

Getting Started

with

Companion Housing



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Weclome!

We are so pleased that you are taking the initiative to learn about companion housing.

At Happipad we believe in creating a better future through sharing. We believe everyone deserves a home they can afford where they feel safe and respected. We believe in creating happier, healthier, and more socially connected communities. We are on a mission to create a more sustainable and enriching way to live, one happy home at a time.

This book is part of a national effort led by Happipad to help all people access resources and support so they may experience the benefits of companion housing. In addition to this book, Happipad has many more free resources available including online workshops, guides, and a self-paced interactive online course. These can all be found on the Happipad website in the Happipad Learning Centre.

You can learn more at www.happipad.com/education

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All About Companion Housing

Housing is one of the most basic human needs. As part of our cultural, social, and economic status, it plays a key role. While not a new philosophy, companion housing may hold the key to helping us live healthier and happier lives. As our communities change and evolve, so must our housing models to meet the diverse needs of all people.

What is companion housing?

The word Companion is likely not new to you. A companion is simply a person with whom you spend a lot of time. A companion should be complementary to yourself, such that you feel safe and happy when together. A companion does not imply a romantic relationship. You have likely had several people or pets in your life that you would consider a companion.

Companion housing is a housing style where like-minded but not related people (companions) share a home together. As opposed to traditional roommates, these arrangements emphasize compatibility, mutual support, and fostering a family-like dynamic within the home. These shared living arrangements may be for a few months or many years. Households may include people of similar ages, such as a group of seniors, or people of different ages, such as students living with seniors. Everyone has their own bedroom and private space, while common areas such as the kitchen are shared.

Why companion housing?

We are entering a unique time in history with record-high housing costs, increasing social isolation, and a rapidly growing senior population.

Existing housing solutions are failing to meet the needs of all people. As our society evolves, it is essential to adopt alternative housing solutions as an option that better meets our changing needs.

Companion housing allows non-related individuals to come together and share homes in a mutually beneficial manner, forming a family-like housing dynamic. By doing so, tremendous amounts of real estate can be made accessible. Across Canada, approximately one in every three bedrooms sits empty. Filling some of these rooms with housing companions can create millions of affordable housing opportunities without any additional construction. This opens up inventory for those who struggle most with housing affordability, such as students, newcomers, entry-level workers, and lower-income families and seniors.

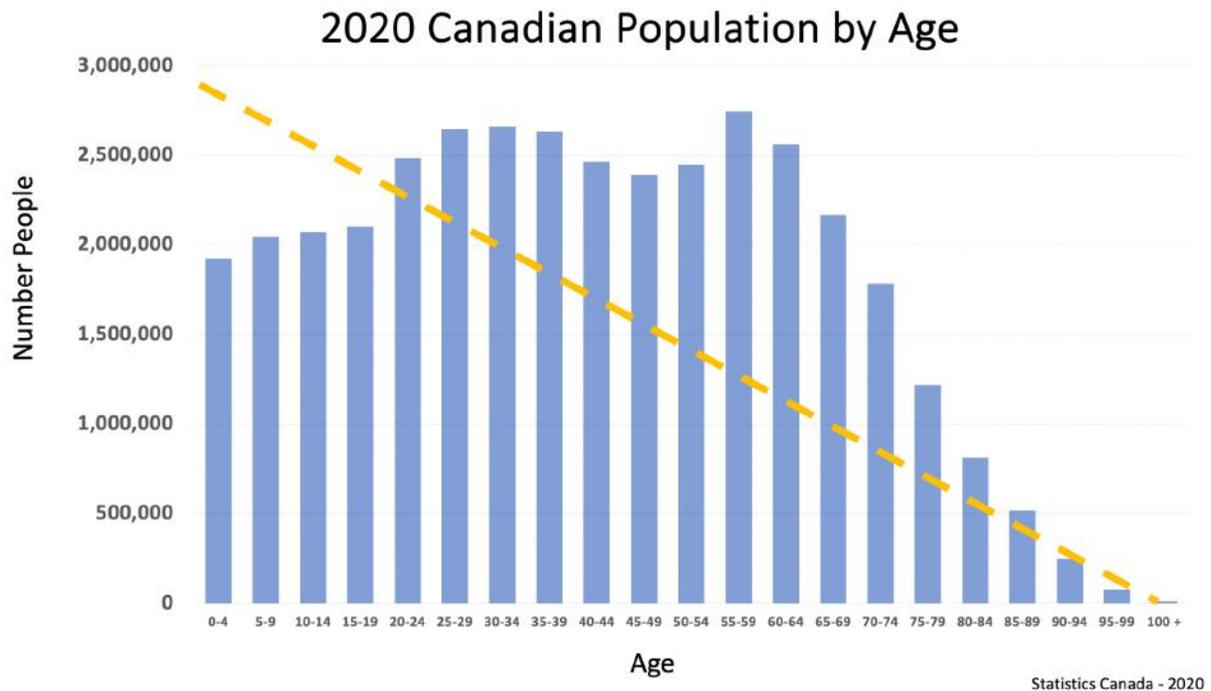
In addition to housing affordability, companion housing can improve people's health and happiness. The social connections formed help to enhance community interaction and increase one's sense of belonging. These activities help support our aging populace to remain in their communities and homes of choice, creating more resilient communities.

How did we get here?

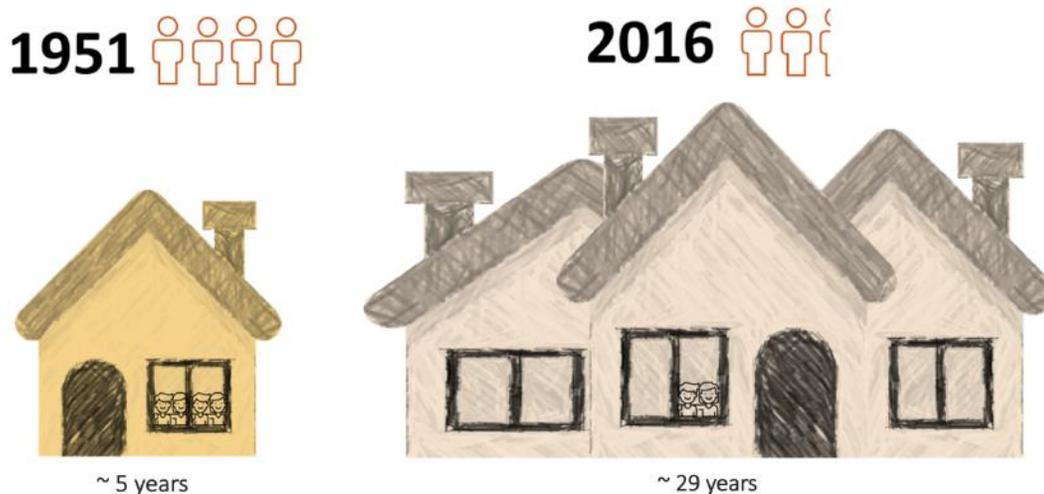
In the past several decades there has been an increase in people looking for alternative housing solutions. However, the pressure has now reached a point where we must adopt change and do things differently to ensure suitable housing for everyone.

Over the past several decades we have shifted towards a culture that lives alone. Census data from 2016 revealed that one-person households outnumber all other household types. Among these people living alone, the number of people 65+ increased the most. As fewer people live in each home, more space sits vacant, putting more pressure on the housing stock.

We have also seen a significant shift in our population's age distribution. An ideal population distribution should have more young people than old. However, in Canada, we are seeing the opposite. Baby boomers, born between 1946-1964, are the largest population group. More and more people are reaching retirement age, but traditional housing models are not changing as quickly.



Additionally, our homes are growing larger despite housing fewer people on average. Modern single-family homes are over twice as large as those built in the 1950s, but they house half as many people. In the past, when the baby boomers were young adults, living in a small home and sharing it with many generations and boarders was a common occurrence.



Canadian housing and occupancy, 1951 to 2016+

The costs of housing have also increased much faster than incomes. For example, according to National Bank financial data, if earning a median household income in Vancouver BC it will take 34 years to save up for the downpayment of a home. This puts the idea of homeownership out of reach for many, forcing people to downsize or to share homes with others.

What can we do about it?

Many solutions are needed to combat the societal changes we are seeing today. Companion housing serves as an important piece of the overall solution to make better use of existing real estate while connecting people in meaningful ways to help one another. The overarching goal is to create a more resilient society so that we may all live happier and healthier lives.

