

House mate



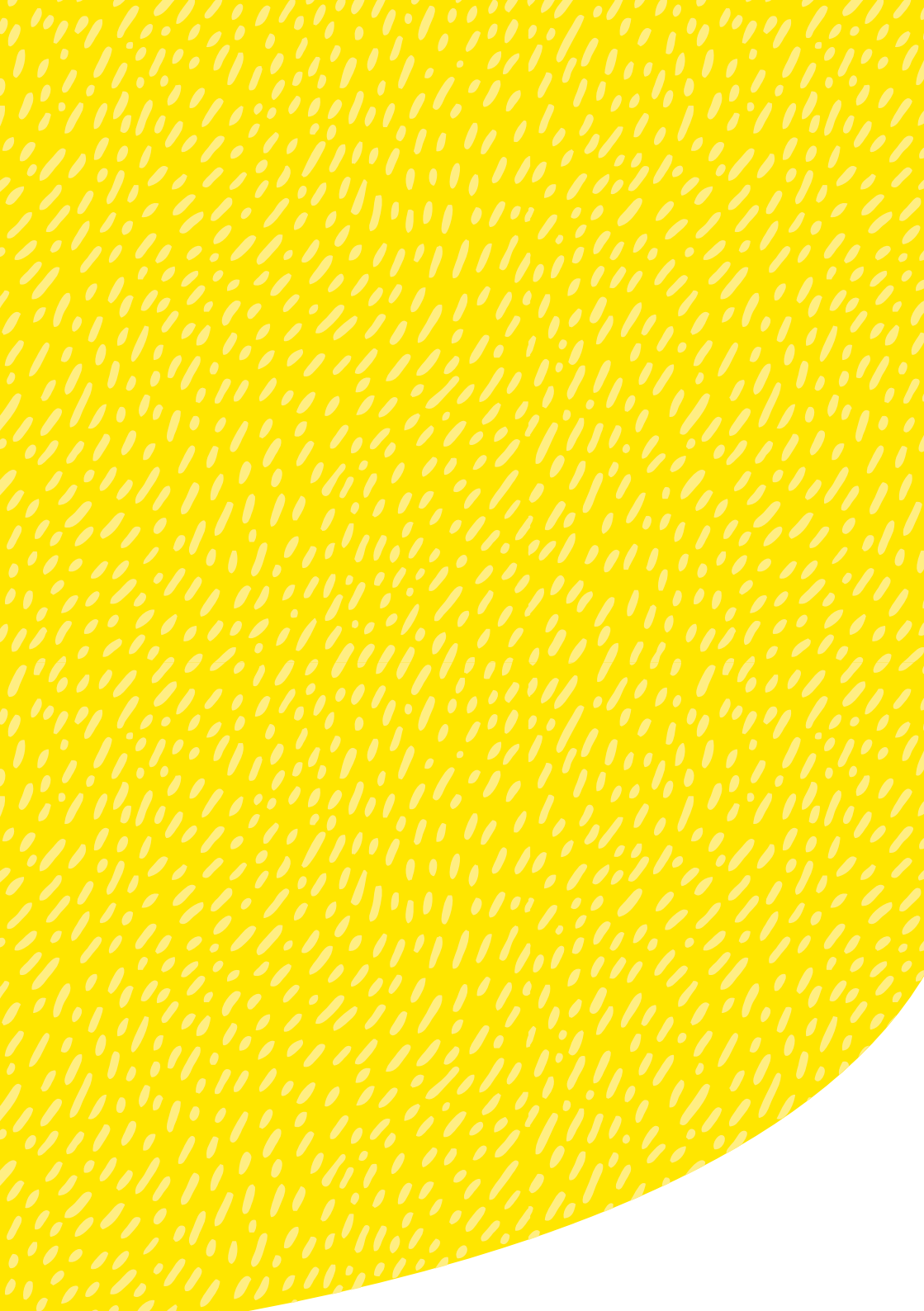
Handbook

Your guide to
being a great
roommate



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

**STUDENT
LIVING**





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Introduction

Welcome to Student Living!

