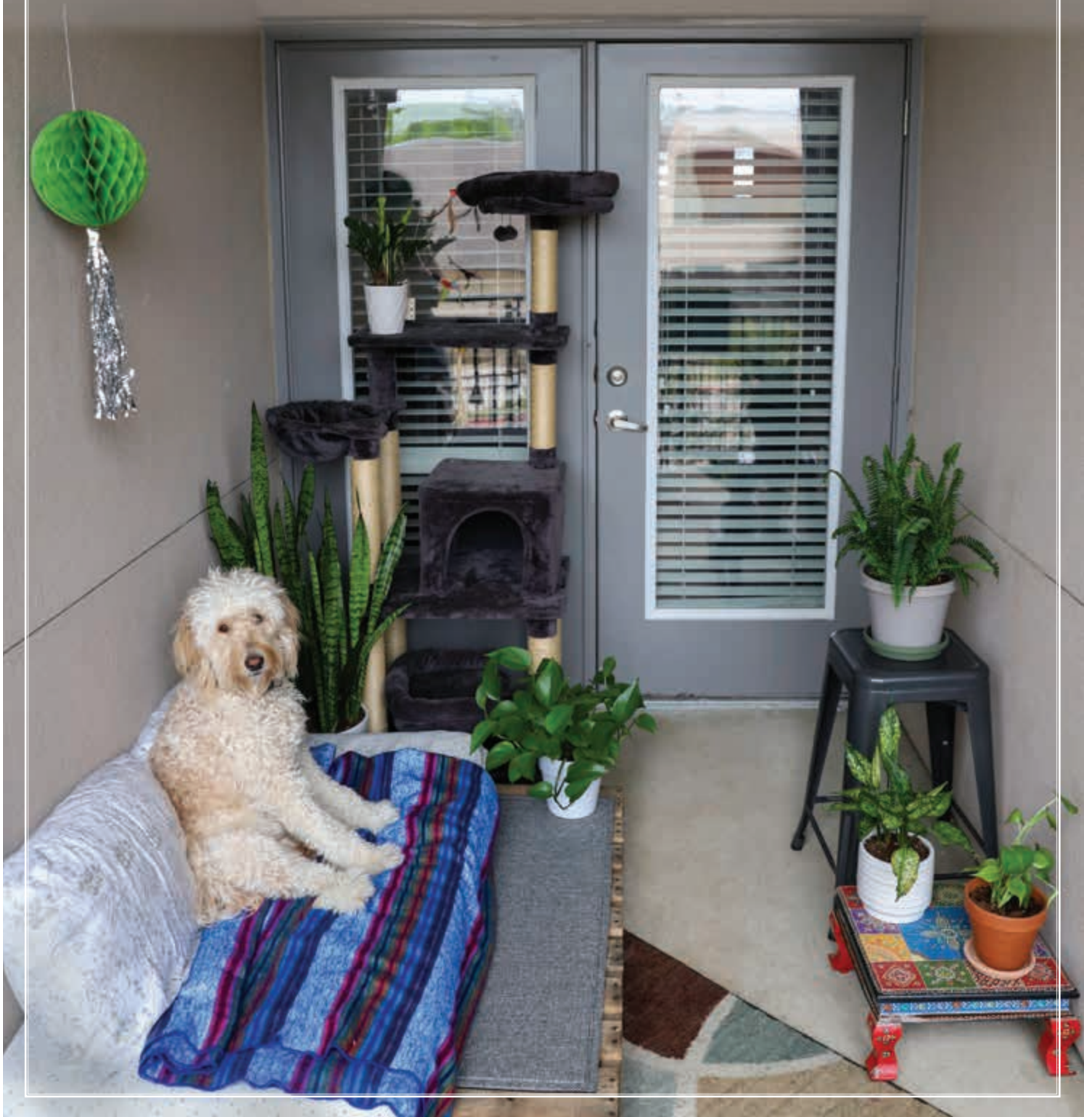


THE SHORTHORN

Housing Guide

2021



How COVID-19 altered the on-campus living experience

Virtual class formats and restrictions on in-person gatherings have reshaped what it looks like to live on campus



Illustration by Arturo Ramos

BY RITCHIE MANALASTAS
The Shorthorn staff

Students living on campus during the pandemic have had to cope with laziness, depression, stress and boredom within the past year because of limited in-person connections.

Nursing freshman Rebecca Jackson expected a more interactive experience when she first moved to campus.

“I can barely even bond with people on my own floor,” she said.

Jackson has been living on campus for a year and has tried

to make friends through her virtual classes. She feels like she has finally been able to make more friends this semester.

Music education sophomore Mireya Campos still prefers living on campus over living at home, but she has faced boredom due to a lack of interactions.

She finds it easier to focus in school and have better time management when she’s on campus.

“I think it’s nice to just be immersed in campus because if I was at home, I’d probably be doing nothing,” she said.

Going to school amid the pandemic has been stressful for Campos because she learns better in-person and finds online learning to be difficult.

She mostly experiences boredom on the weekends, when she spends most of the time in her dorm either doing homework, watching Netflix and YouTube, or doing laundry.

Nursing junior Anthony Ambrose has also experienced his share of extreme boredom.

“Sometimes you feel like there’s nothing to do and like you can only play so many video

games,” he said.

He feels burnt out from looking at screens all day.

Many students find going off campus can relieve their isolation.

Ambrose often drives off campus to go to parks, ride his longboard or eat outside.

Students claim that despite the struggles, they still find it convenient to live on campus, and there are still opportunities to meet new people.

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Compromise, communication essential between roommates

Students explain how they were able to maintain boundaries and establish healthy relationships with their roommates

BY SAMANTHA KNOWLES
The Shorthorn life and
entertainment editor

Moving out is hard enough as it is, but moving in with a stranger for college can add a whole extra level of stress for incoming freshmen.

Isaiah Angle, visual communication design junior, said that since he is an only child, coming to college was the first time he had to share a room.

He remembers being nervous before meeting his freshman roommate, but the guy ended up being pretty quiet and they mostly left each other alone, Angle said.