By sharing homes, millions of spare rooms can be unlocked, making them available to house people who could benefit from the cost

savings, social connections, and mutual support. Companion Housing is about creating a better way to live. It's not just about economics, it's about full-body health: building connections, friendships, and helping people live the best version of their lives.

It all starts with developing a mindset that life can be great when living among like-minded housing companions whom you like and respect. Starting a shared companion home is often the easy part once people are ready and willing for change.

Benefits of companion housing

Companion housing holistically addresses the challenges of housing affordability, aging, social isolation, and environmental sustainability by encouraging people to live together harmoniously. Most importantly, living with others generally makes people feel better. A recent interview of hundreds of older adults participating in a companion housing program revealed the following self-reported benefits:

- 1. Affordability** – worrying less about money and the future
- 2. Feeling safer in my home** – having people around to call for help
- 3. Enjoying home more** – sharing joy and experiences with others
- 4. Sharing pets** – sharing responsibilities and costs of pet ownership
- 5. Feeling happier** and having more freedom
- 6. Feeling less lonely** – always having someone to do activities with
- 7. Completing household chores** more easily – sharing responsibilities
- 8. Sleeping better** – less anxiety and increased peace of mind
- 9. Seeing friends** and getting out in the community more often
- 10. Eating better/healthier** – sharing healthy meals with others

11. Calling friends or family less often for help

12. Having more energy – feeling more motivated by companions

Maximizing the benefits of companion housing is centred around sharing. When you share what you have with others, and they share back what they have, everyone progresses together. When joy is shared with others, this same joy is reflected back. This constant activity of giving and receiving provides tremendous benefit, whether it be through sharing food, helping with chores, or through good conversation.

The following sections will discuss a few of the key benefits in greater depth.

Financial benefits

Housing affordability affects millions of Canadians. Statistics Canada reports nearly one in two renters in Ontario spend 30% or more of their income on housing, while more than one in every five renters in BC spend more than 50% of their income. Companion housing is a way to help address rising rental costs which are creating tremendous financial pressure.

For Guests, companion housing provides the most affordable type of market rental accommodation. Renting in a shared living arrangement is around 20–30% less expensive than renting a bachelor suite. In addition, sharing a home also enables sharing of utilities, internet, maintenance costs, and taxi/transportation costs, which offer additional savings.

For Hosts, companion housing can provide a source of monthly income, which can offset the costs of home maintenance. Depending on location, surrounding amenities, and the quality of the home, a Host can typically receive \$500 to \$1000 per month for each available bedroom.

Mental well-being

Companion housing promotes the mental well-being of its participants. In April of 2020, at the height of the global COVID pandemic, an Ipsos survey found that more than half of all Canadians felt lonely and isolated. Through the shared experience of the pandemic, many have come to appreciate the value in having a companion in the house. Living with people who are compatible can provide security, entertainment, and a sense of purpose.

Sustainability

Companion housing emphasizes efficient use of housing. The housing sector is one of the most carbon-intensive sectors of the economy. It is estimated that new single-family home construction in Canada will result in up to 3 million tonnes of unnecessary emissions over the next 30 years. One of the most compelling advantages of companion housing is that it allows greater use of already-built physical housing resources, lessening the demand for new home construction and reducing the carbon footprint of the housing sector.

Companion housing can also limit per capita energy consumption. According to a UN study, energy for heating, cooling, and powering households account for about 40% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Canada is amongst the highest per capita users of energy,

exceeding the United States by 10-25%. Energy use and emissions can be reduced by living with others. Research from Colorado State University (Frestad et al., 2017) showed that each member added to a home can [reduce per-capita emissions by 6%](#).

Aging in place

Companion housing can help address the evolving needs of an aging population. In 2014, there were over 6 million Canadians aged 65 and older (15.6% of Canada's population). By 2030, there will be over 9.5 million seniors, making up 23% of all Canadians. Currently, one-quarter (24.6%) of the population aged 65 and over live alone. Companion housing is a socially responsible and cost-effective method to support 'aging at home' which helps reduce reliance on public healthcare and home support services. Many older adults wish to remain in their homes and would be able to for a longer time period if they were able to share costs and responsibilities with a companion.

Life in a companion home

Life in a companion home is about creating a fun and inviting home environment where everyone feels welcome, respected and supported. Housing companions are carefully selected based on lifestyle, interests, needs, and personality traits.

Housing companions agree upon a general set of home rules and guidelines to ensure appropriate behaviours and etiquette are followed. Every person in a companion home has fair and equal rights within the allowed general rules.

The social connections that develop amongst housing companions are built through shared everyday activities. These connections evolve and deepen over time through the continual sharing of experiences. As comfort increases among housing companions, friendship emerges.

Typical traits of a companion home include:

- Shared meals on a daily or weekly basis as a way to connect
- Each person lives independently and maintains their own social circle
- Each person has personal quiet time when they need it
- Companions often travel, shop, and carpool together
- Companions help each other with household chores and cleaning
- Companions provide moral support and help if one is sick or injured

In some arrangements, a housing companion may provide extra care for a fellow companion (eg, grocery shopping, shovelling snow, or cooking). This extra care may be provided as part of a task exchange or can be provided for a reduction in rent. For example, a student living with a senior may provide extra help by driving or cooking in exchange for reduced rent.

Ultimately, each companion home is unique. The culture and rules of the home are collectively determined by the people sharing the home. Each person will have unique needs. The goal is to find a place where everyone is satisfied with a balance between personal needs, privacy, and the sharing of space and experiences.

Structure of a companion home

Companion homes may be owned, rented, purchased or leased by one person or by a group of housing companions.

Homes typically have one household manager called the Host, who is the owner or principal tenant of the home. The other housing companions within the home are referred to as Guests. Host-Guest relationships are different from landlord-tenant relationships as everyone has a fair say on setting house rules and expectations. The intention is to create a welcoming home where everyone feels safe and is respected equally.

Hosts who are homeowners need to wear two hats. The homeowner is responsible for the typical landlord duties, such as ensuring the home is in good repair and rent is paid/collected. In addition, they must wear their housing companion hat, where they share equal responsibilities with other housing companions to maintain the household, establish fair house rules, and treat each person with respect.

Companion homes can be as few as two people, or as many as six or more. They can include groups of singles, families, couples, or any combination of. There is no specific definition of what a companion home should be, rather everyone is able to define and structure their home how they choose. Typically there is one person per bedroom with one bedroom sometimes being reserved for visitors or as a flex-room. Some reasonable limitations exist, for instance, municipal or strata bylaws may limit the number of people who can live in a home.

Who can be a housing companion?

The best housing companions are those with an open mind who enjoy the company of others. A companion should be carefully selected based on qualities, values, personality, and characteristics. Companion housing arrangements are most common between seniors and university students, families and seniors, or groups of 3-5 mature women or men.

Students and young adults

Students and young adults are often highly mobile, moving to new locations for work and study, and are therefore frequently Guests in companion homes. Homeownership rates are low amongst young people and their lower incomes often make shared living arrangements a necessity. For students and young adults, companion housing provides an opportunity to live in established homes with mature cohabitants. Happipad has found that students who participate in companion housing feel happier, get better grades, and feel more supported. Unlike student rentals or dormitories, a companion housing arrangement can provide young people with stable home life and limit the isolation, depression, and loneliness that young people can feel when they move away from home for the first time.

Families

Families, especially single-parent families, make great companion housing Hosts. Having an extra person in the home can balance household dynamics and provide some help when needed. Happipad

has found that families who open their homes to a Guest are more organized and find it easier to stick to healthy routines. Families appreciate having an extra hand to look after the home when they are away, walk the family pet, or act as a role model for children.

Intergenerational

There is increasing interest in intergenerational companion housing: arrangements between people from different generations. A typical example is students and young adults living with seniors. Households with people of different generations can create a more dynamic and vibrant household environment. There are abundant opportunities for mutual learning in an intergenerational household.

Seniors & older adults

According to the National Seniors Council, 85% of Canadian seniors want to remain in their homes as they age. Companion housing can help seniors who wish to age in their home to do so longer by providing financial support and help around the home. Having a companion in the home also provides an increased sense of safety and daily social connection. Happipad has found that seniors who participate in companion housing feel safer and happier. Many have reported feeling younger when they live with younger people. Research from around the world suggests that there are health benefits for seniors who live with younger people.

