are we missing anything?"
- "I think that we could add something a little bit more."

Taking a Break

- "It's clear we are both committed to solving this conflict, but I think that we should take a quick break to hopefully end this stalemate."
- "I would hate to lose this valuable progress today, but I think we should take a quick break to come back with a full head of steam."

Missing/Unauthorized Use of Property



Control freaks & borrowers often clash when sharing is not the same as caring. To prevent fears of theft and establish understanding, it is important roommates agree on what sharing is agreeable.

Below are suggestions for ways to start, what to talk about, and how to keep negotiation going

OPENING THE CONVERSATION

Opening the conversation may be as simple or elegant as you see fit. You can start the conversation with a question or a statement.

Question

- "Can we take a minute to talk about using each other's stuff?"
- "What are your thoughts on using each other's property?"
- "How do you feel about using each other's property?"
- "Can I talk to you about how we are using each other's belongings?"

Statement

- "We should talk about using each other's stuff, if you have a minute."
- "I need to talk to you about our sharing policy these days."
- "In my opinion, our living situation would improve if we sit down to talk about our current understanding of sharing/using each other's things."

POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES TO DISCUSS

Substantive issues are the process issue areas that make up a conflict.

Here are some substantive issue areas to talk about to help resolve your conflict:

- Asking for permission of use
- A schedule for fair use
- Splitting ownership costs
- Establishing off limits items
- Establishing anytime use items

Here are examples of how to address these issues:

"I think that if we can settle (insert substantive issue), we can really solve our current conflict."

"It seems like we are really hung up on (insert substantive issue) and if we can find a way to solve it, we can solve our conflict."

KEEPING THE PROCESS GOING

Occasionally, keeping the process going is the hardest part. Here are some tips for keeping the ball rolling or taking a break.

Continuing Collaboration

- "I think that we are making great strides, so let's keep going along this line."
- "That's a good point. Maybe we could also include (insert alternative)."
- "This is really shaping up nicely. Do you think there are any areas that we could be overlooking?"
- "I like that a lot. Is there anything you want to add?"

Taking a Break

- "I hate to say it but I think we are just spinning our wheels over this. Maybe we could take a quick break and then come back with clear minds."
- "Before we reach an agreement, I think we should take a quick break."

Cross Cultural Conflicts



Certain living situations provide a new territory for roommates of different cultures to explore. Sometimes one roommate's norms may catch another off-guard. For this reason it is important to negotiate a space that allows all roommate cultures to coexist.

Below are suggestions for ways to start, what to talk about, and how to keep negotiation going

OPENING THE CONVERSATION

Opening the conversation may be as simple or elegant as you see fit. You can start the conversation with a question or a statement.

Question

"Have you been feeling that our cultures are clashing a little bit, too?"

"Do you have a minute to talk about helping our cultures coexist?"

"I don't know about you, but my culture is a big part of my life, do you think we could talk briefly about helping our cultures coexist?"

Statement

"I think we should work out a way so we can both express our cultures."

"I feel that the cultures we value are clashing right now and that we need to find a way to allow them to coexist."

POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES TO DISCUSS

Substantive issues are the process issue areas that make up a conflict.

Here are some issue areas to address that may help solve your cultural conflict:

- Respecting traditions
- Invitations to participate
- Providing advance notice about upcoming holy days/rituals/practices.

Here are examples of how to address these issues:

"I think we can get to the heart of our conflict if we can address (insert substantive issue)"

"I think that the biggest issue to discuss that relates to our cross cultural conflict is: (insert substantive issue)"

"One part that is important to me in this conflict is: (insert substantive issue)."

KEEPING THE PROCESS GOING

Resolving cross cultural conflicts takes time and effort to build a durable agreement. Here are examples to continue collaboration or taking a break.

Continuing Collaboration

"I think that could definitely work. Are there any other options along that same train of thought?"

"I see where you're coming from It sounds to me like you're saying we should..."

"What are your thoughts on this?"

Taking a Break

"I think that we should take a break to process everything and make sure we come back ready to work on a durable solution."

"I think that we aren't quite seeing eye to eye yet. Let's take a quick break and come back renewed and ready to work together."

I.O.U.

Financial Dispute

When money is involved, roommate relations often pay the price. There are times when one roommate may have to help cover the expenses of another roommate (with the assumption they will be paid back). Sometimes the most harmonious way to sort out financial problems is by negotiating an agreeable payment schedule.

Below are suggestions for ways to start, what to talk about, and how to keep negotiation going

OPENING THE CONVERSATION

Opening the conversation may be as simple or elegant as you see fit. You can start the conversation with a question or a statement.

Question

"Do you have the time for us to sort out this money issue?"