His sophomore year roommate was also fine, but Angle said he had to compromise with their schedules because his roommate always worked late.

Ashley Alfred, applied math graduate student, said she didn't live with a stranger until fall 2020. With COVID-19 in the mix, her experience was limited and she wasn't able to be very close with her suitemate, she said.

Alfred calls herself a kind of a loner, so it didn't bother her as much as it would have if she were a freshman trying to make friends, she said.



Illustration by Cristina Del Coro Trio

Taking initiative is important in befriending an unknown roommate, and if she had tried to reach out, Alfred thinks they would have gotten along.

If you want to be closer, don't be afraid to ask your roommate to do things, like go on a walk or out for lunch, Alfred said.

Biology senior Kristina Anyanwu said she hoped to get a single room this semester, so having a roommate wasn't part of the plan. However, plans changed, and her

rooming situation was altered.

She was initially disappointed, and although the situation is cordial, Anyanwu said she wouldn't call herself and her new roommate friends.

Although the two don't fight, her roommate likes to listen to videos or music without earbuds in, which bothers Anyanwu when she's trying to sleep.

They eventually had a discussion about it and fixed the situation before it became a real issue,

she said.

Because of this, Anyanwu's roommate advice is to be open to compromise and communicate. It's also important to not be overly possessive of your shared spaces and items, like the fridge, Anyanwu said. You have to share, so don't get defensive.

"If something's legitimately bothering you, you should bring it up to them. Hopefully, they're gonna be understanding about it," she said.

Angle's advice to anyone who lives with someone they don't know is to remember that you don't always have to stay stuck in the dorm with them.

Venturing out to mingle with other people can keep you from getting sick of each other, he said, and if the two of you don't get along, there are plenty of other people to hang out with on campus.

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Living abroad: the burdens of homesickness and how to cope

Whether you're an international student or someone from out of state, homesickness is a difficult feeling

BY JESSICA FARMER
The Shorthorn staff

For many students, moving away from home to attend college is a huge adjustment.

International students can have even higher stakes, as they may not know what to expect when moving to a foreign country with unfamiliar customs.

With family and friends many miles away, it isn't a surprise that these students, and even those who are simply out-of-state, can start to become homesick.

Mechanical engineering alumnus Baljinder Singh Sidhu is originally from Uttar Pradesh in northern India. Adjusting to American life wasn't difficult, he said, but he did have to learn to follow certain rules.

Sidhu said he gets homesick sometimes, and it's worse when he sees his parents and relatives at a wedding or birthday party.

He deals with homesickness by watching movies or playing cricket with friends, which is a popular sport in his home country.

Sidhu said he talks to his mother the most when feeling homesick. He normally talks with



Illustration by Arturo Ramos

his father for a few minutes, and the rest of his time is spent with his mother.

Jae-sik Choi, a transportation engineering doctoral student from Seoul, South Korea, said he spent two and a half years in Arizona earning his masters before moving to Texas in 2019.

Now in his third year, Choi said it wasn't

difficult adjusting to the U.S. because of his past experience in the army.

But whenever he does feel homesick, Choi said he calls his friends and family back home, after first making sure it's a good time.

Political science freshman Abd Almoamen Keshlaf said although it wasn't difficult to adjust, he

hasn't fully adapted to life in the U.S. and feels homesick for his family and friends in other countries.

Keshlaf was born in Tripoli, Libya, but only lived there for two years. He lived in several other places before the U.S., including France and Dubai.

When it comes to advice for other students

who may feel homesick, Sidhu said they should try to think more practically.

If a person can understand and just embrace getting out of their comfort zone, they can stay anywhere in this world, he said.

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Tips on bathroom cleaning etiquette

Students share their tips and tricks for making their bathroom clean and inviting for both themselves and others

BY ADRIAN RODRIGUEZ
The Shorthorn sports editor

Restrooms can be a safe place, a zone of peace and tranquility, a spot to escape from the stresses of daily life and find peace for a period of time.

Some people have rules for their restrooms, things they like to have in a particular order or cleaned in a certain way with specific tools.

Some need their restrooms smelling nice, not like someone just got off the toilet.

Everyone has preferences, from which way the toilet paper should be facing to putting the toilet seat down. If even the slightest thing is off about the restroom, they will likely notice.

Daniel Saucedo, marketing and management senior, lives with a family of six, including his father, mother and four brothers.

Out of the four brothers, Saucedo said he is the cleanest.

His biggest restroom rule is cleaning up the sink and mirror area after brushing your teeth. Saucedo said he hates to see toothpaste residue in the sink and mirror area.

He also likes for things to be organized and hates to see things left out that need to be put back in the correct drawer.

Saucedo feels the same about other people's restrooms. He said he wants to see people take the time to make their restroom look nice.

"The first thing you notice as soon as you open the door is 'is it clean' or 'how does it smell?'" Saucedo said. "Are you taking any extra initiative to give a good presentation for the people coming?"

Saucedo said he appreciates

when people take the extra step to put a candle in their restrooms or have a wall plug that emits a nice aroma.

He said he uses a mix of different cleaning products to keep his own restroom smelling nice, from Fabuloso to Clorox. After he's done cleaning, he likes lighting a candle for a continuous nice scent.

Saucedo said his go-to cleaning product is Clorox's bathroom foamer with bleach.

Biomedical engineering freshman Jacob Mayfield said he has a pet peeve of people not drying off completely before exiting the shower.

"I don't like whenever people come out of the shower just completely dripping, and then they soak up the foot dryer towel that's on the ground," Mayfield said. "Then if I go take a shower, I can't dry off my feet there because it's wet."

Another rule Mayfield said people should abide by is placing toilet paper on the holder with the toilet paper facing the outside.

"That should be a rule for everybody," he said.

He also likes the toilet seat to be down and the shower curtain to hang on the side farthest from the spout.

When cleaning his restroom, Mayfield said he uses a variety of products, but his favorite is the Mr. Clean Magic Eraser.

"That thing will wipe away anything and everything," he said.

One thing Mayfield said he doesn't mind is urinating in the shower, an age-old discussion that people have different views on.