This is an amazing opportunity for you to live and learn with people from all over the world who could end up being your life-long friends.

Sometimes you find people that you really get along with, other times it can take a bit more work to form connections with new people. This handbook is filled with practical tips to help you connect with your new roommates and create a caring and respectful living environment where everyone feels safe and valued.

KEY TERMS AT STUDENT LIVING

- **Residential Mentor:** A student-staff member who is employed by Student Living to help you have a great and safe experience while you are living on campus. They are your first port-of-call for questions if you need assistance.
- **Unit:** There are lots of different types of living environments at Student Living (e.g. studios, one bed, two bed, five share and 10 share apartments), so the word 'unit' is a generic term used to describe any living space where you have shared spaces (such as a kitchen, lounge room or bathroom) with other residents.
- **Floor:** A term generally used in The Towers (North, South, East and West), at Barahineban and at Edwards Hall (Main Hall) to describe a level of the building e.g. Floor 1. Each floor will have a Residential Mentor.
- **Block:** A term used at Evatt House, International House and Edwards Hall (Self-Catered) to describe a group of units (which can be five or 10 shares) that make up a block e.g. C Block. Each block will have a Residential Mentor.
- **Corridor:** A term used at Edwards Hall to describe bedrooms that are placed along a corridor with no shared living space or kitchen.
- **Wing:** A term used at Blue Gum House, Ourimbah to describe the different living spaces. Residential Mentors oversee all of Blue Gum House.
- **Five/Six/Seven and 10 share units:** This refers to the number of people who share a unit.
- **Roommate:** the people that you share a living space or unit with or who live around you on a corridor.





Getting to know each other

- 1. Take time to get to know your roommates when you first move into your unit**
- 2. Discuss how you will deal with shared costs**
- 3. Have a discussion around how you want to live together and agree on some mutual expectations for each other**

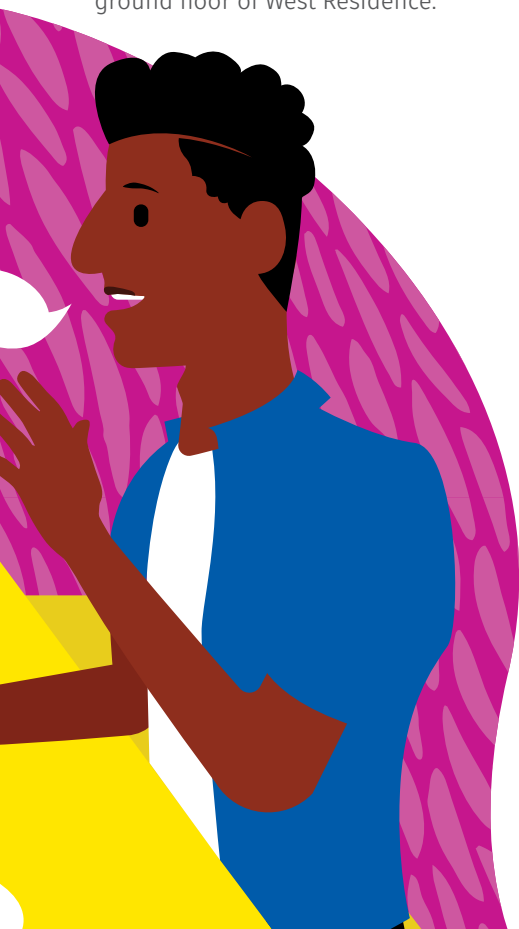


When you first move into your new home at Student Living, it can be an equally exciting and nerve-wracking time.

When you are sharing a living space with other people, regardless of whether you are a new or returning residents, it is important to start forming relationships early on. Getting to know each other is an important step in this process.

There are lots of things that you can do to get to know your roommates and allow them to get to know you:

- Your Residential Mentor (RM) might have placed a sign on your door that helps you tell other people about yourself. If not, you can get a copy [here](#) or pick one up from the Student Living office on the ground floor of West Residence.



