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The roommate factor

For college students, living away from home can be a test of temper and sanity, but there are ways of coping

By Jonah Schrogin • Freelance Reporter

Co-ed. Same sex. Best friend. Residence hall buddies.

There are many options to consider when thinking about a roommate. Students can live by themselves in a single residence hall room or in a one-bedroom apartment. It's possible to rent an apartment for two, three or four people. And some live in a house that can accommodate up to eight people.

Sophomore Michael Thompson lived in a single residence hall room this year after living in a double last year. He said it was important to share a room for one year, but he enjoyed having the extra space of a single.

"It's hard to share such a small space with another person," he said. "Once you've had the experience of sharing, there's no need to do it for another year."

Thompson said even though he lived in a single room, "It's still community living."

He said he liked that there was always someone around, and that he did not have to worry about making his own food.

"If you're coming back (to the residence halls), a single is the way to go," he said.

Another possibility is to live with one other person, be it a random roommate, a friend or a significant other.

A student, who did not want to give her name, lived with a male friend in a two-person apartment.

"I didn't expect to be the only one who was cleaning all the time," she said. "Eventually, about two months ago, I went on strike, and my apartment's been disgusting ever since."

The mess got so bad she stopped enjoying coming home. She said a reason for their problems was the lack of communication early in the year. She said she will use her knowledge from this year to ensure a better living situation next year.

"I'm going to have to lay firmer ground rules (with my new roommates) from the beginning," she said. "We just figured we would work it out as we went along which has not worked out."

Based on her experience, living with a friend of the opposite sex was difficult.

"Try to know the person you're living with," she said. "You should really make sure you're compatible with that person. It has the potential to ruin a friendship."

Junior Brian Taylor is living with his girlfriend of two years this year and is planning on doing so next year as well.

"We have disagreements and

then it sucks, but other than that it's pretty good," he said. "I'd do it again if I had to."

Taylor said a benefit of living with his girlfriend is that he is never alone, and he doesn't have to go back and forth between her place and his. He said living together is not the best situation for all couples, however.

"It depends on the type of relationship you have," he said. "It doesn't work for everybody. You have to evaluate your relationship and see if you're at that point."

There is also the possibility of living with three or four people of the same sex.

Junior Nikki Probst is living with three other girls, all of whom she knew prior to moving in with them.

She said some of the challenges of living with three other people include having people pay bills on time and sharing things such as food and chores. She said there is always hustle and bustle in four-bedroom apartments.

"I think it's good because you're not always by yourself, it makes the utilities really cheap, and you have a guaranteed Friday night date," she said.

Probst reiterated the importance of knowing the people you're going to live with.

"If you don't really know them that well, things can explode in your face," she said.

Sophomore Ben Nussbaum lived in a house with four females and one male this year.

He said he liked his living situation especially because he missed out on living in the residence halls a year ago.

"I got lucky and got some roommates that were pretty low maintenance as far as the drama factor is concerned," he said.

Nussbaum said the most interesting part of living in a co-ed house was when two of his roommates started dating. Nussbaum said in-house dating could create problems, but after the couple broke up, the two were still best friends. Even though this situation worked out, Nussbaum advised against in-house dating.

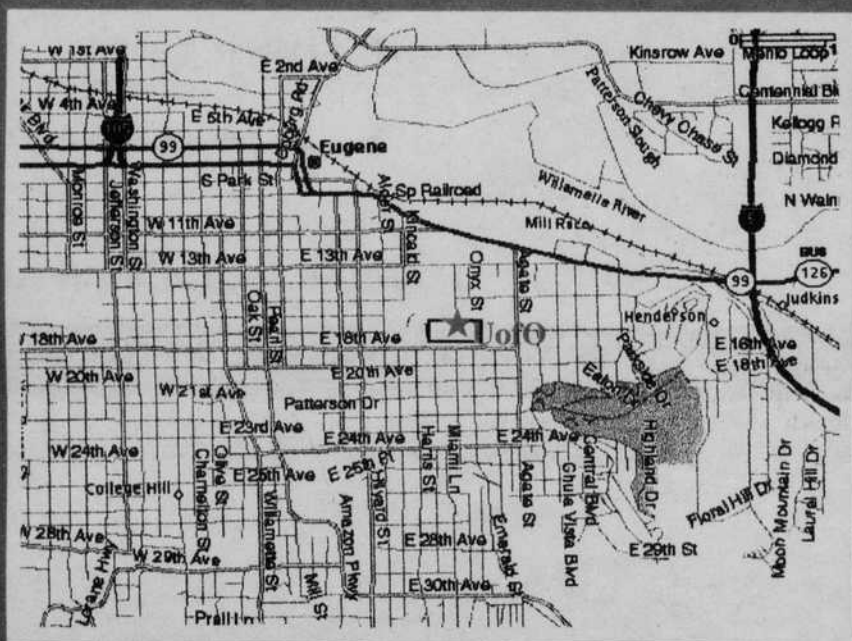
"Try to establish a no-dating in-house rule because it will help avoid drama," he said.

Nussbaum said living in a co-ed situation could be fine if a person has a personality compatible with living with the opposite sex.

"It's a lot of fun," he said. "I got lucky with having good roommates, and that's what it comes down to in any living situation is having good roommates."

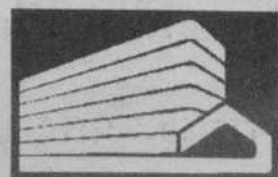
Jonah Schrogin is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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