"As long as you can aim at the drain, I'm fine with it," he said. "The shower is going to wash [it]



Illustration by Kirby Teegarden

away anyway."

Others have mixed feelings and views on whether it's fine to use the shower as a toilet.

"I'm OK with that, but at the same time it's my shower," musical theatre freshman Ambar Acosta said. "If it's someone that I just met that's peeing in my shower, I mean I do clean it, but still I would be like 'the toilets right there.'"

Like Saucedo, Acosta said she likes to see effort from others to make their restroom look more appealing to use. She said the first thing she notices when entering a restroom is the decor.

"If I see that they've actually taken the time to put little plants

or a little sign or some magazines, I'm like 'OK they want this to look really nice,'" Acosta said.

Her biggest pet peeves are people not flushing the toilet or not putting the seat down after finishing up, things that she said are "common courtesy" and "so basic."

Acosta said the best way to keep a restroom clean is to have a routine and make sure to stick to it.

It's safe to say that everyone has different rules they prefer for their restrooms.

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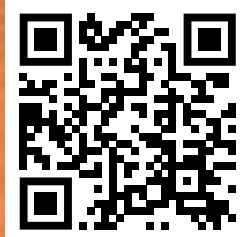
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Courtesy: Patricia Rojas

Computer science sophomore Patricia Rojas sits with her collection of Squishmallows in her room. Rojas said she noticed Squishmallows trending on TikTok last January, and now she has more than 20.

Squishmallows: cute, cuddly, collectible

The plush toys' fame on TikTok is driving their rise in popularity

BY AI-VY DINH
The Shorthorn staff

Many people have picked up a hobby in the COVID-19 era, and for computer science sophomore Patricia Rojas, that new hobby is Squishmallow hunting.

Rojas said in the two months since she started collecting, her count has grown from six to more than 20.

According to their website, Squishmallows are stuffed animals that come in a variety of species and colors. They're meant to be cuddled, collected and gifted, and in the two years since their launch, over 50 million have been sold.

The stuffed animals have seen a rise in popularity recently with the hashtag #squishmallows racking up more than 860 million views on TikTok from creators of all ages.

Rojas said she first noticed

Squishmallows trending on TikTok last January, and it was around that time she started collecting them more seriously.

It's been a good bonding experience for her and her siblings, she said. They have fun searching for different Squishmallows together, and it's brought them closer as a result.

But Rojas' siblings aren't the only ones who bond with her over the toys. After tweeting about her collection, she met a girl online who also collects, and they've become "Squishmallow buddies," keeping each other updated on their current finds.

"I think that's the coolest thing I've got out of it, a little Squishmallow friend," Rojas said.

Pauline Pham, visual communications design freshman, said she also enjoys Squishmallow hunting, an activity she

usually does with her sorority sisters.

She said they once went to multiple Five Below's to search, going as far out as Dallas and Garland.

Some are harder to find, which makes it a challenge to get all of them, Pham said. She recalls going to Costco and seeing someone carry out three of the big Baby Yoda-edition Squishmallows.

For her, stuffed animals bring a sense of comfort, Pham said. She has a plush penguin gifted to her by her grandma that brings back memories, and for her, collecting Squishmallows is no different than collecting something like Pokémon cards.

She said people shouldn't be ashamed of having stuffed animals because liking the things you like makes you unique, and it's better to not listen to people

who bash the things that make you happy.

Political science sophomore Nadia Contreras said she spends a lot of time in her apartment, and having something cute to look at makes her room a happier environment.

Contreras said the rise in popularity of stuffed animals like Squishmallows can be attributed to many people wanting comfort during the pandemic. Squishmallows are mostly inexpensive and can provide people with that comfort, regardless of age.

She thinks if something makes people happy, then who cares what others think about it.

"They're stuffed animals, so it doesn't hurt anyone to collect them. Except maybe your bank account," Contreras said.

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The Shorthorn: Elias Valverde II

Tanisha DeBose, critical languages and international studies sophomore, sits with her cat Minx outside her apartment at The Heights on Pecan in Arlington.

The benefit of furry roommates

Pets can help relieve stress, but it's important that owners know how to properly care for their furry companions

BY MANDY HUYNH
The Shorthorn staff

Many students have found that having furry companionship benefits their mental health.

Tanisha DeBose, critical languages and international studies sophomore, lives alone and finds that her cat, Minx, reminds her to stay present.

"Sometimes with anxiety you kind of tend to think more about the past or the future, but whenever I have to take care of him and love him, I have to worry about the right now and make sure he's OK," she said. "It really helps with mindfulness."

However, students should be aware that a pet requires care. One mistake students make is getting

a pet and not being able to afford veterinary care, said Eryn Von Husen, biology sophomore and Campus Cat Coalition president.

"I know a lot of students don't have a lot of money, but they should at least try to have a little bit of money put aside just in case something were to happen," she said.

There are low-cost vaccine events and clinics around Arlington that the coalition recommends. One such service is the Texas Coalition for Animal Protection, a nonprofit that provides low-cost vaccines, spays and neuters.

Another important factor to think about when having pets is other housemates. Students have

to be even more communicative when bringing a pet home, Von Husen said.

"You don't want to cause any issues with your roommate," she said. "That's going to put even more stress on a situation when at the end of the day you having your pet there with you is supposed to lower your stress."

Architecture junior Marin Cruz had issues with her first roommate because she had to take care of both their dogs. It's really about setting boundaries, she said.

Cruz said having a dog is a big learning curve. She recommends looking for housing that has a green space for dogs to do their business and living on the first floor to avoid complaints.

For cats, Maria Luisa Cardenas, french junior and Campus Cat Coalition president in training, recommends having breaks from school work double as play-time so they can have some attention.

For many students like DeBose, coming back to an empty apartment is really daunting for their mental health. Seeing her cat there makes hard times easier.

"If you're ever just going to a really bad episode or whatever happens, sometimes just having that animal come in and just check on you and lay on you," she said. "It's like the best feeling ever."

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Give the boot before getting booty

Mavericks give advice on how to communicate with your roommate when it comes to sexual activity with your significant other.