- Set aside some time to have a meeting with everyone who lives in the unit or on your corridor. You could ask your Residential Mentor to come along or you could decide to run it yourselves.
- Talk about what you need from each other as room-mates and set some mutually agreeable expectations for living together.
- If you share a kitchen and living space, talk about how you deal with your shared costs, like cleaning products and toilet paper. One way to do this is for all members of the unit to put in a small amount of money each semester and have one person in charge of purchasing shared products. You can rotate this person throughout the year. Make sure to keep the receipt when it is your turn to re-stock!
- Shared items that you may wish to purchase include:
 - Dishwashing liquid
 - Dishwashing wand that can be filled with liquid plus replacement heads
 - Steel wool or scouring sponge for pots and pans
 - Spray and Wipe (or similar) disinfectant
 - Liquid soap for kitchen and bathrooms
 - Sponges for bench tops and tables
 - Jif cream cleanser (or similar) for mid-year and end-of-year clean
 - Towels for the kitchen
 - Toilet paper for bathroom
(Toilet paper can be flushed down the toilet in Australia)



Making friends

1. Making friends isn't easy!

Making new friends can be easy for some people but sometimes it can be really challenging. Here are a few strategies that you can put in place to help you form new friendships:

- Show that you are interested in others – ask people questions about their life and interests.
- Show that you are trustworthy and positive - don't gossip about others and show people that you are a kind and supportive person to be around.

2. Put in the time to get to know those around you

3. Show that you are a positive and trustworthy person

- Create opportunities to socialise – invite people to activities that you have organised rather than waiting for others to invite you. Be open to new interests and activities.
- Join a UON Club or Society – get involved and find your people!
- Accept that you can't always be right and other people can't always be wrong. Being open-minded and embracing other people's ideas has the potential to lead to more opportunities for connections.
- Nurture old and new friendships – give people in your life the time and attention they deserve, and they will do the same for you.

Maintaining connections

1. Spending time with your roommates on a regular basis is an important step in developing friendships

All relationships take work, including your relationship with your roommates. That means setting aside time regularly to chat, hang out, and address any issues that might be occurring.

Here are some tips that you can use to spend time with your roommates:

