

# Taking The Headaches

**RENTALS TO SHARE**  
2BR, 2 BA APARTMENT,  
\$185+utilities, female, non-  
smoker, professional  
Extra clean, private, furn.,  
apartment. Young black person  
to share. Util. included.  
Only one bill to pay.  
\$320 month

**FEMALE TO SHARE 2  
BR house. Non  
smoker. \$175 per**

**RENTALS TO SHARE**  
**PERSONS TO SHARE LARGE  
HOME** Util. furn, kitchen & W/D  
privileges, cable & phone. NO  
pets. \$300/mo.  
**PROF FEMALE** Needs prof.  
female or student. 2BR, 2 BA  
apt. Dep/Pets req. No Drugs.  
**PROFESSIONAL BLACK MALE**  
seeks same to share 2 BR, 2 BA  
house, 1/2 rent & util.

# Out of House Sharing

## Some Pros and Cons To Turn Your Home Into A Gold Mine

By Patricia Smith-Deering  
Phoenix Managing Editor

As individual budgets get tighter during these recessionary times, more people are finding that sharing living expenses is a practical solution. Classified ads are increasingly being placed for "Rentals To Share." But, whether you are considering renting out a room or two in your home or getting a roommate for your apartment, you should consider several areas to keep from making a mistake that can be costly, financially and/or emotionally.

### Personal Assessment of Needs

Before entering an arrangement that may later cause you grief, you should take a personal inventory to determine whether or not sharing your house or apartment is the right move. Ask yourself:

- What are the disadvantages of sharing a residence with someone else?
- How open and honest can I be when faced with unsatisfactory behavior or a situation that does not meet my needs?
- Do I know how to talk about my needs?
- Am I flexible and compromising?
- How receptive am I to other people's needs, personalities, and opinions?

While the financial incentives may be great, the end result can be devastating at worst, frustrating at least, when you realize that you cannot tell another adult what to do or how to live. There is a risk in having someone else move in with you, but it can be kept to a

minimum by being clear on what you can or cannot, will or will not tolerate. Compatibility is essential, not only for your peace of mind, but for a smoothly-operated household, as well.

### Identify Your Requirements - Up Front

Your personal assessments will determine whether a prospective housemate or roommate must be a non-smoker, alcohol and/or drug free, male or female, with or without children, a student or professional, have references from previous residences, or be of the same ethnic and/or religious groups.

Even if you are willing to consider someone whose habits don't coincide with your own choices, you should seriously consider the potential impact on yourself and your household operation. A smoker can increase the risk of fire or property damage. A social drinker is one thing; an alcohol abuser can cause untold financial, emotional, even physical distress. A child (or children), especially if you have none, adds a whole new dimension to your residential environment.

You should also be specific about attitudes towards such seemingly innocuous things as air temperature, space and storage requirements, music and other noise levels, neatness and cleanliness, frequency of visitors, and use of any shared areas (e.g. kitchen, bathroom, laundry, etc.).

One thing that should not be shared, if at all possible, is the telephone. Some of the most heated disputes result from telephone abuse, non-payment of a person's

share of the bill, or disagreement over long-distance calls made. This is particularly important if the telephone account is in your name. You may find, to your dismay, that a roommate has left you holding the bag for hundreds of dollars in telephone charges and you will be responsible for payment.

### Careful Advertising and Strict Screening

No advertising medium will eliminate cranks, crazies, or cheats. This is something that must be considered seriously. This is particularly true when you place an ad in newspaper classifieds - a very public medium. If you are in a specific profession, consider advertising in a local publication or with an organization catering to that profession. A notice on the bulletin board at your place of employment and spreading the word among your co-workers can also be effective.

One source that is sometimes overlooked is local college campuses. Frequently, graduate students seek residence off-campus for an environment more conducive to their study needs. A call or letter to the university's housing department will add you to the list of off-campus housing made available to incoming students.

Strict screening of a prospective housemate or roommate to determine compatibility, responsibility, and ability to pay is the only way to ensure that you are getting the best possible match. Your initial ad can reduce the amount of time spent in this process (e.g., sex, race, smoker/non-smoker, age, student/professional, facilities available, etc.).

Regardless of your other stated

preferences, any prospective housemate **must** be employed or have a verifiable source of income. Being in line for a job or having applied for a financial grant is not good enough. If your prospective housemate hesitates in any way to provide or allow verification, you need to keep looking. And verifiable sources of income should not include things like alimony and/or child support because spouses have been known to miss or ignore payments.

Go into detail about those things that you require and expect, and identify the needs and expectations of your prospective housemate. It is this discussion that will provide the objective information you need to make a sound decision. Do not let desperation to have someone ease your financial burden push you into a subjective judgement you may later regret. Seeing \$\$ signs can blind you to shortcomings that can affect any agreement or contract you have arranged.

### Put It In Writing, Please!

Whether your housemate is a relative, friend, friend of a friend, or a new-found acquaintance, put your agreement in writing. Specify rental deposits and conditions of their return in full or in part, rental amounts and payment schedule, termination/eviction notice requirement, living arrangements (shared and separate spaces), shared bills, telephone arrangements, and other items discussed and agreed upon by all parties. Terms for renegotiating the living arrangements also need to be included.

Although too many people enter into shared rentals without it, this agreement is a necessary evil.

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