BY DEJAH ABRAHAM
The Shorthorn staff

Managing roommates and sexual relationships can be difficult if communication is not used effectively.

Some residents said it is important to inform their roommate and get permission beforehand when they have company over or are trying to engage in sexual activity with their partner.

“If we were to bring a guest over, we would make sure it was okay with [our roommates],” nursing sophomore Lindsay McCranie said.

Aerospace engineering freshman Jim Ber said in regard to public displays of affection and sex while living with roommates, students should ensure others are not home.

“Just communicate,” Ber said. “Commu-

nicate, ‘Hey, this is about to happen, just letting you know, in case you want to leave, which you probably do.’”

Undeclared freshman Benjamin Suh believes it can be considered disrespectful to engage in sexual activity with a roommate around, especially when not well acquainted with each other. He wouldn’t want his roommate to experience that, even with their permission. He suggests asking the roommate to leave.

Ber said his roommates are respectful when they have their girlfriends over, but that is not always the case for others.

“Don’t have a full-out make-out sesh in front of me,” McCranie said.

Architecture senior Danielle Stephens said setting boundaries with your roommate is very important to avoid awkwardness and feeling uncomfortable whenever someone’s significant other is around.

It may be best to move out when those boundaries aren’t respected, Stephens said.

“If you’re not going to listen to me about

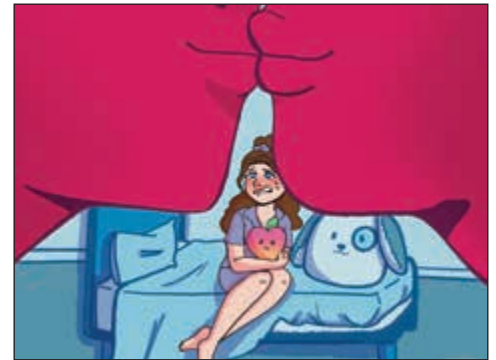


Illustration by Claudia Humphrey

something that makes me uncomfortable, what’s the point of living with you,” Stephens said. “If that’s the one thing you’re not going to listen to me about, what are other options that you’re not going to listen to me about?”

Overall, communicating and being respectful when booty comes calling is essential with roommates.

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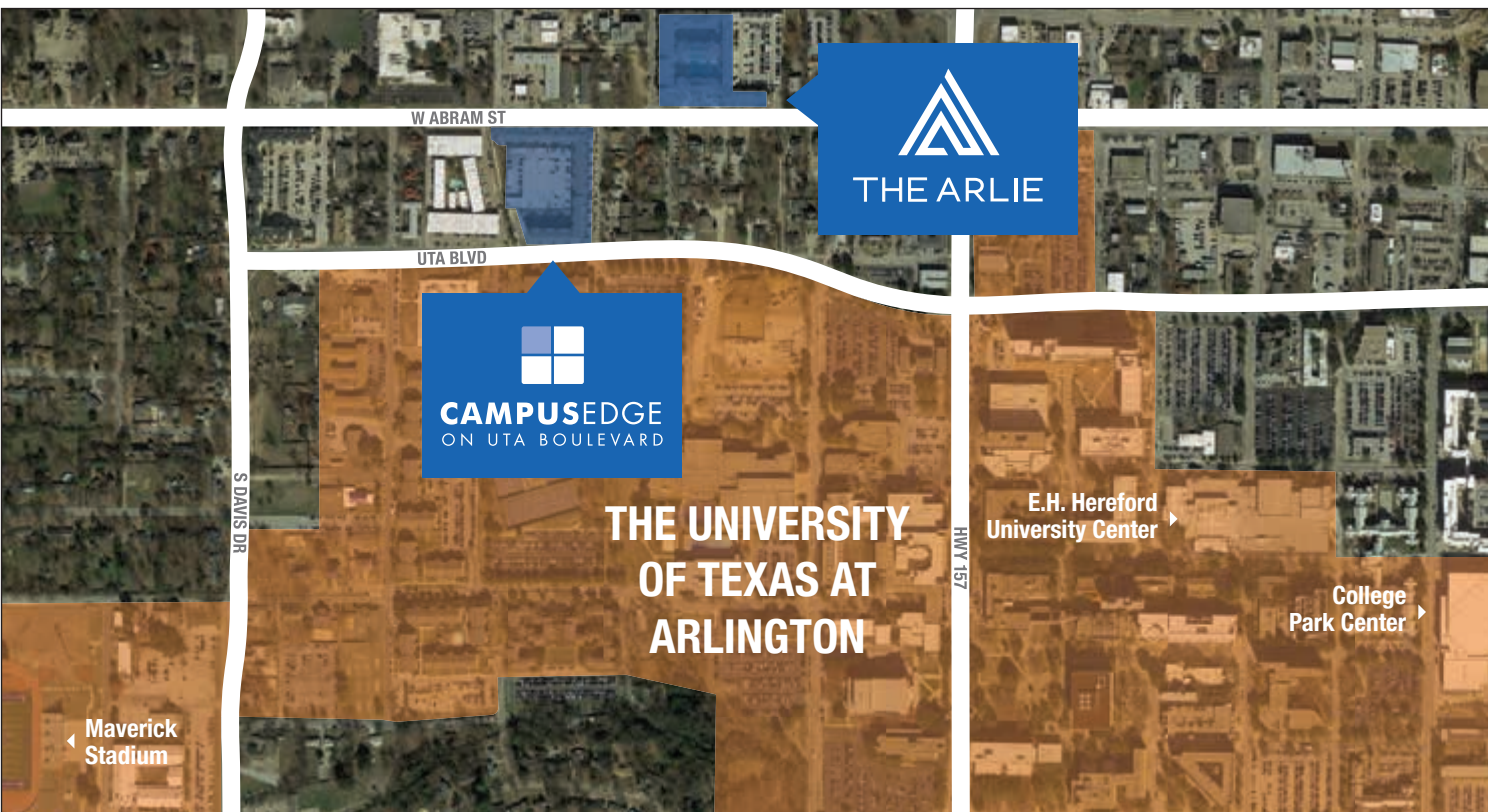


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Clean space, clear minds

Students discuss the state of their living spaces and reveal their spring cleaning traditions.

