

MINE=YOURS

Living in the residence halls can be a great learning experience for students as they figure out how to deal with roommate and dorm issues

By MARIANNE HUDSON
THE BATTALION

It is late at night, and somewhere, someone is waking up wondering, who is this person sleeping in the bunk bed above me? After hearing the horror stories about crazy roommates, could this roommate be one of those nutcases? Whether roommates were already friends or selected by "pot" living together in a residence hall is a new experience for both parties.

The experience can be exciting and memorable as responsible actions are taken to ensure contentment for both parties.

Erin Wells, a residence hall adviser (RA) and marketing major, said the first step toward a good relationship is getting to know each other.

"At first, roommates should try to spend a lot of time with each other," Wells said. "For example, try to eat dinner together."

Wells advises roommates to complete roommate agreements that are available in the RAs' rooms. These agreements are a promise between the roommates to establish room guidelines, such as study hours.

"Fill one out right away," Wells said. "That way, if there are future problems, you can refer back to it."

Wells encourages roommates to expand their relationships beyond their room and meet other people in the hall.

"The residence halls have hall councils to plan events for the residents to get to know each other," she said. "Hall council meetings are open to anyone."

Wells said a great way to get to know your

neighbors is to keep the door open.

Although many students are happy with their roommates and on-campus life, troubling situations do arise.

Ron Sasse, department of residence life director, said that the housing assignments office is available to residents if problems arise in the dorms.

"The Housing Assignments Office, the RA and the hall director are the student's best resources," Sasse said. "They will know how to handle a situation better than anybody."

Sasse suggests that roommates first try to talk and work out conflicts between themselves. If progress is not made, they should both talk to the RA.

Betty Milburn, associate director of

Student Counseling Service (SCS), said SCS can offer extra support if the problems persist.

"We help students with adjustments and conflicts. If both parties come in, we counsel them."

Milburn suggests discussing all problems up front.

"Don't let things build up," she said. "Rather than blow it off, go to the person at the time of the conflict, and let them know how they affected you."

SCS teaches students techniques for handling disagreements.

"We try to handle problems by working at the lowest level," Milburn said.

things are going.

"Roommates and situations change," she said, "so it is a good idea to set time aside on a regular basis to make sure everything is running smoothly."

Despite attempts to work out conflicts, some roommate situations may not improve. In these cases, a roommate change can occur. Sasse emphasizes that a room change should be made only if all other attempts fail.

"A room change is a last resort," Sasse said.

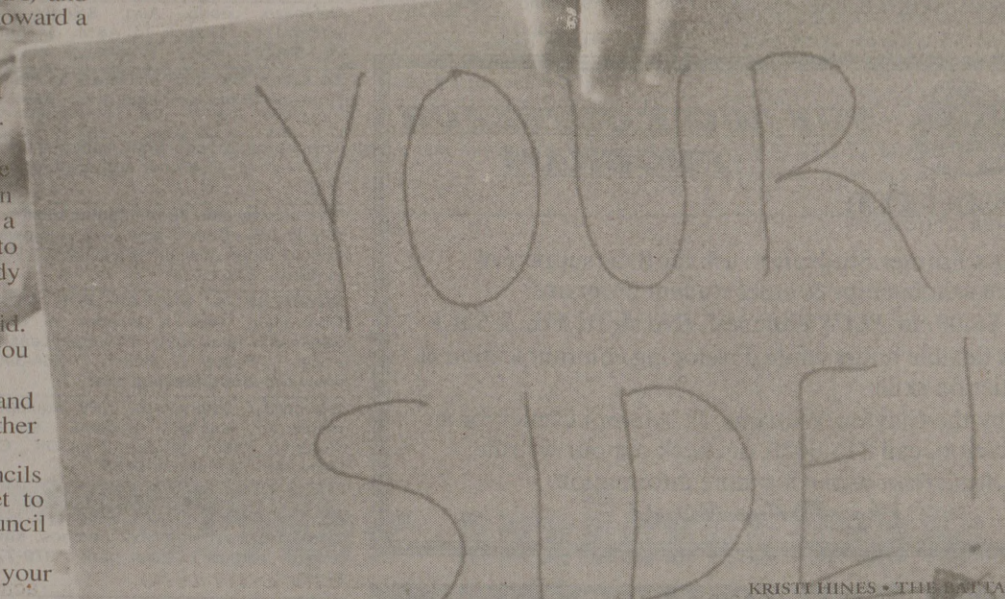
To make a room-change request, students must go to their hall director. Requests can be filed until Sept. 6. If the request is approved, the student must move into their new room by 9 p.m. on Sept. 9.

"Dealing with other people is a life skill. It is something that a person will have to do their whole life," Sasse said. "The key to good relationships is compromise."

Compromises in the residence halls extend beyond those made between roommates. Residents must communicate their feelings with their neighbors. For example, many residents are concerned with noise levels. The quiet hours in all residence halls are from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. Sunday through Thursday. Residents can request RAs to extend quiet hours. If another resident is being too loud, a student should go directly to the person and explain that the noise is a problem. Sasse said.

"In most situations, the person will be willing to cooperate," Sasse said. "However, if the noise becomes a serious issue, all of the residents can come together and agree on a time in which the noise will be tolerated. That way, both parties can walk away satisfied."

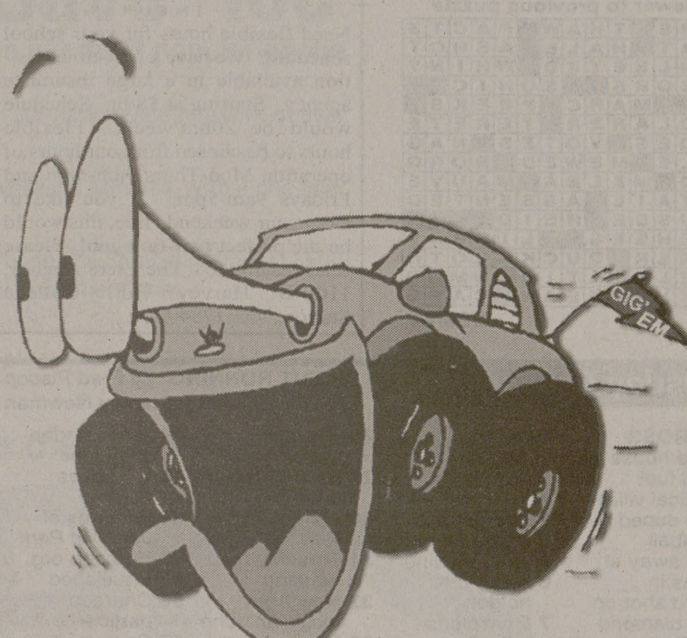
Living in a residence hall can teach students concepts of communication that will be with them for the rest of their lives. "Every Aggie should be respectful and courteous to their fellow Aggies," Sasse said.



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