

# Are you ready to **move in** together?

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Though it seems unromantic to parse all the details, it's necessary to have one or two "big relationship talks" before moving day. It's awkward, but better for everyone if expectations are expressed upfront. Think about what

you want and need instead of trying to figure it out on the spot, and allow your partner the time to collate his or her thoughts, too. What might be no big deal to you could be a real deal-breaker to your new roomie.

## BIG QUESTIONS

Where are we? Where are we going? OK, this is definitely the hard part. Do you see the move as a rent break? A prelude to marriage? A replacement for it? A way to practice playing house? At the very least, do you both have a common definition of monogamy? When you live together, you're more acutely aware of each other's friendships and social schedule.

## HOUSE PARTIES

Are you a social butterfly or a wallflower? In solid relationships, there is an implicit understanding of what's cool and

cleaning concerns include convenience of laundry rooms, cooking habits and, especially, smoking and pets.

## DOLLARS AND CENTS

Nothing puts stress on a relationship like money, or the lack thereof. Create concrete guidelines upfront. Will you keep all of your bills separate or combine them? Are rent and utilities split down the middle regardless of income? What about flexible expenses like groceries and household items? Start by reviewing your apartment's leasing policies. It may be necessary to create a new agreement. The property may make you

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what's not. Just because friends drop by for post-club pancakes at your place doesn't mean they're welcome at the new place. Who comes and goes, when and how often, though, isn't as big a factor as your personal comings and goings. Although you should feel free to enjoy most of your single-life pursuits, be considerate of the concerns of your new roomie. If you're invited for post-workday cocktails, is the norm going to be: calling to invite your date, calling and letting him or her know you'll be late, just going, or heading home for private time instead?

## DUST BUNNIES

It may seem trivial, but the umpteenth time you have to pick up dirty undies from the bathroom floor, it will be a very big deal. First, you'll be combining two households worth of junk, and it's often hard to be diplomatic about what stays and what goes. Second, you're used to privacy when you floss, clip, scratch, or whatever. You're used to your own timeline for chores. If necessary, re-visit Home Ec days and create a task schedule. Not sexy, but effective. Your other

both sign a new lease. If your partner can't make the rent, can you pick up the slack? If, sadly, it just doesn't work out, who's left holding the lease? Although you shouldn't have to ask permission for every mojito or pair of Kenneth Coles, you should share a rough idea of your financial situation. If one of you has poor credit, it can affect your rental and credit options. It may be best to pay off debts and do a little damage control before becoming too entwined. If you're not vested in your job, your dispensable income can change quickly as well. If you change jobs, will you change spaces, too? How flexible are you both? How able are you to pick up the whole tab if things get rocky?

Now that you're completely paranoid about this venture, realize that there are many benefits to bunking down with your honey. Even with different work schedules, you'll have more time together. Down time, cooking meals, late nights — you'll already be there instead of commuting. You can be each other's bodyguards, movie buddies, and therapists. But, hopefully, not each other's housekeeper.

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