BY MARYAM ZAFAR
The Shorthorn staff

English sophomore Kimberly Lopez, who lives off-campus this semester, said there are always things laying around her room.

There are always clothes on “that one chair” and a table cluttered with notebooks, she said.

“I’m slightly messy, but it’s an organized mess,” Lopez said.

The pandemic has increased her motivation to clean because she’s constantly stuck at home, which makes her more aware of the dirty areas, she said.

To Lopez, spring cleaning means removing the things that no longer serve a purpose, whether it’s getting rid of them or donating them. It also means making sure there’s no dust on surfaces.

“Just letting the light touch everything,” she said.

Decluttering her room helps declutter her mind. If her room is clean, her mind is at peace, she said.

She likes to listen to rock or metal music at full volume when she cleans.

As part of her spring cleaning system, Lopez puts everything on the floor, dusts and wipes everything down, then puts everything back in its rightful place.

“It’s more like a ritual,” she said. “Cleaning everything to bring in all of the goodness of spring.”

She tends to avoid dirty spaces in her room. But the more she avoids it, the less she’s cleaning, and the space becomes dirtier, she said.

Nursing freshman Ami Patel likes to keep things organized. She keeps everything sorted by categories — make-up and beauty products get their own drawer, and books have their own section, she said.

Being clean helps her relieve stress and know where to find things, she said.

Patel makes sure to clean every week. She usually sweeps and mops when her roommate is out, she said. Having a

system keeps her focused.

For people who aren’t sure where to begin with spring cleaning, Patel suggests keeping an organization system. People operate differently, she said, but what matters is that the system works.

“Start with the biggest concern,” she said.

Biomedical engineering freshman Sylvia Gichana lives on campus this semester.

“Because I’m at school, I’m very organized with my school stuff,” she said. “But like, my dorm life, I’m not very organized.”

To her, spring cleaning brings a clear mind and a clean space. It elevates one’s day, one’s confidence and one’s productivity, she said.

“The one thing I make sure to do everyday is make my bed, because it gives me this sense of ‘oh, I’ve done something,’” Gichana said.

She has a loose, weekly schedule for cleaning her restroom, her bed and her dishes, she said. Preparing her schedule is an important part of her day, and she sees this as another aspect of cleaning.

As people come out of the winter and into spring, there’s a sense of laziness, she said.

“Spring is where the environment [around] you is changing, so the flowers are more blossoming, everything looks new,” Gichana said. “As a student, spring is more of a time to actually organize yourself.”

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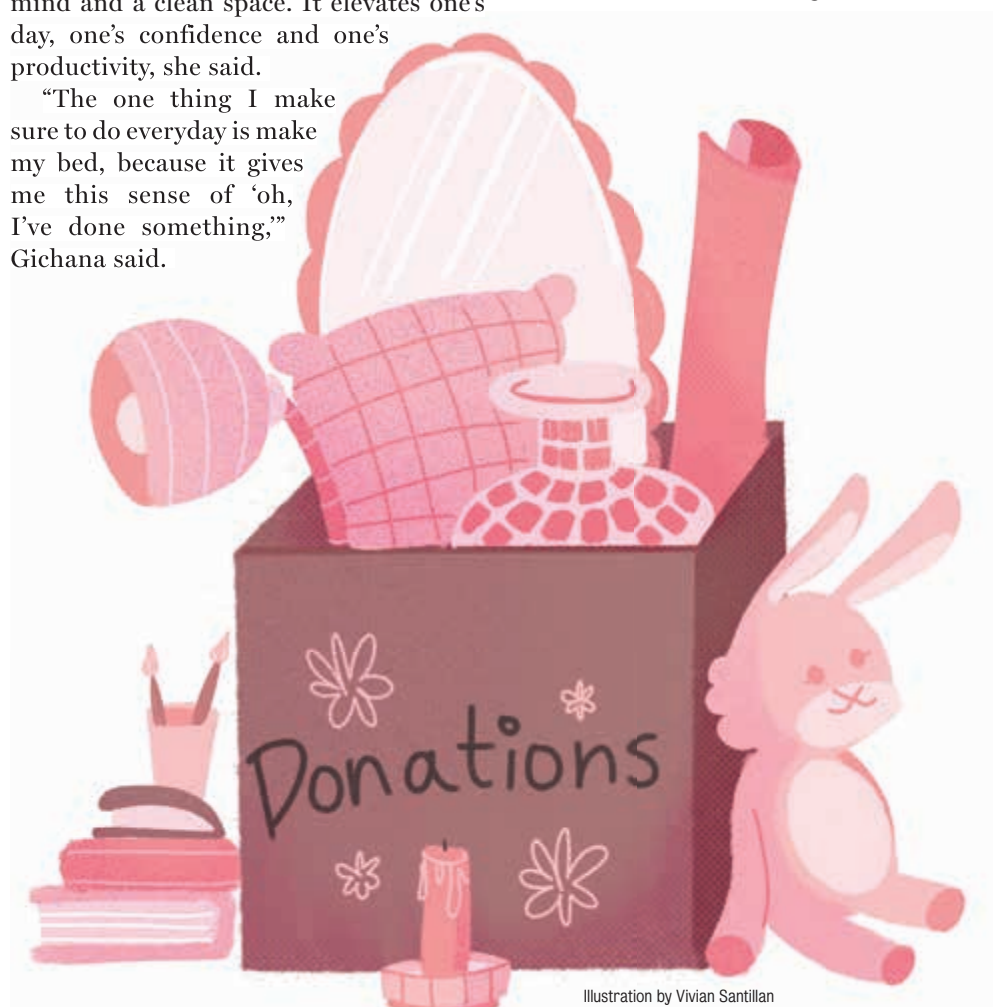


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Plant parenthood: Everyone can do it

Here's a number of house plants that are easy to care for and maintain around your apartment, house or dorm

BY GECILIA LENZEN
The Shorthorn editor in chief

If you're a broke college student like me, spicing up your dorm or apartment can be challenging. One easy, affordable way to liven up your living room is with house plants.

Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to have a green thumb to successfully keep a few plants alive. I don't consider myself the world's greatest gardener, but I've accumulated over 20 plants in my home, and they're all thriving.

So if you're looking to begin plant parenthood but don't know where to start, here are my recommendations and tips for which plants to start with and why.



Snake plant

Sansevieria, more commonly known as "the snake plant," is basically the world's

easiest plant to keep alive. It doesn't require much sunlight, and you can forget to water it for weeks.

With its long, snaky leaves, it's a statement plant perfect for any living room. Mine now stands about four feet tall next to my TV.

Research also indicates that snake plants help keep inside air clean, removing harmful toxins. So it's pretty and keeps you healthy.



Pothos

Pothos plants are generally easy to care for, but it depends on which variety you get. They come in many colors, but I recommend those with solid green leaves, not the variegated white ones, which are a little more tricky to take care of.

As a whole, pothos can adapt to varying environments. They thrive most with indirect sunlight

but can tolerate low light, and they can grow in either soil or a vase of water.

They grow fairly fast and are super easy to propagate new ones. Simply cut a leaf off at the stem, stick it in some water, and you'll probably see roots sprouting in a few days.

However, you should be aware that pothos can be toxic to cats, dogs and children if ingested. Although not fatal, they can cause irritation and vomiting — my cat learned this the hard way.



Fern

If you keep them safe from dry air and extreme temperatures, ferns won't cause you any problems. They love humidity and shade, so they're ideal for a bathroom away from any windows.

I have a Boston fern on my bathroom counter, and it has thrived in that environment with minimal watering.

Because they love humidity, it's better to mist ferns with a spray bottle rather than soak the soil, but you can get away without doing so by keeping them in the bathroom like me or by using a humidifier.



Succulent

Most plant enthusiasts will say succulents are easy, but that's only if you don't over-water them. Too many new plant parents — with the best intentions — water their succulents daily or even weekly simply because they worry too much.

A nursery owner once told me that if you spit on your succulent every few weeks, that's still too much water. With their thick stems and leaves, succulents can store water for weeks and thrive in dry soil.

There are many types of succulents but some of the most common are aloe and cacti. I highly recommend these as long as you can control yourself with the watering can.



Spider plant

The spider plant is both adaptable and easy to grow. It gets its name from the spider-like extensions, or "spiderettes," that sprout and dangle down from the base plant.

With its dangling spiderettes, this plant works well in a hanging basket or on a high shelf. If you water them well and provide them with bright sunlight, they'll likely grow quickly.

If a spider plant looks like it's dying, it probably isn't. You might notice the leaves start to brown, but that's normal and won't harm the plant. It probably just means there's fluoride in the water you're giving it. It helps to periodically flood the plants with distilled water or even rainwater to flush out excess salt in the soil and then allow them to

drain.

No matter which one you choose, parenting plants can be a rewarding, enjoyable experience, so long as you know where to start.

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Illustrations by Kirby Teegarden



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How to overcome political differences

UTA students discuss how they find common ground with people who have opposing ideologies.

BY THEVNIN RUMENDE
The Shorthorn staff

With Americans facing increased political polarization, some UTA students are looking to bridge the gap with friends and roommates who share opposing views.

International relations freshman Tom Ravet said it can sometimes be difficult to have conversations with people on the other side of the political spectrum. Ravet and his roommate, political science freshman Liam Mcree, are on opposite sides of the political spectrum. Ravet is a registered Democrat, and Mcree is a registered Republican.

Mcree and Ravet said their conversations don't usually go into full debates when discussing politics.

"We always try to find the middle ground," Ravet said. "That's the most important thing."

Mcree said during the 2020 election, they would often discuss different policies and share



Illustration by Claudia Humphrey

their perspectives.

"Those were some of the best conversations to have," he said.

Thomas Reboli, aerospace and mechanical engineering sophomore, said finding what unites people is the key to successfully dealing with different political opinions.

Mcree said what makes political conversations less contentious is sticking to the facts.

"A lot of our conversations are based around events of history and things of that nature and what we think about them and how we apply it to today," he said.

Mcree said people should remain honest and never be afraid to express their opinion.

"Never suppress what you have to say, what's on your mind," he said. "Express it in a positive manner."

Mcree and Ravet said roommates should find positive outlets to bond over, and not everything should be political.

Reboli said it's important to understand that sometimes people can't overcome disagreements, and that's fine.

"You have to be able to agree to disagree," he said.

Mcree said even if someone may disagree with him politically he can still recognize the good in differing opinions.

"I find beauty in diversity of thought," he said.

Reboli said this kind of diversity is one of the things that characterizes America.

"It doesn't matter what skin color you are, who you believe in [or] what you believe in," he said. "In America, we are all Americans."

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Illustration by Kirby Teegarden

Students learn to divide their home spaces

Online learning has resulted in many students using the same space for all their daily activities

BY OLIVIA YAMAH
The Shorthorn staff

Due to the pandemic increasing many students' time at home, knowing how to divide space between work and leisure is an increasingly important skill.

For many, work, sleep and class all happen in the same place: their bedrooms.

One example of this is communication senior John Henry Lu, who has a desk setup that does it all.

Lu's desk holds his monitors and PC and is also where he does his homework. He also uses that space for entertainment, as a self-proclaimed "huge gamer."

Not much changed for Lu when COVID-19 hit.

"I just never had to leave home

again," he said.

Lu's main issue with staying home was with the disorganized structure of online schooling. He believes there is no structure when you wake up and can attend class from your bed, he said.

You have to block out your time more to make sure you're studying, doing homework and attending class without that structure, Lu said.

Biology sophomore Cecilia Rodriguez said she prefers to spend her time working at a desk by the window in her room. Because she lives at home, eating meals with her family is normal, but not when she is busy.

"When I'm rushing I will just eat at my desk while I'm doing work," she said.

Her leisure time is also spent in her room, and she said she likes to relax on her bed or in the living room.

Benjamin Do Couto, mechanical and aerospace engineering senior, believes he's more efficient on campus, but he actually prefers doing online assignments.