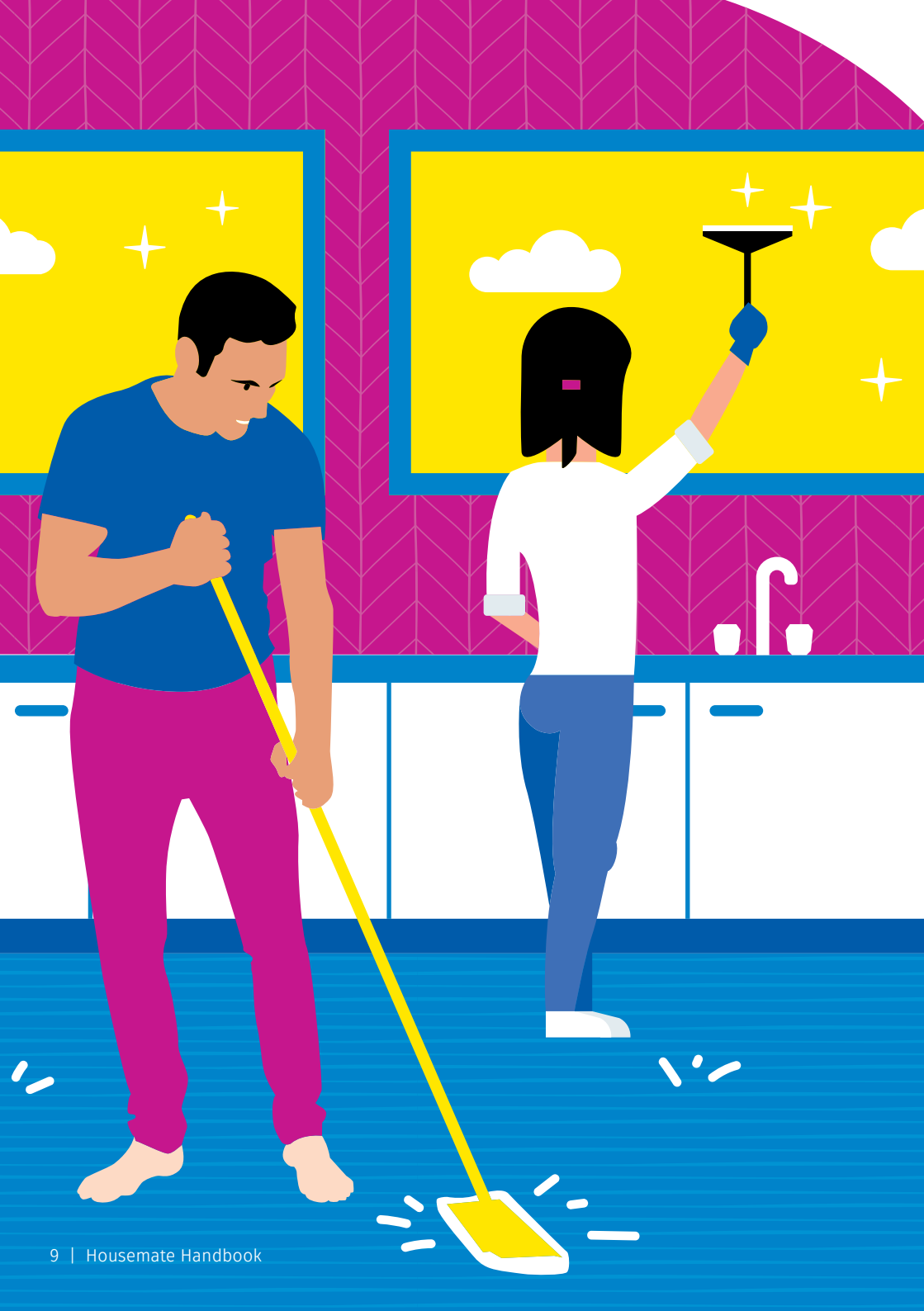
- Have dinner together one night per week.
- Hold a Dessert Night once every week. You can either set up a roster where one or two people provide dessert for everyone or everyone could bring their own.
- Have a Potluck Dinner one night per week where everyone brings food to share.
- Check out the [No Money No Time](#) website for cheap and easy recipes.
- Pick a show that you all enjoy watching (think The Bachelor, If You Are the One, Survivor, MasterChef, The Story of Minglan or Call My Agent) and watch it together.
- Hold a Movie Night once a week. Take turns in providing snacks and picking the movie (maybe you could introduce each other to your favourite childhood movies).

2. Make a plan to spend time together on a regular basis doing something fun

3. These regular activities are a great way to share your interests with your roommates e.g. favourite movie or a meal that makes you think of a happy memory.







Being a great roommate

1.

Think about the impact of your actions and behaviours on your roommates

2.

Everyone should contribute to the housework that comes with living in a shared living environment

3.

Complete the Cultural Competence Program to gain an insight into the impact of culture on our daily lives.

All residents have a responsibility to contribute positively to their living environment. You can be a great roommate by following a few simple tips:

THINGS TO DO

- Be respectful. Your behaviour will impact the people around you (positively and negatively).
- Do your fair share of the housework. Use the cleaning rosters provided by Student Living to ensure everyone takes part in looking after the shared living spaces.
- Keep communication open. If you're going away or staying somewhere else for the night, let your roommates know so they don't worry about you.
- Look to compromise. We are not always going to get along, but we do need to consider the needs of others, as well as the [Student Living Standards](#).
- Learn about bridging cultural differences by completing the [Cultural Competence Program](#). This online module can help increase your understanding on the impact of culture on your everyday life so that you can better understand the perspective of your roommates.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Don't store your stuff in the common rooms or corridors. Keep your possessions in your room or in the kitchen cupboards.
- Don't leave a mess in the bathroom. Make sure you clean up after yourself and remember that you can flush toilet paper down the toilet in Australia.
- Don't forget that the walls are thin. Keep noise at night to a minimum, whether it be playing video games, calling family in another time zone or enjoying the company of another person.
- Don't ignore issues. Work with your Residential Mentor to address concerns in your unit.

