



TRACE A FLAT

SHARING A HOUSE OR FLAT

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To Share or Not to Share

Living with other people in a house or a flat can be lots of fun. It means that you have company and people to tell about the exciting or horrible day that you've had. But, sharing can also mean that there is nothing for breakfast because someone else has eaten it all, the kitchen is a mess or that someone is using the bathroom when you want to go in there. As you can see, sharing means more than just sharing the physical space of a place. It does mean sharing "you" to some extent.

What are you looking for?

You must think about whether you want to live in a house, a flat, a unit or with a family in private board. Remember, houses are generally more expensive than flats, but they can be larger and have more people living in them. If there are a few of you renting together, this can make it a bit cheaper.

Flats or units may be smaller than a house and possibly will not have a back yard for you to use.

Where do you want to live ?

When looking at a place you must think about several things.

- (1) If you haven't got transport of your own, you will need to be near to public transport. Find out how often the transport service operates, and how much it will cost you to get to where you want to go.
- (2) If you have got your own transport, you've got to think about how much it will cost you in petrol or "exhaustion" (if you have a pushbike) to get to wherever you want to go.

Remember, there is no point renting a place that is a long way from where you go often to work, visit or relax. At the same time, it's good to have some shops within easy reach so that you don't have to trek for miles for bread and milk.

How much can you pay ?

Before you move into a place, you should find out how much it is going to cost you to live there. So, check out the following things -

Rent:

Think about how much rent you can afford to pay. Be realistic about this. If you will be spending more than one third of what you get every week on rent, then chances are that you won't be able to make ends meet. So, if you only get \$50 per week, you won't be able to afford to pay \$25 per week on rent.

You will usually have to pay two weeks rent in advance.

Food

This can be expensive depending upon what you and your fellow householders wish to buy. Ask about the amount people put in for food every week before you move in. For example, if you are only getting a small amount of money every week you won't be able to afford to live on rump steak. It's a good idea to have a food "kitty" or a tin where you all put a certain amount of money each week, you can then do the household shopping using this money. There should also be enough money in the "kitty" to buy things that are needed every day or so like bread and milk.

Bonds and Deposits:

Find out how much the security bond on the house or flat is going to cost. Altogether, it can be as much as 4 weeks rent. If you are moving into a place with others, you will need to share the cost of the bond between you.

The Gas and Electricity Companies both require a deposit of \$40 & \$35 respectively to be paid when you first move into a house or flat. The payment of these bonds can be shared among the people in the place. But, make sure that you are clear about who has paid which deposit.

Extra Costs:

These can be a problem if you find out about them after you've moved in. So, while you've got the chance before you move in, find out :

- (1) if the house or flat has the telephone connected;
- (2) if the other people rent or want to rent a television for example;
- (3) how much furniture is provided in the room and the rest of the house, flat or unit. Is the furniture suitable or can you afford to buy some if it isn't furnished? For example, if you look at a room with a bed and wardrobe in it, ask to make sure that these things actually stay in the room if you rent it;
- (4) how much the electricity and/or gas bills usually come to. If the house or flat has expensive heaters to run for example, the electricity accounts can be very large. If you ask about these you will know approximately how much you can expect to pay.

It's a good idea to put a few dollars extra in the "kitty" every week to cover these costs so that the money is there when they have to be paid.

What are the other people like ?

The people you will be sharing with are very important to think about. Ask yourself if you feel comfortable with them. Do they have similar ideas or similar interests to you? Even if people are quite different in their ideas or interests, you can get along well - it's only when these clash that problems arise. Be honest to yourself about your feelings towards these people because over time, small things which annoy you can turn into big things. There is a big difference between being friends with someone and living with that person. Think about how you would get along seeing each other day after day.

Who is going to do what in the house or flat?

You should ask about preparing food and doing house work in the place. Do people all cook and eat together or does everyone want to cook their own meals separately? If there are a few of you living together, it tends to become a bit messy if everyone is trying to cook separate meals at once. But, if you all eat together, it's important to take it in turns cooking it and cleaning up afterwards. Somebody also has to buy the food to cook so you must share this job between you as well as the cost.

House work always seems to need doing and it's not everyone's favourite past-time. No matter how casual your household may be every now and then floors, sinks, fridges and ovens need cleaning. It's a good idea to organize yourselves so that everyone does some of the work. It's no fun if it's left to one person - this person could be you. If it always seems to be you doing the cleaning, stop doing it and get others to do some of it.

Do You feel comfortable in this place?

The house, flat or unit should suit your lifestyle and you should feel comfortable in it. You can't expect to feel "at home" straight away because it takes all of us a while to settle in. But, if you find the place very depressing for example, there is no point moving in there.

It's also a good idea to think about what the landlord or Real Estate Agent is like and how you would get along with this person. It can cause problems if you can't bear the sight of each other!

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Well, these are some of the things to check out when deciding whether or not to share a place with other people. Remember to discuss things that might annoy you with the person concerned as they happen. Don't keep these problems to yourself because they won't get sorted out this way. It's good to try and consider other people in the house or flat. Remember, it might be you that is tired and wants to sleep another night when someone is playing a record very loudly.

