

## Resident Resource Guide – Conflict Resolution

A document created as a resource for residents to navigate conversations pertaining to conflict resolution with their roommate.

### Communication

**What is it:** How people use messages through verbal and non-verbal methods to express and share how one is feeling pertaining to a specific situation, conversation, or mood.

**Forms:** Communication can be shared in a variety of ways. The ways that communication is most shared with others is through Verbal, Non-Verbal, Visual, and Written styles of communication.

**Effectiveness:** Communication is most effective when you follow the subsequent rules to help guide your communication you are attempting to share with another party.

- Establish who is going to be the one addressing the conflict.
- Decide what will be shared and how you are going to address the issues causing the conflict.
- Choose which of the above communication styles will be used.
- Embrace potential outcomes that could be shared due to the conflict being addressed.

### How to be Proactive about Conflict

**Expectations:** Establish and agree upon clear expectations for your living environment. It is strongly encouraged that you complete a roommate/suitemate agreement within the first month of living together in your residential hall or apartment.

The roommate/suitemate agreement covers topics including ideal room temperature, guest preferences, privacy, and more. It is important to take this process seriously and to be honest and realistic during your roommate/suitemate agreement conversation. These agreements serve as a conversational starting point and should be revisited frequently as relationships between individuals grow.

Discuss how you will communicate prior to when conflict arises between you and your roommate/suitemate:

- How should you address conflict between one another?
- How will we confront one another when conflict arises?
- Does in-person communication or something else work better for problem solving?

### How to Navigate the Conflict Conversation

**Prepare:** Conflict exists where clear and consistent communication does not. Preparing is an imperative step in the process of navigating a conversation surrounding around conflict and can be done so in four steps:

- **Accept Multiple Realities**

- It's okay to feel how you feel. When you accept this, you can address these feelings and work through them in a healthy and collaborative way.
- **Check Your Purpose**
  - This is often referred to as your vision of what comes out of this conversation. Consider the goals or sets of goals that you are striving to achieve by addressing this conflict with your roommate/suitemate.
- **Choose a Positive Mindset**
  - Negativity slows the process and does not allow you to find the resolution you are seeking. Acknowledge how you are feeling, but also acknowledge how the roommate/suitemate may be feeling as well. Approach with a positive mindset and allow yourself to have a productive conversation.
- **Imagine Multiple Realities**
  - There may be multiple answers and solutions to the ongoing conflict, think of and imagine the different avenues of resolutions that are possible for the conflict that exists.

**Open the Line:** Open yourself to having the conversation. A closed line of communication eliminates the ability for progress to be made and “closes” the opportunity for a resolution to be established.

**Explore then Share:** Conflict resolution relies on clear and consistent communication. Explore the side of the story that your roommate/suitemate would like to provide. Once their side is heard, then share yours. This again opens the line of communication and is a step towards finding the resolution you are seeking.

- Allow yourself to probe into the idea of intent vs. impact in your conversation. Intent focuses on the why you do the things you do. Impact focuses on how the other person felt as a result of the things you did.
- Allow the opportunity to ask or be asked open ended, short questions to navigate the ongoing conflict.
- Establish genuine curiosity. Asking questions as to why and how decisions are made, and actions are taken can allow a resolution to be established.
- Invite reflection. Allow both yourself and your roommate/suitemate to reflect on how this conflict has made each of you feel and explore the value and cost of the conflict that it is creating.

**Actively Listen:** Listen to understand and not to respond. Active listening is imperative to understand how one is feeling regarding the ongoing conflict. Active listening is best executed when the following occur:

- Removal of distractions.
- Resistance of interruptions.
- Respond with appropriate physical and vocal cues (i.e., head nod).
- Restate what they have shared.
- Ask follow-up and clarifying questions.

**Collaborate on Solution(s):** Work together to find and establish a plan on how to avoid this ongoing conflict moving forward. Oftentimes, you and your roommate/suitemate have identical preferences on the expectations of the room. Be willing to compromise and collaborate to find that solution but stay true to yourself and your preferences.