Online assignments allow him to do things open-book, which helps him balance his classes, he said.

Since COVID-19, Do Couto has been spending his leisure time in his living room, as well as trying to go to the Maverick Activities Center four or five times a week, he said.

But kinesiology freshman Italy Moreno takes breaks from working at home in a different way.

"I usually go to the park and take a walk or hike to get distracted," she said.

Moreno has a hard time focusing at home because she is used to school and home life being separated, instead of the current combination, she said.

Like Moreno, Rodriguez now associates her room with studying just as much as she does with relaxing.

But no matter how students choose to structure their space, many seem to be making the most of juggling work, online assignments and down-time, all from home.

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Be aware of common pitfalls when planning your commute to campus

Planning for unexpected traffic, detours and delays will make for a more successful semester once classes resume in person

BY EDGAR ESTRADA
The Shorthorn staff

Broadcasting senior Iridiana Barcenas thought she was ready for her first day of school. Her bags were packed, and the car's gas tank was full. But when she got in the car and turned the key, nothing happened.

After trying again with the same result, she realized her car had died. She called family members and friends, but no one was available.

Commuter students like Barcenas face various challenges getting to school, including traffic, vehicle issues and parking. Sometimes, it's hard to know how to handle.

"First I cried and prayed to God and the Virgin Mary," Barcenas said.

Instead of waiting for divine intervention, she purchased a bus ticket and decided to use public transportation to take her to class.

She hopped on the bus, and before she realized what was going on, she was dropped off in Downtown Dallas — the opposite direction of Arlington and UTA for the Carrollton resident.

"I got off on the wrong exit," Barcenas said. "I used Uber [to go home.] It was a bad first day of college."

Criminal justice senior Cristian Gallegos, who also commutes to school, said it made sense financially to save money by living off campus and commuting. The only problem was getting to class on time.

One day while running late for an exam, he decided to take a shortcut by making a left turn. Unfortunately, a street sign indicated no left turns. Even more unfortunately, a police officer was there to witness his mistake that day.

"I said 'I'm in a hurry,'" he recalled. "I've got an exam, and you're wasting my time."

Gallegos said the officer chuckled at his joke but still wrote him a traffic citation.

His time mismanagement led him to find parking in the staff parking areas. Risk it for a ticket, he said.

His risks did not pay off. He said he has received 20 or more tickets per year in the six years he has been at UTA.

Parking without a



Illustration by Arturo Ramos

permit can result in a \$55 citation, while parking in an ADA-accessible space is a \$250 citation, according to the Parking and Transportation Services website.

Athletic training alumnus Ivan Garcia recalled when the Maverick Activities Center had a large parking lot before it was converted into a garage.

Garcia said he drove to school from his home in Fort Worth. To ensure that he would get to his 8 a.m. class on time, he would wake up at 6:40 a.m. to get ready and have breakfast.

His strategy didn't work on the days he had

mid-morning starting classes.

"When I arrived on Tuesdays and Thursdays, it was like going to war trying to find a parking spot there," Garcia said. "You had to hunt people down coming out of the MAC and follow them, stalk them until they got into their car. It got that bad at certain times."

With UTA planning to offer a majority of fall 2021 classes in person, the increase in commuters could drive up the demand for parking.

Something as simple as listening to the radio or Spotify can make commuting easier, Gal-

legos said. And leaving as early as possible is essential.

Although living at home saved money, Barcenas said she misses the coffee shops around campus. She says she would frequent them to unwind and get some studying done, but now it doesn't make much sense to travel close to an hour to campus.

"It sucks being a commuter. It's difficult," Barcenas said. "If you're a commuter, you have to move yourself around. A lot of things can happen, and it's just you."

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Close-knit roommates make for complementary teammates

Women's volleyball juniors highlight the benefits of living with your teammates.

BY ANDREW TINEO
The Shorthorn staff

Maintaining a healthy relationship with your roommate and finding activities to bond over is essential in college.

Junior setter Kylee Kapp and junior outside hitter Brooke Townsend exemplify this, as both teammates and roommates.

"Our freshman year, we got paired together, and throughout the year we were able to bond," Kapp said. "So it made sense our sophomore year to be roommates."

Townsend said they were given the opportunity to grow together through volleyball.

Another unique aspect of the pair is they both major in marketing and management.

"It's been really cool to have someone my age who is going through the same stuff, and we can just relate to a bunch of different things," Townsend said.

The two have game nights with their roommates and the team, Kapp said. Getting to see everyone and bond as a team after quarantine ended was especially fun.

Other than game nights, they schedule time to watch TV, specifically "The Bachelor," every Tuesday. They don't have much time for other activities as student-athletes.

While at home, most of their conversations involve practices or games.

"I don't think there's been a time that we come



The Shorthorn: File photo / Elias Valverde II

Sophomore outside hitter Brooke Townsend, now a junior, laughs with teammates during a match against Chicago State University on Sept. 20, 2019 at College Park Center.

home and not talk about the game, talking about what we could've done better and what we need to go into practice and work on," Kapp said.

Assistant volleyball coach Kailee May notices the interactions the two have on and off the court.

"They're really good at keeping each other in check. They're both fun girls to be around and have big personalities," May said. "When it comes to game time and practice, they do a good job of bringing each other back into the competitive atmosphere and staying focused."

May believes living together gives them the opportunity to evaluate matches and practices, as well as the benefit of

talking about volleyball a lot.

Kapp and Townsend take advantage of their alone time when the opportunity presents itself.

"I think we've learned each other's schedules, so we respect each other's alone time," Townsend said. "We don't get much time to ourselves."

May believes it can be hard to balance volleyball and personal life because you are constantly with your team. But she said there is a lot of growing and maturing that happens when you are roommates with a teammate.

The duo complements one another through their personalities, May said.

She said Townsend's best trait is her drive to be the

best on the court and in the classroom. Kapp's best quality, meanwhile, is not taking mistakes personally and moving forward after one is made.

May said Townsend and Kapp are a good example of having chemistry on and off the court.

"They have a really good balance of the competitive edge on the court, but also maintaining a really close friendship and making sure they have each other's backs," she said. "They're putting each other first and their teammates first."