"Have you noticed the extra tension and stress this unresolved money dispute has caused us? Do you think we should try and fix it?"

Statement

"I know that money is a tough subject to address, but I think we should make a commitment to solve our problem so we don't have to worry about it anymore."

"I know that everyone is in a different place financially and that is why I think it is important we solve our little financial issue as soon as possible."

POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES TO DISCUSS

Substantive issues are the process issue areas that make up a conflict.

Here are some substantive issues to address to try to solve your financial conflict:

- Repayment in a lump sum
- Creating a payment schedule
- Negotiating costs
- Debt forgiveness

Here are examples of how to address these issues:

"I think that we should try to figure out (insert substantive issue) to help resolve our current financial conflict."

"If we resolve (insert substantive issue) I think that we can really take steps in the right direction to solve our conflict"

KEEPING THE PROCESS GOING

Negotiating money problems can take time and effort. Here are some tips to continue collaboration or taking a break.

Continuing Collaboration

"I think that we are really working well together. Let's keep it up."

"That's a great idea. Maybe we could try(insert alternative)."

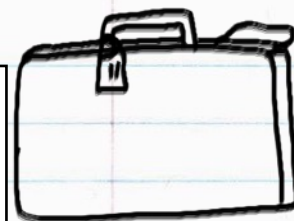
"I agree. I think we could also (insert addition)"

Taking a Break

"I think we have made great headway. But maybe we should take a break to step back and then finalize it when we return."

"I appreciate our commitment to solve this problem but maybe a quick break would do us both some good."

Extended Guests



Whether it is your roommate's best friend from Ohio or their significant other from down the hall, extended guests may be familiar to some roommates but strangers to others. It is important for roommates to negotiate the expectations and procedures for extended guests.

Below are suggestions for ways to start, what to talk about, and how to keep negotiation going

OPENING THE CONVERSATION

Opening the conversation may be as simple or elegant as you see fit. You can start the conversation with a question or a statement.

Question

"Can we talk about our thoughts on guests staying with us?"

"Do you have any time to talk about people visiting us and staying with us?"

"Can we talk through our thoughts about having guests stay with us and how we feel they will impact us."

Statement

"I believe we should come to some sort of an agreement about having guests stay with us."

"I think it is in both of our interests to create some understanding about how we feel towards having guests stay with us."

POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES TO DISCUSS

Substantive issues are the process issue areas that make up a conflict.

Here are some substantive issues to address to try to solve your guest conflict:

- Length of stay limits
- Boundaries
- Property use
- Restrains on specific days

Here are examples of how to address these issues:

"I think that the heart of our problem lies in (insert substantive issue) and if we can find a way to address that, we can solve our conflict."

"Our solution would work best for me if we addressed (insert substantive issue)."

"It sounds to me like we are getting hung up on (insert substantive issue)"

KEEPING THE PROCESS GOING

.Here are some examples to help continue collaboration or take a quick break.

Continuing Collaboration

"I think that is a great idea. Let's see if we can come up with any others just like that."

"I believe you are making a great point but what if we tried (insert alternative)"

"I think if we can keep building on this we can solve our conflict in no time. Do you have any other suggestions?"

Taking a Break

"Do you mind if we take a quick break and then come back refreshed and ready to create an agreement?"

"I really think it says a lot that we are sitting down to work this out but maybe we should take a quick break to switch things up and shake up this stalemate."

General Negotiation

Worried that your conflict did not fall into one of those other categories? Fear not! Below is a list of conversation openers, interest expressing phrases, option generation phrases, and agreement phrases that are guaranteed to help under any circumstances.

CONVERSATION OPENERS

"Do you have a minute to talk about (insert issue)?"
"Can we talk about something that has been on my mind lately?"
"Have you been noticing we have had a little trouble with (insert issue)?"
"Have you been noticing we have had a little trouble with (insert issue)?"
"Do you have any thoughts on (insert issue)?"
"Is it okay with you if I get something off of my chest?"
"I don't know about you but I have been having a lot of trouble dealing with (insert issue). Do you have some time so we can talk about it?"
"How are you doing today? Has anything seemed a little off recently?"
"I would like to talk about something important to me. I have been a little (insert emotion) because of the (insert issue)"

EXPRESSING INTERESTS

Statements for you

"What matters most to me is: (insert interest)"
"The reason I have been acting this way is because I am trying to satisfy my need for (insert interest)."
"If I could summarize my interests they would be: (insert interests)."
"I think that it's important to know that I really value (insert interest)"

Questions for your roommate

"What matters most to you in this situation?"
"Do you feel like you have any interests that aren't currently being met?"
"Are there any interests that have been informing the way you have been acting recently?"
"What matters to you that I may not be able to see?"
"If there was one thing that I needed to know about you and your interests to solve this problem, what would it be?"