Home Support

Companion housing can be a great way to help seniors age in place. However, housing companions are not a replacement for the support that would normally be provided by a nurse, care aide, or other professional support. Housing companions do not substitute for home care workers or housekeepers. Housing companions primarily provide social support and there is a mutual expectation that each housing companion is capable of living independently.

More for less

Companion housing allows an individual to live in a larger home with more amenities than an equivalently priced apartment.

For example: For a cost of \$1200/month rent two available options include:

Three housing companions sharing a single-family home with 2400 square feet, 3 bedrooms plus a den, 3 bathrooms, large kitchen with pantry, two-car garage, and a yard with a garden.

OR, living alone in a studio apartment of approximately 320 square feet. Apartment-sized appliances, a fold-down bed, no green space, street parking.



2500 ft² home, 3 bed + den, 3 bath, large kitchen, garage, walk in closet, and a yard. Shared with two other like-minded people.

833 ft²/person
\$1.44/ ft²



320 ft² micro apartment, one bathroom, no storage, apartment size appliances. No outside green space. Living alone.

320 ft²/person
\$3.75/ ft²

More for less

It quickly becomes apparent that sharing space with some like-minded housing companions can allow you to live in a premium home for the cost of basic housing. The limiting factor is that some extra effort is required to maintain the relationships and culture within the companion home.

Is companion housing for me?

Companion housing does provide many benefits. However, it is not for everyone and is not suitable for all stages of life. Some people simply have a very hard time sharing space. However, those who are able to get past the initial barriers can often find great rewards.

Living in a companion home does not have to be permanent. Many people live in a companion home for only a few months, while others make it part of a retirement living plan. Most people can benefit in one way or another which is often dependent on one's phase of life.

Ultimately, companion housing should provide the feeling that you are better off living with your housing companions than living alone.

An African proverb that speaks to the potential of companion housing is

“

If you want to go fast, go alone.

If you want to go far, go together.

”

Common concerns

There are many common concerns most people share when considering companion housing. If these concerns are not addressed, it is very unlikely that they would be willing to share a home. Having concerns is a good thing as it allows you to determine what is important

to you. Finding others who share the same values and concerns allows you to structure a home that respects your concerns.

Below is a list of the most commonly reported concerns people have when considering companion housing.

- 1. Privacy** – Having time alone without the distraction of others
- 2. Trust** – Feeling safe in the home and around your housing companions
- 3. Compatibility** – Finding like-minded housing companions
- 4. Visitors** – Having friends or visitors in the home
- 5. Drugs** – Concerns of others using drugs which affect their behaviour
- 6. Rent** – Concerns about being able to afford the costs of rent
- 7. Culture** – Concerns about living with someone from a different culture
- 8. Responsibility** – Concerns about housing companions being responsible
- 9. Alcohol** – Concerns about differences in alcohol consumption and habits
- 10. Partying** – Concerns about excessive visitors and noise
- 11. Personality** – Differences in personality, making it hard to relate and connect
- 12. Generational gap** – Living with older or younger people
- 13. Differences** – Having different views, beliefs, preferences, and habits
- 14. Location** – Living in a central, safe, and convenient location

Which of the above concerns might you share? Which would you be willing to compromise on and which would you not be willing to negotiate?

Adapting to Change

Change is good and necessary to adapt to an evolving environment. Change happens constantly in our lives; it may be forced upon us during unexpected circumstances or may be something we embrace to create more joy and happiness.

We can all have some resistance to change. Letting go of what is familiar and trying something that is unknown, even if we recognize the benefits of making a shift in our thinking or circumstances, can be difficult. Changing from living alone to living in a companion home can be a big change. Without some support and guidance, this change is often too great for people to consider.

Four common approaches to change include:

Resistance: Tend to wait to make change until it is forced upon us by unexpected circumstances.

Cautious: Like to explore ways to make change by researching and talking to others.

Open: Are able to let go easily of what is known and familiar and try new things, taking proactive steps towards positive change.

Jumper: Love to experience new change constantly, jumping in with confidence that it will always work out.

Chances are you have met someone that sees change in each of these ways.

We are all made differently and base our experience of letting go often on things that have happened in our past. There is no right or wrong here, everyone has their own natural process of change. Having awareness of what it is you want in life is important to drive change – no matter your age. Change in life is inevitable, how you choose to adapt to those changes is up to you.

Finding Housing Companions

The approach to finding housing companions depends on one's needs and circumstances.

First, determine what length of living arrangement you are looking for:

Short term (6 months or less)

People wanting to try companion housing, or people relocating for work, school, or life circumstances will often fit in this category. Rooms are usually provided fully furnished and the Guest will usually have less input in setting house rules.

Medium-term (7-18 months)

People looking for non-permanent housing but wanting to enjoy a family-like home dynamic. There is generally more mutual consideration for setting house rules and deeper connections are developed than short-term ones. Bedrooms are usually provided fully furnished.

Long-term (2+ years)

People who want to adopt companion housing as a way of life. Greater consideration is made to choose companions, often being people that have previously lived together in a short-term living arrangement.

Housing companions may share possessions to furnish the home and typically establish house rules as a collective group.

Next, determine which role you want to hold:

Host – Homeowner or principal tenant of the home. Responsible for managing the home and selecting fellow housing companions.

Guest – Individual who rents a room in someone else's home

Co-living – Find a group of individuals to collectively buy or rent a home together

Common mistakes

Before rushing into setting up a companion home, take a moment to consider. The concept of sharing a home is simple, however, when it is rushed without taking adequate consideration, problems are likely to arise.

Inexperience with structuring a companion home is a common mistake. Sharing a house isn't just about renting a bedroom to someone. Inviting someone into your home and trying to figure it out as time goes by is a poor approach. Instead, follow the steps outlined in this guide to carefully select housing companions and establish household agreements that respect everyone's needs and values.

Assuming someone is compatible with you because you both share some interests is an incomplete approach. People are complex; to understand a person from a quick interaction is very difficult. Making assumptions can limit the chances of finding an excellent housing companion. For example, assuming someone is messy or clean because of their appearance may result in an unpleasant surprise.

Desperation of finding someone to share your home with often results in choosing a poor match and ultimately frustration. Plan several months ahead and be careful selecting companions so that you will be able to find people you can truly enjoy living with.

Companion housing can be a joyful experience when done right. However, when done wrong, it can create an awkward and unfriendly home environment. A little planning and preparation can go a long way.

Self-assessment

Before choosing housing companions it is important to review what matters most to you. There are many points to consider when choosing a companion, some of the most common include:

Cleanliness

How clean do you want your home environment to be? How regularly do you clean floors, dust, vacuum, clean bathrooms, and sanitize countertops?

Orderliness

How orderly or tidy do you want your home environment to be? An orderly home is one in which items are easily located. For example, linens are folded and organized, and there are few household items left about.

Noise levels

What is a tolerable level of noise in the home and how does your noise tolerance vary throughout the day and week? For example, is running a coffee grinder in the early morning an acceptable noise?

Sharing

Which household items are you comfortable sharing? Some commonly shared appliances include the television, coffee maker, washer/dryer, refrigerator, and stove. Also consider shared consumable items such as cooking ingredients (flour, sugar, salt, oil, and spices), cleaning supplies (soap, shampoo, cleaning supplies, laundry detergent), and consumables (tissue paper, toilet paper).

Visitors

Which visitors are acceptable and how long can they stay in the home? Are overnight guests allowed? A common source of conflict is when a visitor (often a boyfriend/girlfriend) frequently stays overnight. It is highly recommended that this be discussed early on during the interview process.

Meal sharing

Do you enjoy sharing meals and eating with others, or do you prefer to cook and eat alone? If meal-sharing is agreeable, do you prefer taking turns to cook meals or cooking together?

Food storage

What is your preferred method for purchasing and storing food? Do you buy in bulk or do you prefer fresh ingredients? Do you require a pantry or freezer for your food?

Storage

How much space do you need to store your things? Will there be a conflict if each person is fighting for storage space?

Home amenities

What features or amenities in the home are must-haves for you? Consider if you need an office, a home gym, laundry facilities, a bathtub, or a yard.

Parking

Do you have a car, motorcycle, or boat? How much parking space do you need? Do you need covered parking, or is street parking sufficient?

Transportation

How do you plan to commute, and how might this align with your housing companion? Do you usually take transit, walk, cycle, drive or carpool?

Fun

What activities make you happy? Is it reading a book, watching television, dancing, singing, or working on your arts and crafts? Are these activities you would like to do with others or do alone?

