

# LIVING WITH OTHERS



Living independently can be fun and empowering. However, being on your own can also be lonely and expensive. A way around these challenges is to rent a place with other people.

There are great reasons to live with a roommate. Roommates can help pay the rent, be great company, and give each other an added sense of security.

Finding one or more roommates does not automatically mean that you can all move into a property. Landlords have the right to restrict the number of people in a rental property. To be certain, the law protects people from being discriminated against by landlords: landlords cannot ignore human rights when renting out a home. We will explore specific protections from discrimination that renters have in a coming lesson.

Nonetheless, landlords are within their rights to limit how many people can stay in a place. In fact, a landlord can end a tenancy if there are an unreasonable number of people living in the place.

Another right landlords have is the ability to charge more rent for extra people, so long as there is a term in the contract that says rent can change based on the number of tenants.

Even if the landlord allows roommates—and most do—remember that living with others requires patience, kindness, and compromise. Renting a home is not just about forming a relationship with your landlord. You also need to build a relationship with your roommate.

## GETTING ALONG

Having a roommate means less privacy and the risk of disagreements. Chores, guests, and other aspects of day-to-day life can create conflict.

To help avoid disputes, it is helpful if everyone agrees to some rules about how to live together. When moving in with a roommate, think about creating a written agreement. It can outline anything ranging from sharing chores to everyone's obligations to each other. If a dispute arises, a written agreement can help determine whether or not everyone is living up to their obligations.

Your agreement can be more than just a list of "Do Not's." Think about positive "Do's" as well: do be respectful and kind, do laugh with each other, or do clean up after yourself.

If disputes arise between roommates, the laws governing rental properties in the province will not help you out. The Office of Residential Tenancies, the provincial agency that deals with rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants, does not deal with roommate disputes. You will need to resolve these disputes with your roommate. In extreme situations involving money or property, Small Claims Court may be an option.

Keep in mind that when you and your roommates make an agreement, your agreement does not affect the rights of a landlord. This means that one tenant can end up on the hook for the entire rent if the other tenant does not pay. It also means that a tenant could lose anything they paid towards the security deposit if their roommate causes damage. Also, if only one tenant signs the rental agreement, that tenant can do things like decide to end the tenancy without consulting with their roommates.

For all these reasons, it is important to choose roommates that you trust. It is equally important to spell out your expectations to each other before entering into a situation where you live together. And above all, it is important to be open, honest, and respectful with each other.

## **BOARDERS**

Boarders rent out a room in a home from the owner, sharing common areas like the kitchen, bathroom, and laundry. When a landlord also provides their boarder with meals, it's called Room and Board.

Like all rental situations, the landlord and tenant must agree to conditions when a boarder moves in. A landlord cannot decide they no longer want their boarder and make them immediately leave. They must follow the same rules for ending a tenancy as they would for any other rental situation. Also, boarders cannot be restricted from access to common areas within the home. However, boarders can face eviction if they fail to abide by certain homeowner rules, like not smoking.