## Tips to Keep in Mind

**Mindfulness:** Remaining respectful and using appropriate language will help you to solve the issue. Listen to learn, not to respond. Recognize when you need to take a moment to collect and process your thoughts on what has been discussed.

**“I” – Statements:** “I” statements are simple and convey how you feel about the situation. For example, saying “Sometimes I can’t get enough sleep because you have guests over,” rather than, “You and your guests always wake me up and I can’t get enough sleep. It’s so annoying.”

**Time Sensitivity:** It is important that you address the issues with your roommate(s)/suitemate(s) in a timely fashion. Typically, the sooner the better.

**Acronyms:** These acronyms are easy reminders and can be beneficial as you work through a conflict conversation with your roommate/suitemate.

- BIFF
  - Brief
  - Informative
  - Friendly
  - Firm
- EAR
  - Empathy
  - Attention
  - Respect

Each of these allow simple yet impactful words to allow a resolution to be worked towards.

## Escalation

**Scaling Up:** Sometimes, despite preparing and following the above steps, conflict may still exist between you and your roommate/suitemate. This is not your only option when addressing conflict in your living environment.

You are not alone when living on campus; your Resident Assistant and other Residential Life staff members are here to support and assist you in resolving roommate/suitemate conflicts.

**RA-Led Intervention:** This is the second step related to effective conflict resolution. In the event of a failed resolution after speaking with your roommate about the issues, you should notify your Resident Assistant (RA) of your concerns regarding your roommate(s). The RA who is appropriately trained in conflict resolution, will gather additional information from the student and schedule a time to sit in with both or all parties to address the concerns. The Resident Assistant (RA) will also complete an incident report as documentation of the intervention and potential outcomes.

The conversation with the RA should:

- Gather additional information from each involved resident.
- Discuss what things are working/not working? (Core concerns)
- Facilitate the dialogue between residents to ensure respect is shown.
- Discuss potential solutions based on the discussed issues.
- Provide opportunities and scheduling information to follow up with each resident.

**GRC/RC Intervention:** If the conflict persists after the resident-led and RA-led intervention, the resident(s) will engage in an intervention with a Graduate Residence Coordinator or Residence Coordinator who provides oversight in the on-campus community. At this level, an incident report will have already been submitted by the resident assistant and will be reviewed by the GRC or RC to inform their conversation. These professional staff members are trained in conflict resolution and can provide additional support and guidance in resolving complex conflicts.

During this period, the GRC or RC will determine based on the information shared in the written Incident Report and consistent check-ins or whether a room change is the next option.

*\*Please note: Each resident is encouraged to engage in the conflict resolution process prior to requesting a room change to allow a potential resolution to be found. However, at any point, the student can request a room change through the room change process if they choose to. IF the concerns encompass issues of harassment, endangerment, or otherwise any escalated verbal and/or physical altercation, a more immediate relocation may be in order due to safety of all residents in the room and community.*

## Roommate Agreements

**How to Access:** Roommate Agreements for both Apartment Roommates and First-Year Roommates can be accessed at <https://lsu.erezlife.com/>. For the student to fill out the agreement, click on forms, and have the student select the form they are wanting to complete. Please share that it is encouraged that your student has all roommates with them as they complete the form as the roommate agreement is to assist in agreements on how the living expectations are to be during their time together in the residential provided space.

**Use Your Resources:** If you have not yet resolved the conflict, your Resident Assistant can give you helpful techniques to use when speaking to your roommate/suitemate. Also, your Resident Assistant and other Residential Life staff members in your communities facilitate conflict resolution interventions among roommates/suitemates.

You should notify your Resident Assistant (RA) of their concerns regarding their roommate/suitemate. The RA will gather additional information from the student and schedule a time to sit in with both or all parties to address their concerns. The Resident Assistant (RA) will also complete an incident report as documentation of the conflict resolution intervention and potential outcomes/solutions.