Exercise

Do you like to exercise at home? If so, could this activity be disruptive for others in the home? Would you like to schedule exercise time with your housing companions to motivate each other? Examples include a short stretch session, yoga, or using a home gym.

Lifestyle and activities outside the home

Travelling

How often do you travel and for how long at a time? Do you travel internationally or regionally? Would you like to travel with your housing companions?

Social events

Do you enjoy going out to social events regularly, or do you prefer to do more home activities?

Exercise

Do you live an active lifestyle and engage actively in sports activities? How many days per week, and what hours are you away to pursue your activities?

Work

Do you work at home or do you commute? Do you work late nights or early mornings? How might this impact your home environment and needs?

Schedules and routines

What is your typical morning routine? What time do you wake up, shower, eat breakfast, leave home for work/school/activities? If you share a bathroom, consider: how you could share a bathroom to prevent overlapping use in the morning?

Personal development goals

What are your personal goals for improving your health, education, or personal development? Surrounding yourself with supportive people who share similar aspirations can make achieving your goals easier.

Money and spending habits

Rent

What is your monthly budget for rent or payment towards your mortgage?

Utilities

Do you like to have top-tier internet and TV packages? Do you like to keep your air conditioning on all summer? How much are you willing to spend on utilities?

Spending habits

Are you constantly buying the latest fashions and gadgets or are you more frugal?

Culture

Culture is an important topic as we live in a multicultural country. Many people are concerned about sharing a home with different cultures when they first consider companion housing. However, the differences between cultures may be smaller than they appear.

Cultural norms

These refer to patterns or behaviours that are typical of a certain group. These norms are often invisible to those who grew up in the culture. Canada has its own set of cultural norms that are different from other countries.

Example: Punctuality!

Canadians are normally quite literal about time and schedules. Scheduling to meet at 6 PM means you should arrive by 6 PM, preferably a few minutes early. By contrast, in Latin America, arriving at least an hour late is often expected. If you are the host, it is considered rude to get upset at latecomers.

A tool to see what culture looks like is the cultural iceberg. Some characteristics are visible; however, the majority are not visible. Many stereotypes are made from what we see, whereas it's the traits we cannot see that are often of greater importance.

The key point to take away here is to meet people with an open mind. You may be pleasantly surprised who a person actually is once you get to know them.

Some examples include:

Food – What type of food do you consume? Do you have specific dietary requirements that others need to be aware of? Does the food you cook create strong odours or have lots of spice that others may not be familiar with?

Language – What is the language that you use in your home? Are you wanting to learn a new language? How will you communicate with someone who may speak English as a second or third language?

Religion – What are your religious practices? Will sharing a home with someone who has a different religious background cause conflict?



Personality traits

Every person has a unique personality that likely varies depending on the situation and environment.

It is good practice to understand your personality traits in different situations. Being able to communicate your needs and how you like to respond to situations will make it much easier to share a home with others.

A common tool to understand personality traits is called the Big Five personality assessment. This breaks down personality traits into five categories. Note that every person will be somewhere on the spectrum for each personality trait.

The Big 5 personality traits:

Openness

Are you open to new experiences or do you prefer routine and comfort?

Conscientiousness

Are you a person that prefers to plan ahead or are you more flexible and spontaneous?

Extroversion

Do you love to be around people or prefer alone time? After interacting with others, do you feel energized or tired?

Agreeableness

Are you willing to compromise your interests to help another person? Do you consider yourself generous, kind, and understanding?

Neuroticism

How quickly do you get angry in an uncomfortable situation?

Have you ever taken a personality assessment?

You can complete a FREE personality assessment as part of the Happipad online course.

Where to find housing companions?

Increasingly, companion housing opportunities are formed through online connections that begin with a Host creating a posting to advertise the available room.

How you approach this will depend on if you are looking as a Host, Guest, or looking to form a co-living arrangement. Hosts will need to post their home as having a room available for rent to a housing companion. Guests will be looking for Hosts, or for others to rent or buy a home with as part of a co-living arrangement.

Common options include:

Classified sites: Such as Kijiji allow you to reach a large network, however, you need to be very cautious as there is no security screening or protection.

Bulletin boards: This could be at a coffee shop, church, etc. These can be effective but are rarely seen by enough people to find the 'right person'

Social media groups: This is a safer option than Kijiji and will let you find people with similar intentions

Community programs: We are starting to see many community programs surfacing across Canada. These can be a great resource,

especially because they will provide extra support. You can see some community programs on the Happipad partner program website.

Online programs: Online services, such as Happipad combine the efficiency of classifieds websites while being far safer and providing you with support throughout the process.

The best option depends on your needs. It may be beneficial to use more than one channel.

Making a posting

When making a listing to find a housing companion there are a few general rules to significantly improve your success.

Important point:

Most websites have user policies that prohibit discrimination of people based on age, race, religion, or ethnicity. Be careful not to use discriminatory wording when creating a listing on classifieds websites. For example, “female only” or “student only” can be viewed as discriminatory and the rental listing may be removed. Working with a companion housing service allows individuals to set criteria for who they would like to live with.

The title

This should be specific and captivating. Instead of a title like “Room for rent”, a title like “Companion housing opportunity – one spot available in an executive home” gives prospective Guests an immediate idea of the type of home that is offered.

Write a good description

Be specific in what you are offering and looking for in the body of the post. Avoid generic posts that invite everyone to apply. If you want a particular type of person, explaining the qualities that matter to you will attract that type of person. Unlike typical rental posts, it is important to include a description of the Host and other housing companions. It is

important to describe the type of person who would be suitable for the home in terms of personality, lifestyle, hobbies, habits, and interests.

For example, the following text is non-discriminatory, yet conveys a sense of an ideal housing companion: "Group of older women looking for a like-minded vegetarian to join our home. We enjoy sharing meals, playing cribbage, and watching soap operas."

Be sure to clearly indicate what is included with rent, such as: parking, furnishings, or utilities. There should also be a description of amenities (nearby bus stop, grocery store) and the furnishing of the home. Include the date the room will be available for move-in and the duration of stay available.

The goal is not to attract everyone, but rather to attract the right person.

***If you are a Guest** or looking for a co-living arrangement you can create a similar post as a wanted or in search of advertisement.

Price

Price will make a big difference in who you attract. Offering a lower price will attract more interest; this is especially true if you want to share your home with students. When pricing your rent, it is best to include the cost of utilities in the price of rent. You can look at your last 12 months of utility bills to determine an average monthly cost. Offering a fair rent will usually result in a more loyal housing companion.

If you are wanting someone to help with extra work around your home, you may want to offer reduced rent in exchange for help. Stating this in your posting will help attract people interested in a task exchange.

Photos

When taking photos, make sure the home is clean and organized. Home photos with natural lighting look much better than photos with only interior lighting. A post should have at least five photos, including pictures of the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, living room, and outside view of the home. High-quality images make the home more appealing. Most cellular phones are adequate for taking high-quality photos. However, avoid taking portrait (vertical) photos whenever possible as they typically look bad online.

Contact details

For public websites, it is not recommended to include your personal phone number or email address as spammers can and do steal this information. It is common to create a new email address specifically to receive rental inquiries, which can be easily replaced if it becomes compromised. One advantage of using companion housing services or websites like Happipad is that contact details, emails, and addresses are hidden to keep personal information safe.