Having difficult conversations

1.

It is often hard to discuss the issues that we might be having with another person's behaviour.

2.

Putting effort into forming positive relationships with roommates can make hard conversations easier.

3.

Come from a place of kindness. Focus on the behaviour, not the person.

It can be really challenging to have hard conversations with the people that you live with. It can feel easier to not deal with the issue at all and ignore it, but this can often lead to the issue reaching a crisis point which isn't healthy for anyone. You have the right to feel safe and comfortable in your living space so if something is making you uncomfortable, talking about it can be a great first step to dealing with the issue.

If you put time and energy into forming positive connections with your roommates by spending time together and getting to know each other, having hard conversations can be easier.

- Have the conversation at a mutually agreeable time.
- Meet in a private space where you both feel comfortable.
- Don't be vague. Sensitively name the behaviour that is causing an issue within the unit.
- Keep the focus on the person's behaviour. It isn't that the person is a bad person, but that their behaviour is causing an issue within the unit. Explain the impact of the behaviour on you, for example, "when you (insert behaviour), it makes me feel (insert impact on you or the unit)". This can increase empathy and understanding.

- Explain the impact of the behaviour on you. This can increase empathy and understanding.
- Empathise with the other person's experience. What is motivating their behaviour?

It is always important to remember that discussions should always come from a place of kindness, even when we might be upset with the behaviour of the other person. It is also best to have these conversations face-to-face.

Don't rely on chat groups, post-it notes or whiteboards to convey the issues that you are experiencing.

Don't forget that your Residential Mentor is here to support you in dealing with issues that might be occurring in your unit. You can speak with your Residential Mentor before you have the conversation with your roommate to develop a plan and your Residential Mentor can support you to have tough conversations with your roommates.



Your cleaning roster

A weekly cleaning roster is important for several reasons:

- Cleaning a shared living space is everyone's responsibility and a roster keeps people accountable.
- It keeps cleaning manageable and means that the mid-year and end-of-year cleaning tasks won't be as difficult and you'll maximise the chance of getting the majority of your deposit back at the end of the year.
- It means that our cleaning staff can do their job more effectively. Cleaners are not supposed to touch personal property. Mess and clutter on benches, tables and floors means that the cleaners can't do their best work in your unit.
- It will help you to pass the quarterly Living Standards Inspections conducted by Student Living staff.
- It makes for a much more positive living environment for everyone.
- It is an opportunity to learn skills that will assist you when you move out of Student Living.
- It's an opportunity to bond. Make it fun by turning some music on and spending time together to do the cleaning.

Weekly cleaning rosters for residents who live in five, six, seven and 10 share units, as well as mid-year and end of year rosters for studios, one and two bedroom units are available [here](#) or from the Student Living office on the ground floor of West Residence.

If you live in a studio, one bedroom or two bedroom apartment with another person, sitting down with them and creating a weekly roster that suits you both is a great place to start.

Tips on using the roster:

- Agree on a day that the roster starts each week and rotate all the jobs on this day.
- Agree on a day once per week that all of the jobs will be completed.
- Use the provided rosters to cut jobs out and use Blue Tack to stick allocated jobs to food cupboards or bedroom doors - whichever is appropriate for your unit.
- The person who is on bin duty for the week is responsible for rotating the jobs ready for the next week.

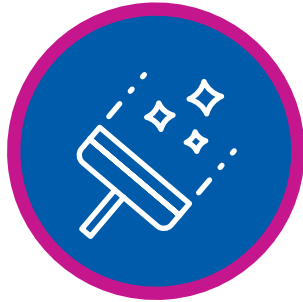
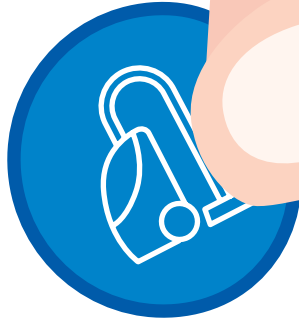


DAYS

TASK

MONDAY
JACK

TUESDAY
SALLY





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UON Student Living



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