CREATING OPTIONS COLLABORATIVELY

Statements for you

"I like that option a lot!"
"That's a good idea but it doesn't really help my interests as much."
"I appreciate your great input but I think we could try focusing on (different interest/option)"
"I think that's a great option and I think we could tweak it and do (suggested alternative)"
"I think that I could (insert option) if you are comfortable committing to doing (insert option)."

Questions for your roommate

"What do you feel comfortable committing to?"
"Are there any options that you could live with if it means that it will solve our problem?"
"If you aren't happy with my options, do you have any alternative options we could consider?"
"Do we share any common interests?"
"Do you see any options that conflict with meeting your interests?"
"What do you think we could do to satisfy both of our interests at the same time?"

REACHING AN AGREEMENT

Statements for you

"If you can commit to this, I can commit to this too"
"This is very close to what I hoped for- I think we figured it out!"
"I hate to say it, but I just don't think we are at a fair point. I say we take a break and come back with a fresh set of eyes in an hour or two."
"I think we should look into other solutions and look at generating some more options."

Questions for your roommate

"What do you think of this agreement?"
"Does this agreement seem fair to you? If not, how can we make it better for both of us?"
"I just really feel like this solution is one sided, is there any wiggle room to help me satisfy my interests?"
"Do you see anything in our new agreement that might not work out in the long run?"
"Do you see any reason's or problems in the future that may make it hard for either of us to honor this agreement?"

Last Minute Tips and Tricks

Now, you are officially on your way to becoming a full-fledged negotiator. You are now equipped to tackle any roommate issue. Before you go, here are some last minute tips and tricks:

Try being transparent about your interests from the very beginning to build trust and create a collaborative environment.

Try charting out ideas and options on a piece of paper to help create a visual record of all of the possibilities

Try Paraphrasing:
To demonstrate active listening and collaborative intent.

Try listening and repeating the main points of your roommate's statment in your own words when they finish talking.

To deescalate tough conversations try using " I feel" statements instead of stating opinions or judgements as facts

Set time limits on speaking opportunities to allow for fair chances to speak and listen

Take turns expressing each party's "Key Message."

This message is the one thing you want the other party to know about your interest in the conflict.

Do not put down your roommate's suggestions.

Instead, work together to create options and evaluate fairly based on what will work best.

Conclusion

Congratulations! You've made it this far and now have all the tools necessary to manage your conflicts as they arise.

Be warned, that conflicts never really go away, they just transform and crop up in different ways. But with the skills you have learned, you will now be able to handle any situation with a level-headed, problem solving approach.

Further in the future, if you decide to move in with a significant other, move in with a friend, or even move to live with relatives, you are now equipped with the tools to negotiate any type of conflict that may stand in the way of your happiness.

For further assistance, please see the provided resources or feel free to check back through this book for an issue area guide that focuses on the issue that you are currently experiencing.

My Sources as your resources

Whether it's for pleasure, curiosity, or implementation, here are my resources for further information on negotiation:

Beyond Winning

(2004) By Richard Mnookin, Scott Peppet,
and Andrew Tulumello

Getting to Yes

(1991) By William Ury, Roger Fisher, and Bruce Patton

Harvard Program on Negotiation

www.pon.harvard.edu

Interest Based Bargaining

(2003) By Brad Spangler

Negotiation Preparation- The Seven Elements of Negotiation

(2005) Michael Moffitt and Robert Bordone

Conflict Styles- Conflict Mode Instrument

(1974) By Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann

The Ladder of Inference

Overcoming Organizational Defenses Facilitating Organizational Learning
(1990) by Chris Argyris

Emotional Intelligence

(2001) By John Mayer and Peter Salovey

Real College: The essential guide to student life

(2004) By Douglas Stone and Elizabeth Tippet

My Roommate is Driving Me Crazy

(2009) By Susan Fee and Julie Scandora

The College Roommate from Hell

(2009) By Linda Fiore

Rules for Roommates: Reclaiming Your Space and Your Sanity

(2001) By Mary Lou Podlasiak

APPENDIX I

What To Account For:

Take a minute to answer each of these questions to best prepare for a well rounded negotiation

Interests:

What is each party hoping to get out of this?

Mine:

My Roommate's:

Alternatives:

What are the other options outside of negotiating?

Mine:

My Roommate's:

Options:

What parts can each party do to resolve this conflict?

Mine:

My Roommate's:

Relationship:

How do you want the relationship to work between you and your roommate in the future?

Objective Criteria:

What are some rules, policies, or laws that will help you and your roommate measure a fair deal?

Communication:

What information do you want to know to help you make your decision?

Commitment:

What are the possible issues that may keep this negotiation from working?