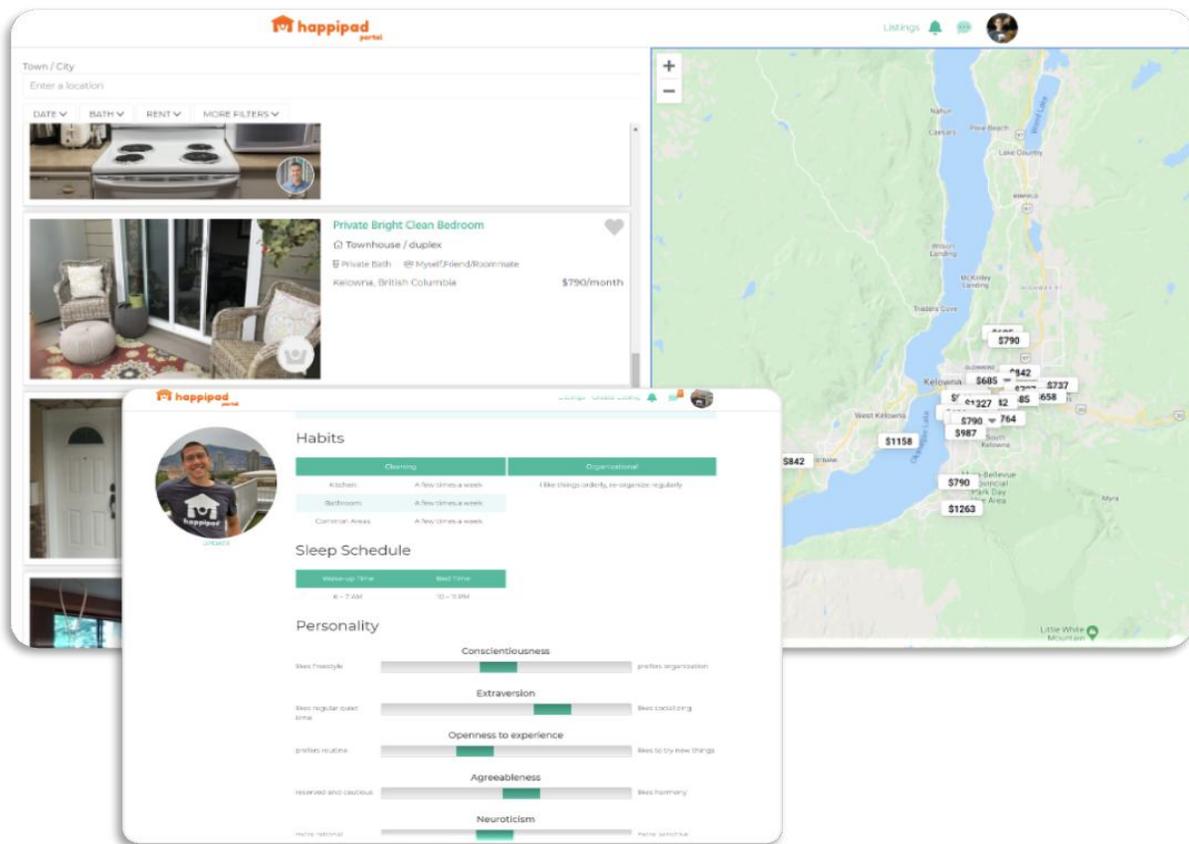
Using the Happipad Portal

The Happipad Portal is an online tool built specifically to help people find and connect with suitable housing companions. It includes many features to make the process safer and easier such as map-based searching for homes and people, background checks, personality

assessments, creation of shared living agreements, conflict support, and much more!

It's free to register and use all of the standard features. You can access it at www.happipad.com

Pictured below is an example of Happiad's home listing platform. It allows you to list house rules, compare personalities and interests, perform background checks, and receive applications from people without sharing your email or other personal information.



Receiving responses/messages

Once a posting is active, the interest that it generates will depend largely on the price, location, and amenities of the home. It is very important to respond to inquiries from prospective housing companions, ideally on the same day.

People will greatly appreciate a message confirming that their application has been received and is under review. This is also an excellent opportunity to ask any quick questions to assess the quality of different applicants. Providing immediate response and feedback demonstrates punctuality and professionalism. Many people feel bad when declining someone's application, when in fact a punctual

response is almost always preferable to no response. Whether the response is positive or negative, it is always good practice to be courteous and responsive.

Not everyone who inquires will be suitable for you, in fact, many will not be.

The first step is reviewing applications. If you are using a classified website, you can ask for a resume to assist with this. If you are using a platform such as Happipad, you will be able to see the person's profile, personality traits, and other details on the website.

Ask yourself if this person meets your basic criteria, your needs and your 'don't wants'. If you think there is potential, you can do a quick internet search of their name to check for any obvious red flags by typing their full name into Google in quotation marks.

If you are still interested at this point, it is time to schedule an interview. After the interview, you will want to do some due diligence. This typically includes a background check, identity verification, and reference checks.

Interviews

Upon receiving applications from potential Guests, the Host will review applications and create a short list of 3-5 potential Guests to interview. The Host will then schedule an interview with these shortlisted applicants, ideally in-person or by video call. Applicants not chosen for this interview should be notified so they can continue their search.

Note: Keep an open mind when selecting people to interview. Many people are more fun and friendly in person than they may appear from their application.

When meeting someone new, start with some ice-breakers, or light conversation to help them feel safe and comfortable talking with you. Some people may be very shy or reserved at first, so this can help you see their true personality.

Popular video-call software options to try

[WhatsApp](#) – Available for smartphones, tablets, or computers. It uses your existing cell phone number to make free internet calls.

[Zoom](#) – Available for smartphones, tablets, or computers. No phone number is needed to use.

[Skype](#) – Available for smartphones, tablets, or computers. Free calls to other Skype users, inexpensive calls to landlines.

[Facetime](#) – Available on Apple iOS devices to make free calls to other Facetimes users

[Google Meet](#) – Make free calls from smartphones, tablets, or computers.

Note: When scheduling calls, keep in mind that applicants may be from different time zones. A useful tool for comparing time zones is www.worldtimebuddy.com.

First Interview (In-person or video call)

The purpose of the first meeting is for introductions and to provide a tour of the home. The typical duration of the first meeting is 30 minutes and it is common for Hosts to schedule groups of interviews closely together within a 1 or 2-day interval. During the first interview, it is advisable to review your house rules and items from your self-assessment.

The discussion should reveal information about lifestyles, daily activities, the intended use of the home, amenities, transportation logistics, cleaning, and protocols to resolve conflicts. It is important to pay attention to non-verbal cues and to be aware of feelings that arise during the interview.

For co-living. You will want to meet each person at their home. This will allow you to see their habits and personality traits in the home environment.

Key topics to discuss during the interview:

1. Your needs and your deal breakers
2. How you will each use the home, perhaps you both plan to work from home which could create conflict
3. How clean and organized do you like to keep your home? Talk about examples as everyone has different definitions of 'clean'
4. Noise can cause many conflicts. What is acceptable noise? A blender at 7 am? A TV at 10 pm? Heavy footsteps? Talk about typical scenarios.
5. Visitors cannot be overlooked. This includes day-to-day visits from friends and overnight visits from a significant other. What are you comfortable with?
6. Sharing of items in the house and food. Do you want to share flour and rice, or do you like to keep all your own things? If it's important to you, make sure to talk about it.

7. Personal values should be discussed. If something will annoy you, don't be afraid to bring it up.
8. How will you share chores around the home? Do you like teamwork or are you very independent?
9. Any other question that is important to you! Perhaps you want to carpool, shop together, or share a pet. Now is your time to learn what it would be like to share a home with this person.

*You can download a free interview guide through
the Happipad Learning Centre*

Some warning signs

At this point in the process, there are several important considerations when assessing the fit of a potential housing companion.

First, be wary if either party takes too casual an approach to the selection process. This usually suggests a lack of care and seriousness and commonly results in a poor fit.

Second, be careful of people who are not interested in establishing a human connection. People who treat companion housing simply as a rental transaction are unlikely to respect the housing environment.

Third, be careful not to select people or homes based on stereotypes. For example, cleanliness is often stereotyped based on gender or ethnicity but can lead to false expectations of others.

Finally, avoid establishing housing arrangements with anyone who is desperate, as it will likely lead to disappointment and frustration. The most successful housing companion arrangements are established two to three months in advance of the move-in date. This allows for adequate time to do a thorough screening and to establish the best match.

Second interview

After interviewing a prospective housing companion, take some time to reflect on impressions after the first interview. It is suggested that no decisions be made, nor asked for, at the first meeting. If any concerns arise after the interview, ask the person about it immediately. It is advisable for the Host to invite the top applicants for a second interview in the home to get a feel for how they might fit with the culture of the home. During this second interview, it is important to go into more detail about the housing environment, house rules, strata rules if applicable, and visitor policy. It is important for the Guest to get a preview of what it will be like to live in the home and to determine if there are any deal-breakers.

Background checks

Hosts should respond to the applicants with feedback and to conduct proper due diligence on the top applicants. Due diligence typically consists of identity verification, background screening reports, google search, credit checks, reference checks, and, if available, user reviews.

1. **Call references** – When inquiring about references, be sure to ask for people who have previously lived with the applicant, as opposed to friends or colleagues. References should be asked specific questions about the person to check for consistency. Avoid asking generic questions such as “Are they a nice person?”. A better question is “Can you tell me a time when they got angry and how they handled the situation?”
2. **Google search their name.** This will not provide comprehensive information, but it’s worth doing for the little time it will take. Looking for their name in news stories and reports is a good method.
3. **Background checks and identity verification** will give you peace of mind that the person is who they say they are. This also checks for sex offender lists, court records, negative news, fraud watch lists, and much more. If you are using a home-share program, this is usually done for you or can be requested. If you are using the Happipad platform, you can download and share a report, or view others who have shared with you.
4. **Credit checks** are good practice if entering a co-living arrangement with others where a long-term lease will be signed, or if buying a home together. It is not standard practice to perform a credit check for guests renting a room as many people renting rooms (especially students) have little or no credit history.

