

## Transcript Season 3 Episode 4: Roommates and Cleaning

Picture this. You walk into your new living space. There is a sink with a mini fridge beside it. You open the mini fridge, and to your horror, it is crammed full of food containers, trash, and its beginning to freeze up. I wish that were a made-up story, but no. I experienced that during college. This week we will focus on the importance of cleaning when living in shared space with roommates.

### Podcast Opener:

*(Music playing.)* Tackle your “Adulting” To Do list with the Grown Up U: Facts for Success podcast. Keep listening as we celebrate Season 3 with podcasts to help steer you in the right direction by providing useful advice for living an independent and satisfying life as a young adult. *(Music ends.)*

### Podcast Script:

**Tristin Bolton:** Hello, I’m Tristin Bolton, Crawford County Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. Today we are talking about the importance of cleaning while living in a shared space. I am joined by Stephanie London, Assistant Dean of Students for Housing and Campus & Community Engagement, University of Arkansas Fort Smith.

Stephanie, thank you so much for joining me today to talk about this very important topic! Last week I discussed the general importance of cleaning and tasks associated with that. But let’s talk about the dorms.

**Stephanie London:** Thanks for having me Tristin. Cleaning is so important for the health of our residents. For many students, this is their first time on their own and learning to navigate school, jobs, and roommates can be a lot.

**Tristin Bolton:** That is a great way to look at this! For many students they are learning a new routine and normal and cleaning honestly may not be a priority. I remember when I lived in campus housing, we had a handbook and agreement. Is that still the case?

**Stephanie London:** Absolutely!

**Tristin Bolton:** So, would you say that most, if not all college housing has a contract and handbook that outlines the expectations for cleaning?

**Stephanie London:** Yes, that's what I've seen at pretty much every institution. We have a Housing and Residential Life Handbook which outlines all of our policies, as well as a require that a roommate agreement is completed within the first two weeks of the semester. RAs, or resident assistants, meet with all the residents of the same suite or apartment to help them formulate a plan to live together – which includes cleaning.

**Tristin Bolton:** When we talk about cleaning and the health reasons for cleaning, one thing we discuss is mold and mildew. Damp conditions allow for mold and mildew to grow. I remember there being signs in the shower rooms about mildew.

**Stephanie London:** Mold or mildew can occur in damp situations, so the culprit is oftentimes the bathroom if it's not being kept clean. We send out a digital Welcome Packet which includes information on "how to prevent mold and mildew." This includes 10 tips and tricks to preventing mold and mildew such as not leaving wet or damp clothes, towels, or shoes in closets, as an example.

It's also important that if you suspect small amounts of mold, it can be cleaned with general household cleaner, BUT if the problem worsens, we definitely encourage residents to let us know so we can investigate further.

**Tristin Bolton:** This leads me to my next point about living with others and different standards of cleaning. Last week talked about knowing who should clean what, when, and how often.

**Stephanie London:** That is a great idea. Have the conversation with your roommates and work together to make sure your environment is safe and secure. Again, that's part of that roommate agreement we do upfront and if a roommate isn't holding up their end of the bargain, there's a written record of what they've all agreed to. Ultimately, everyone needs to do their part.

**Tristin Bolton:** So, Stephanie, what would a resident do if their roommate or roommates weren't holding up their end of the cleaning schedule and expectations?

**Stephanie London:** I think the first option is to talk to one another. We would encourage the roommates to have a conversation about their agreement and what's not being upheld. Honestly, this is also a great life lesson for the residents when it comes to conflict as well.

If they cannot come to a conclusion on their own, then the RA will typically get involved and help mediate the conversation. In an extreme circumstance, it may become more of an educational conversation from a staff member such as a Resident Director.

**Tristin Bolton:** Those conversations can be difficult, but they are so important to have. You want your environment to be as safe and secure as possible.

**Tristin Bolton:** Oh, another topic I wanted to talk to you about was cleaning in regards to illness. For the past couple years, we have been on high alert as far as cleaning and disinfecting. We have begun to congregate again, and flu season will be here before we know it. Are there steps students can take to help stay well?

**Stephanie London:** Absolutely, the most important thing is to maintain a clean living environment and to disinfect regularly, including “touch” surfaces, like your doorknob, on a regular basis.

Sometimes it can be hard for students to come by cleaning supplies, so if the dollars are tight and cleaning supplies are not on this week’s grocery list, you might see if there are any freebies available. If you’re at a college or university that has a pantry, check to see if they are giving out free cleaning supplies.

If an on-campus pantry is not available, oftentimes there are local places to get free cleaning supplies. We also have extra disinfectant wipes and cleaning spray that we need to use before it goes bad, so we put one of each in every on-campus apartment before move-in and plan to put more out in common spaces for residents to take.

Regular cleaning is the key when it comes to prevention.

**Tristin Bolton:** So, let’s recap some of the things we have talked about today

- Cleaning is important when living with others, it prevents pest and illnesses from spreading.
- Having a conversation with your roommates is a great place to start when it comes to cleaning expectations.
- Universities and colleges have tools, people, and expectations in place to help you navigate this new experience.

Stephanie, do you have anything else you would like our listeners to know?

**Stephanie London:** I think those are the key points. Thank you so much for inviting me to chat with you on the topic!

**Tristin Bolton:** Thank you so much for visiting with me today Stephanie as we talked about the importance of cleaning in a shared space, like a dorm.

You can find more resources and information on our website [www.uaex.uada.edu](http://www.uaex.uada.edu)

Thank you, listeners, for joining us today! This is Tristin Bolton, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

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