



Your Family Just Got A Whole Lot Bigger

The Ins and Outs of Sharing A Floor in Residence

by Brook Jones

Unless you happened to be born as one of a set of twenty-five-uplets, sharing a residence with a few dozen people your age, and no parents to speak of, is probably a new experience for you. As such, there are a few adjustments you'll have to make to this situation of community living. Luckily, the "trick" to it, so to speak, is entirely summed up in one word. R-E-S-P-E-C-T is how Aretha Franklin spelled it, and who am I to argue spelling with the First Lady of Soul?

While you're probably accustomed to sharing a household with a few other people, you will shortly find yourself sharing a House with a few hundred people, a floor with twenty or thirty people, and possibly a room with one or more people. The only way to keep these shared living spaces from falling into utter chaos and strife is by working hard to show respect for your room/floor/housemates.

While one of the really great things about living in residence is how close you are to so many of your friends and peers, twenty-four hours a day, this can of course turn out to be one of the biggest drawbacks as well. This is most easily and most commonly illustrated by the issue of noise in residence. Everyone has their own standard of "acceptable" noise levels, and even a person's own individual standard will vary greatly depending on the time of day, day of the week, etc. This becomes a crucial issue in residence because, with everyone so close, your noise level IS the noise level of your neighbours, beside, above and below. This isn't to say that you can never play your music as loud as you'd like; only that you have to realize that you're a member of an academic community in residence, you need to respect your neighbours' desires for quiet (or loud) and they need to respect your desire for loud (or quiet). There's a distinct chance that you won't be able to have the level of noise that you desire (be it quiet or loud) all of the time, but if you can respect your neighbours and be willing to compromise, you'll definitely be able to make residence liveable.

Another area where respect plays a huge role in determining your enjoyment of residence life is cleanliness. You will share hallways and a lounge, and possibly a room, with your peers, and just as everyone has their own definition of "appropriate noise", everyone has their own definition of "appropriately clean". It's absolutely crucial to talk to your roommates at the beginning of the year to work out an agreement of how clean things need to be and who will be responsible for various cleaning tasks, and when.

With common areas in particular (lounges and hallways), the classic rules apply:

1. Always leave the area as clean as—or cleaner than—you found it.
2. If you make a mess, clean it up.

Along these lines, if you put food in the lounge fridge, try to either eat it or throw it away before it grows legs and leaves of its own accord, and if you leave dishes "to soak" in the lounge sink, try to actually go back and finish the job before the entire pot/glass/bowl full of water has evaporated.

One of the great blessings bestowed upon us in Totem Park and Place Vanier is that we have a hardworking and dedicated Housekeeping staff who regularly tidy up common areas. However, they aren't paid for cleaning up anything other than the results of basic use; leaving a large mess for Housekeeping will only result in a) your floor being assessed the cost of the clean-up, and b) garnering the ill will of the person who really ought to be your best friend — they help keep your living space clean! So respect is once again a key issue: you need to respect the Housekeeping staff by working with them, not against them, in keeping your living space clean.

Respect for others is the guiding principle of the Residence Contract, which every resident signs before moving in, and it's worth taking a look at that Contract to see what your obligations are while living in a UBC Housing and Conferences residence. The terms of the contract (AKA the "residence standards") are available online at www.housing.ubc.ca/rez_guide/contract.htm; you can also ask your friendly neighbourhood Residence Advisor if you have any questions about them.

Speaking of whom... One of the primary tasks of your Rez Advisor is to help foster and build community on your floor and in your house. So, if you feel that your rights or desires aren't being respected by other members of your community, please let an Advisor or your Residence Coordinator know. They'll do their best to help you resolve the situation and create a workable arrangement for each person involved.

In the end, a little Aretha goes a long way.

The logo for RezLife features the word "RezLife" in a blue, stylized font. Above the letters "z" and "L" is a simple line drawing of a house roof. Below the main text, the full name "UBC Student Housing & Hospitality Services" is written in a smaller, sans-serif font.

UBC Student Housing & Hospitality Services