Living arrangement agreement

Once a suitable housing companion has been selected and both parties agree to move forward, the next step is to draft a written living arrangement agreement. The living arrangement agreement outlines the terms and rules of living in the shared home.

This is different from a residential tenancy agreement. If the home is rented as a co-living household, or if the Host is not the homeowner, you will likely need to sign a residential tenancy agreement with the landlord or property manager as tenants in common. Terms in a residential tenancy agreement will override terms in a living arrangement agreement. If the Host is a tenant of the home, it is important to obtain permission from the landlord before sharing the home with others.

Shared living agreements vary, but typically include the following terms:

- The names of the Host and Guest
- The address of the home
- The date the agreement is signed
- The address and telephone number of the Host and Guest
- The phone number of an emergency contact
- The date the living arrangement will start and end
- What will happen at the end date (move-out by a certain time)
- The amount of rent and when it will be due
- What will occur if rent is not paid
- The services and facilities included in rent (utilities, furnishings, food, etc.)
- The amount of security deposit or pet deposit required and the date it must be paid
- How conflicts will be resolved
- Length and terms of a trial period

It is important to have terms and procedures in your agreement for conflict resolution. This will help you resolve conflicts against violation of

the terms, house rules, damage claims, and unpaid rent. It is advisable to use an agreement drafted by a lawyer or to use an established service to help manage these issues. Happipad provides extra support for this as an additional service.

Agreements should also contain a summary of the **house rules and guidelines** that both Host and Guest agree to abide by, some examples include:

- Quiet times in the home (what noise is acceptable)
- Rules for visitors (day and overnight)
- Laundry use (days of the week)
- Garbage/recycling days and rules
- Use of storage space
- Meal sharing frequency
- Parking rules
- Sharing of kitchen space
- Sharing of food and other items
- Cleaning schedules and standards for cleanliness
- Household meeting schedule

There should be adequate time for the Host and Guest to review the living arrangement agreement and to discuss any items in the contract. Once the contract is signed by all parties, the agreement is legally binding and enforceable. If any changes are needed, amendments to the contract must be signed and dated by all parties.

Want some help? You can generate a basic living arrangement agreement for FREE using the Happipad Portal.

Rules around termination

Within the living arrangement agreement, it is advisable to set guidelines for handling breaches of house rules and to provide ways to end the living arrangement. Below are examples of how you could agree to prematurely end your living arrangement:

- At any time, by mutual agreement of the Host and Guest
- At any time, by either party by giving at least 30 clear days' notice in writing to the other party
- After 10 days, if the Host or Guest fails to uphold their obligations under the living arrangement agreement, such as non-payment of rent
- Immediately, if the home becomes uninhabitable due to significant structural damage or other safety concerns resulting from unforeseeable circumstances including, but not limited to, fire, flood, or natural disaster
- Within 48 hours, if there is a severe breach of safety

Note: If the Guests are tenants or tenants in common, termination clauses cannot override any Residential Tenancy laws.

Is it the right fit?

Many companion housing arrangements have a trial period to 'test drive' the match. The trial period is typically 1-3 months, allowing either party to terminate the living arrangement if the fit is poor.

During the first few days of a new living arrangement, there is a great deal of excitement as everyone learns how to re-adjust to the home changes. It

is normal to realize details about a home that was not covered on move-in day. During this time, it is important to maintain personal boundaries and to begin establishing the culture and etiquette standard of the home. It is a good idea to schedule a meeting on days 7 and 14 to discuss what is and is not working.

During the first few weeks, everyone will begin to exhibit their natural behaviours and routines. In addition to reviewing (and enforcing) the written rules of the home, the Host and Guest will begin to get a feel for unwritten rules of conduct. Regular communication between all parties will help clarify harmonious ways of sharing a home that works for everyone. One of the biggest mistakes during this time is to assume that a housing companion will 'figure it out' on their own. It is almost always better to be explicit about expectations and to communicate them clearly.

After the trial period (typically 1-3 months), sit down and do a thorough re-evaluation of the living arrangement. At this time, there should be a good understanding of the habits and schedules of each housemate and the likelihood of the cohabitation to fulfill the needs of the housing companions. Discuss what is working and not working and, in the end, decide if the living arrangement should continue.

Preparing the home

If you will serve as a Host, sharing your home with others, preparing your home to share is an important step. Doing so ensures the shared household starts off in the right direction with everyone happy.

Eliminate your personal items from the room, wardrobe, and closet. Remove any family photos or other items with sentimental value. By

leaving personal items in the room, your housing companion is likely to feel as if they are encroaching on your space. Having the room cleared of personal items will allow them to feel like it is their space.

Clean the room thoroughly. Your housing companion will be expected to return the room to the same state they found it. Give the room a thorough dusting, steam clean carpets, wipe down the windows and blinds, and wipe down the walls. Is the room clean and comfortable enough for you to enjoy it?

The bed. Most hosts will provide a bed for their housing companion. If you are, then you should ensure you have a comfortable newer mattress. If your bed is over ten years old, you should consider updating it. This step should not be overlooked as having a good night's sleep is a sure way to increase your housing companion's happiness and ultimately yours!

Stylize the room. Now that the room is cleared out and clean, you can begin stylizing it to make your new companion feel welcomed. Many people like to paint their walls and even paint a colourful feature wall. Keep the style simple and allow for flexibility for your new housing companion to hang their artwork if they so desire.

Noises and smells. It is an awkward feeling when you move into a new home, and there are abnormal noises or smells. This is more common in basements or rooms that have been unoccupied for some time. Consider running a dehumidifier to remove dampness and avoid using strong fragrances to mask odours. If you would not want to sleep in the room yourself, then you need to fix it.

Storage is something everyone needs. Pantry space, bicycles, and winter clothing all take up space. Make sure you have fair and reasonable space available or you will likely have a conflict in the future. It's also important to set limits on how much space someone can use, but it must be fair.

The kitchen is the highest traffic area of the home. This should be well organized and space should be made for housing companions to store their food in the fridge, freezer, and pantry. If you haven't cleaned out your freezer or spice cabinet in a while, it is best to do so before the home gets busier.

Safety items should be reviewed, such as fire extinguishers, smoke and CO2 detectors, first aid kit, as well general repair of the home. Check expiry dates and replace batteries, if it's past the expiration date, replace it immediately. If anything is broken in the home, repair it.

Set an example of how you like your home to be cleaned and organized upon the arrival of your housing companion. If they arrive at a messy home, they may assume this is the 'acceptable standard'.

Insurance

For homeowner Hosts, home insurance provides coverage of the physical structure and personal liability. Most insurance policies will allow for up to two housing companions without any changes in cost. However, always consult with the insurance provider to ensure

compliance and adequate coverage is in place. When a new housing companion moves in, the insurance provider must be informed.

Common terminology used by the insurance industry to describe a housing companion is “*boarder*”.

It is recommended that Guests have tenant insurance prior to move-in. This can provide liability, damage, and content coverage for the Guest. These policies are usually affordable and widely available.

Move-in process

The first day a new housing companion moves in is a special day. The experience felt by all housing companions sets the tone for the future living arrangement. It is more than worth it to put some extra effort and thought into the move-in process.

Imagine moving into a new home where you arrive to find nobody is home to welcome you, general disorganization, no space in the fridge for your food, and a bedroom that has not been cleaned. This would likely result in frustration and a poor experience on your first day. On the contrary, arriving at a clean and organized home where you are greeted by smiling faces immediately makes you feel at home. The effort put into preparing for move-in has an immediate return by starting your new shared home in a positive direction.

Welcoming Home - preview story

Maria arrives at her new companion home, the door swings open where she is greeted with a warm welcoming smile. Through the front door, she

walks in to find a space on the shoe rack with her name on it. She is invited into the kitchen to have a coffee, the smell of fresh baking wafting through the home puts a smile on her face. After some enjoyable conversation about her travels, the Host tells her all about the neighbourhood, the best shops, and the best bus routes to take. She is brought to her bedroom, already cleaned with fresh bed sheets pulled taught. They proceed to take a tour of the home, reviewing storage areas, cleaning supplies, and how to use the appliances. After the home tour, they put their shoes on and walk over to the neighbour's home to make a formal introduction. That evening after unpacking, Maria is invited to join the household for dinner. After cleaning up they review the house rules and negotiate some fair middle ground where everyone is happy.

Wow, Maria feels like she is truly home!

Things to do on move-in day:

1. Complete a move-in inspection, note any damages and take photos.
2. Review and agree upon house rules. It's easy to do now, if you let it slip it will be hard to change.
3. Make everyone feel welcome! If you have other people living in the home, make introductions! Share dinner together on the first night, with the host cooking, it's a good ice breaker!
4. Review your living arrangement agreement and terms for a trial period if you choose to have one.

5. Have a house key made for the new housing companion (or door code)
6. Review household safety protocols, fire exits, and emergency contacts
7. Introduce new housing companions to the neighbours

Note: You can download a copy of the move-in checklist and inspection form from the Happipad website

The first few weeks

This is referred to as the 'honeymoon' stage where you are getting settled and may not notice problems. After this period of time, you will begin to better see if there are compatibility mismatches or house rules that aren't working very well. Avoid drawing conclusions too quickly before you get to truly understand who a person is and how you can work through problems together.

Trial period limitations

It is advisable to limit what Guests can bring into the home during a trial period. After the trial period, guests can fully move in their belongings.

Culture in the home

What feelings and emotions do you get when you walk into your home? There is a chance you feel overwhelmed with the house chores you are behind on which prevents you from enjoying the serenity of your home. Now, how would you feel walking in to hear laughter coming from the kitchen with the smell of fresh baking in the air? How would you feel to

be greeted with smiling faces, a clean home, and a home-cooked meal awaiting your arrival?

It is a fantastic feeling when you have a fun, supportive, and positive culture in your home. This is something unique that can be found with companion housing when the effort is made to create it.

Rules to follow

1. **Be inclusive** of everyone. If you invite some friends over for dinner or games night, invite your housing companions to join in. Creating segregation in the home creates awkward feelings. Likewise, they don't have to participate, but extending an offer to participate is always appreciated.
2. Make it a habit to **do activities together**. This may be shopping, cleaning the home, games night, or movie night! Making a normal routine makes this an easy and enjoyable experience for everyone, most people prefer some routine and predictability.
3. **Share meals**. Food is a central part of society. Connecting over food creates a special connection. Take turns cooking, or have everyone contribute, potluck style! Aim for once a week, or more often if you can. Allow time to talk and connect, 2 hours perhaps.

Communication

Communication is at the root of all good and bad relationships.

Communication skills are not something we were born with; rather, they are learned in time.

Effective communication is so much more than saying some words or leaving a note. Humans are complex; we have emotions and feelings

that need to be considered. We could go into great depth on this subject; rather, we will get down to the basics of simple things you can do to improve your ability to communicate.

Communicate with LUV

Listen to all that the other person has to say without interruption.

Most people need to process by talking, provide them with a safe space to talk so they can process. If they stop talking, wait 3 seconds (count in your head) before you allow yourself to talk. The reason for this is that most people will only share surface information at first. Creating this intentional pause will cause them to start talking again and go deeper, allowing them to uncover the root of the problem.

Understand – Provide positive feedback that you are listening and understanding, both verbally and non-verbally. Give your undivided attention, use short responses like ‘yes, okay, tell me more’. Nod your head, keep your body focussed.

Validate their thoughts and guide them towards finding a resolution. No one likes to be told what to do. However, if you help guide them towards reaching their solution, they will be much more likely to take action. Ask them questions to guide them towards reaching a solution. You must allow them to figure out their own solution, refrain from just telling them the answer even if it’s obvious to you.

For more tips, you can do the exercises in the Happipad online course.

It is important to be sensitive to the non-verbal cues that someone may display. The following are some signs to be aware of if someone's boundaries have been crossed:

- avoiding eye contact
- turning away or sideways
- limited conversation response
- excessive nodding or saying "uh-huh"
- voice suddenly becomes higher pitched
- nervous gestures like laughing, talking fast or talking with hands
- folding arms or stiffening posture

It is important to be honest and upfront about issues that may arise when living with others. Leaving important things unsaid (like deal-breakers) can lead to resentment and tension in the household. Do not ignore issues that come up. When engaging in conversations over home issues, remain calm, cool, and collected so that everyone feels comfortable expressing how they feel. Resolving conflict together can be very rewarding and create an even closer personal connection afterwards.

Preventing conflicts

Conflicts are likely to occur when living with others. Most people will try to ignore and hold onto problems instead of facing them directly. It is best to adopt a proactive approach to address small issues as they come up. These small corrections are quick and easy to work through instead of allowing problems to build and escalate, often leading to passive-aggressive behaviour, resentment, or outbursts of anger.

Most conflicts arising in a shared home fall under one of six categories:

- 1) cleanliness
- 2) food and belongings
- 3) noise
- 4) behaviour
- 5) visitors
- 6) not communicating expectations

Most conflicts can be prevented by clear communication. It is very important to review rules and expectations upon move-in and to discuss them again whenever they are not followed.

Some tips that help:

1. The 60/40 rule. If you (and everyone else) always try to do 60% of a task shared with someone (such as cleaning), this ensures nothing will be missed. This avoids pointing fingers. Do a little more and everyone wins.
2. Keep a positive energy at all times. If you had a bad day, leave it outside the front door. Or even better, tell your housing companions that you feel down and need to be cheered up. Your housing companions can be an amazing support group!
3. Avoid passive-aggressive behaviour if you ever catch yourself doing it! This will always create an awkward situation. If you are dealing with a passive-aggressive person, be very clear and level-headed. Make sure everything you say is factual and not emotional.

Lastly, a quote from Dr. Brene Brown suits this well.

“ When we fail to set boundaries and hold people accountable, we feel used and mistreated. This is why we sometimes attack who they are, which is far more hurtful than addressing a behaviour or a choice. ”

Never attack the person, attack the problem!

Household meetings

Preventing conflicts is key to everyone's happiness. Instead of ignoring problems, it is best to address concerns right away or meet together often to discuss them. A great way to do this is by scheduling a regular meeting over dinner where all housing companions discuss what is working and not working in the shared home.

How to hold ‘house meetings’ – example model

The Check-In round – What’s going on in your life? Allow each person 1-2 minutes to talk about the good things in their life and the things they are struggling with.

Appreciation round – Each person says something that they appreciate about another resident and thanks them for what they did. This can be related to something done around the house, but not necessarily.

Self-Appreciation round – This is where you get to mention things that you did, especially things that others may not have noticed!

Self-Clearing round – This is an opportunity to admit to “blowing it” – when you didn’t hold up your end, or you regret something. It also offers you a chance to explain why something was, or wasn’t, done.

Clearing round – This is when others notice something that was or wasn’t done, and they need to share their feelings/observations about it.

Consciousness-raising round – Bring up issues that need resolving. Prepare an agenda and decide what will be discussed at the meeting to stay on topic. In making a final decision, consider what is “good enough for now” or “safe enough to try.”

Processing Time round – Take a few minutes at the end of the meeting to answer – ‘How did this meeting go for me?’

Safety

Ensuring safety within the home starts with a review of the environment and safety equipment. It is important that all housing companions feel safe within the home, it is advisable to review all safety considerations at move-in and at regular intervals throughout the year.

Basic safety equipment to check includes fire extinguishers, smoke and CO2 detectors, first aid kits, and locks. In addition, it is important to

remove hazards around the home, such as tripping or slipping hazards, exposed electrical wires, broken chairs and furniture.

Tip: Consider installing a doorbell camera to see who visits your home unexpectedly and to keep track of package deliveries. They can be very affordable and easy to install.

Ensuring a feeling of safety within the home is related to the culture within the home. Housing companions can help ensure everyone's safety by looking out for one another. If something doesn't seem right, or if someone is upset, talk together as a household to ensure everyone is safe. It is good practice to communicate with all housing companions about travel plans, going out to an event, or about something suspicious in the neighbourhood. The collective safety of everyone helping everyone is a wonderful benefit of companion housing.

To increase the security of the home, consider the following tips:

- Know the neighbours and introduce them to all housing companions
- Change locks to an electronic keypad and change the code regularly when people move in and out
- Establish rules on visitors to limit who, when, and how often people can visit the home
- Lock windows in position (most windows have a locking mechanism)
- Always have a WIFI password that is difficult to guess
- Keep your yard and home organized, this helps detract burglars
- Install a doorbell camera

- Talk regularly with all housing companions about safety concerns, fears, or suspicious activity

Touching on COVID-19

The COVID pandemic has brought new safety issues to light when sharing a home. There should be an open discussion amongst everyone in the home about how to collectively minimize COVID exposure risk. For example, one person can be designated to do all the grocery shopping for the household. As a general rule, high-touch areas of the home, such as doorknobs, should be sanitized on a daily basis. If a person in the home becomes sick, do what is possible to have them self-isolate in part of the home away from others. Housing companions are part of each other's bubble, it's important to work together and ensure everyone feels safe, particularly if someone in the home is more vulnerable or immunocompromised.

Financial abuse

Financial abuse describes situations where money or property is used without permission or in a fraudulent manner. This is of particular concern for seniors who have a housing companion shopping or performing other financial transactions on their behalf. As a general rule, credit card and banking information should never be shared. To prevent the potential for financial abuse, consider the following tips:

- Set up automatic bill payments
- Keep records of lent money including name, date, amount, and when it will be paid back

- Send money by electronic bank transfer instead of cash
- Do not sign any contracts or documents that are not fully understood

Resolving Issues

You have likely experienced many conflicts, fights and arguments throughout your lifetime. They often leave you feeling broken and rarely solve the true problem.

Ideally, we would all address small problems as they arise, preventing them from escalating. However, it is likely that even the best of us will encounter at least a few conflicts with our housing companions. Most often conflicts arise because of differing values, perspectives, or opinions. It is very unlikely to always share the same thoughts and opinions of others.

Resolving issues within the household requires having a difficult conversation. A strategy to help with this is outlined below.

Key point 1: Be direct

Get right to the point and avoid getting off-topic with small talk. The other person likely already knows what is coming.

Key point 2: Be specific

Provide full clarity of why you are having the conversation and provide concrete examples. Explain why this is important for you.

Key point 3: The change

Explain what needs to change and what a positive outcome looks like. This provides them with something clear and tangible to work towards.

Key point 4: Guidance

Just telling someone they need to do 'something' often results in little change or action. Instead, guide them towards developing a realistic plan to change their actions and behaviour. By having them develop their action plan, they will be much more likely to take action.

Key point 5: Manage emotions

Do your best to keep the conversation concise and rational. If you are a very caring person, you will likely allow for more compromises than you want.

Key point 6: Practice empathy

Try to see from the other person's perspective. Chances are there are other factors and stressors in their life that contribute to their behaviour, such as work or school stress, family, or financial issues. Remind them that you are trying to help them.

Key point 7: Allow them to process

Most people need to talk to process. Allow them to ask questions related to the subject, and try to reiterate the important parts.

Ending a shared living arrangement

All things eventually come to an end, including the living arrangement you share with your housing companions. The living arrangement will typically end for one of the following reasons:

End of term – You have a fixed-term living arrangement agreement, and the end date has arrived. The housing companion must then vacate the property unless they have signed a new living arrangement agreement and paid rent.

Notice giving – A written notice is delivered to provide notice of ending the living arrangement early. Notices must comply with the terms of your living arrangement agreement. Written notices will typically be 21 days for shorter-term stays and 1-2 months for longer-term stays.

Mutual agreement – Typically, a living arrangement can be ended at any time if it is mutually agreed upon between the host and guest. This can occur at any time during the living arrangement and may take effect immediately. Typically, this happens when there is a compatibility mismatch or other personal reasons.

Cause – A breach of contract, non-payment of rent, or health/safety risk to the other housing companions. Move-out timelines depend on the severity of the breach and must be outlined in your living arrangement agreement.

Breaches such as non-payment of rent will typically result in a 10-day timeframe to vacate. For cause, 48 hours is usually provided for all

possessions to be removed. However, the person may be required to vacate immediately, depending on the severity of the incident.

Note: Many people like having a shorter time allowance (such as 21 days) to end a living arrangement agreement for any reason. This makes it easier to end a living arrangement if you don't get along with your housing companion. There are advantages and disadvantages to shorter and longer time allowances; you can discuss what works best for you and your housing companion.

Move-out Process

You should communicate move-out expectations one week before the move-out day. It is particularly important to review what cleaning is required a few days before move-out. The last thing you want on the move-out day is to find spaces that have not been adequately cleaned.

Move out day

On the last day of the living arrangement, all cleaning should be done, and possessions removed by 12:00 noon (or a time mutually agreed upon).

Guest cleaning

The Guest must clean their bedroom, and all shared common spaces, including any bathrooms used by the Guest, to a reasonable standard before vacating the residence.

Tip: Hosts should show Guests what their expectations are for cleaning, be specific and do a walkthrough of what needs to be cleaned.

Move-out inspection

The Host and Guest must complete a move-out inspection TOGETHER on the last day of the living arrangement or another date mutually agreed upon. Take photos of any damage.

Security and pet deposit

Deposits should be returned within 15 days. If you are part of a program, this will normally be taken care of for you.

Damage claims

Guests are liable for any damages to the property caused by themselves, their pets, or one of their visitors. Damage claims must include photos of the damage, evidence showing the repair cost, and a completed move-in/out inspection.

Note: Failure to conduct a move-in/out inspection or to provide suitable evidence may result in no compensation for claimed damages.

Returning items

Guests must return all keys, fobs, and anything else provided by the Host. Failure to do so may result in claims against the security deposit or further legal action.

If the Guest has damaged or lost any items, they will be responsible for replacing those items. If items are left in the home after moving out, the Host should notify the Guest and arrange for the items to be picked up.

*If the items are worth less than \$500 they should be held for 30 days. If the items are unsanitary to store or if the cost of storing is worth more than the items, then the items may be disposed of in an appropriate manner. Items worth more than \$500 should be stored for up to 60 days, after which it may be permissible to sell the items and keep the proceeds to pay for storage or other monies owed.

**Consult your state/provincial laws for returning personal property*

What if they refuse to leave?

This is a fear many people have. This is why it is VERY important to have a signed living arrangement agreement with your housing companions that defines the move-out terms. If they do not leave by the contractual date and time, you are able to call your local non-emergency police line for assistance.

If you are part of a companion housing program, support will often be provided with these types of issues.

Concerns for your health or safety

The living arrangement with your housing companion can be terminated early if any event occurs which violates the contract or law or creates an unsafe situation. The notice required will depend on the severity of the breach and the terms of the living arrangement agreement. Examples include situations where there is a violation of

personal rights, a major disagreement, physical, verbal, or emotional abuse, purposeful breach of rules, or illegal activity.

If someone is in immediate danger, they should leave the house and go to a safe place such as a neighbour's home. The police should be called to resolve the immediate danger of the situation.

Other Resources

Happipad Companion Housing Online Course

A free interactive course to learn more about companion housing. There are many exercises and resources available for download to help make the most out of a companion housing arrangement.

www.happipad.com/education

Home Together Canada

Free resource to get connected with home-sharing service providers and supporting businesses across Canada.

www.hometogether.ca

Community Programs

Find local non-profit organizations running companion housing programs across Canada.

www.happipad.com/partners

Home Share Canada

A national resource to help you find home sharing initiatives across Canada where services are exchanged for free or subsidized rent.

<https://www.homesharecanada.org/>

Closing thoughts

We are living in a unique time in history. Modern technology has made life much easier and enjoyable in many ways. However, we are now experiencing a new wave of different problems.

Issues around housing affordability, environmental pollution, and social inclusion of all people are among our greatest challenges. The change needed for these problems starts with each one of us. The idea of companion housing alone does not solve these problems. Instead, it is each one of us sharing and helping others a little more every day that will make a big difference over time.

Great opportunities exist to those who are able to move beyond the fears and barriers of change. All great things start with a single step. Will you take that first step?

If you don't feel ready, we encourage you to explore other resources available to you.

www.happipad.com/education

Our Manifesto

Across Canada, millions of empty rooms go unused.
So why is it that so many people can't find
somewhere to live?

We connect the people who have space,
with the ones who need a place.

To help make their pockets fuller,
and their lives richer.

Because along with your space,
who knows what else you'll share?

Cherished stories,
meals from another culture,
a new perspective,
or a helping hand when you're in need.

We bring together owners and renters in harmony,
and make living together a little easier
and a lot happier.

After all, you aren't just sharing a space-
You're sharing a chapter of your life.

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