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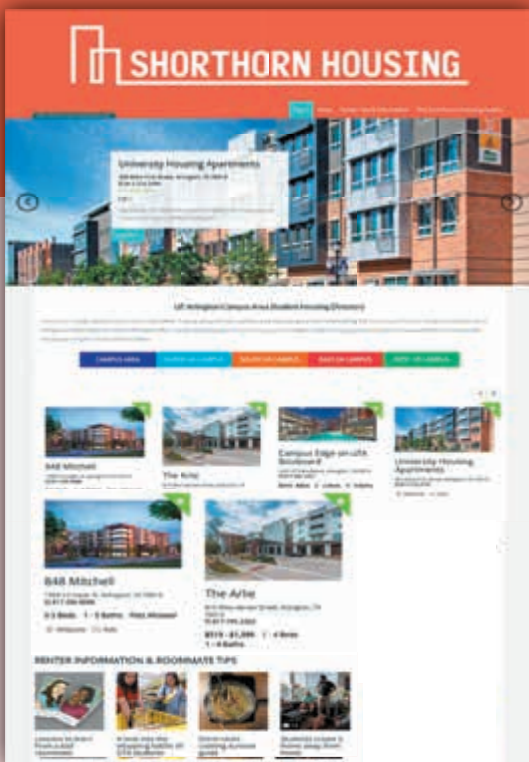
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Creating your happy place on a budget

Students share tips on how to work with or without a budget to make your living space more personal and organized

BY ALEXUS HURTADO
The Shorthorn staff

Living on campus, whether in a dorm or apartment, requires students to be tactful with their use of space and number of belongings.

Decorating doesn't have to be expensive, and you can be both creative and expressive on a budget using simple pieces. Despite having limited space, there are still ways to decorate and make your home feel like a place you want to be.

Here are some student tips for decorating a dorm or apartment that can make your space a little more inviting.

Embrace simplicity

Less is more, and when you're limited on space, sometimes less decor can make a statement as effectively as a wall full of photos.

Roz Nguyen, business and economics freshman, said minimalism is key to her decorating style.

Nguyen lives in West Hall and appreciates its built-in drawers for storage. As a self-proclaimed "neat freak," the drawers help her achieve her goal of tidiness.

While her roommate has more decorations and wall art on her side of the room, Nguyen prefers to keep her belongings tucked away, only keeping the most essential items out for quick access.

Still, Nguyen doesn't believe style and aesthetic should be compromised for functionality. Sentimental items, like photos of family and friends, are great ways to simplistically decorate a space, she said.



Use smaller pieces of decor or furniture as big design statements

Small, bold pieces of decor, like a small tapestry or a statement pillow, can make for great decorations in any room, nursing freshman Keyera Burns said.

Using small decor pieces like pillows, decorative wall canvases and desk accessories will go a long way and feel bigger than they are, allowing for more free space.

Burns lives in Arlington Hall and uses pillows, rugs and curtains as decorative accents for her dorm room.

Using functional pieces of furniture and storage, like behind-the-door shoe holders or nightstands with drawers save a lot of space, Burns said.

Pick a color scheme and overall aesthetic

Color schemes can create a balanced, simple look for any room and can also make it easier to decorate.

Nursing freshman Liliana Toto went with a grey, pink and white color scheme when she moved into Arlington Hall this semester.

She bought decorative tape to cover the desk and nightstand in her dorm and brought along a

tapestry, decorative pillows and lots of cute stationery for display.

Make use of what you have

Using whatever furniture or decor is at your disposal can create an environment that feels more like you.

Nursing sophomore Hailey Hanson kept old decorations from her childhood home but created a new color scheme for her room when she moved into Arlington Hall, she said.

Two ways Hanson keeps her dorm looking aesthetically pleasing is by making her bed every day and keeping her desk clear of homework or any other tasks.

Hanson also uses a shelf with four cubby slots for storage as a way to keep organized and free of clutter.

No matter your personal style, making your dorm or apartment your own doesn't have to be limited by your wallet.

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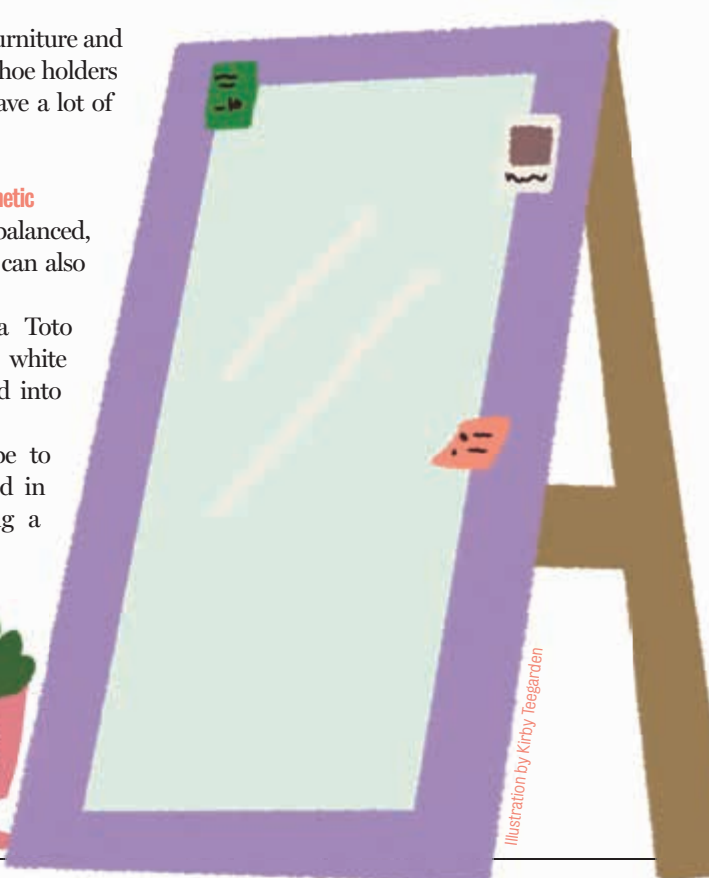
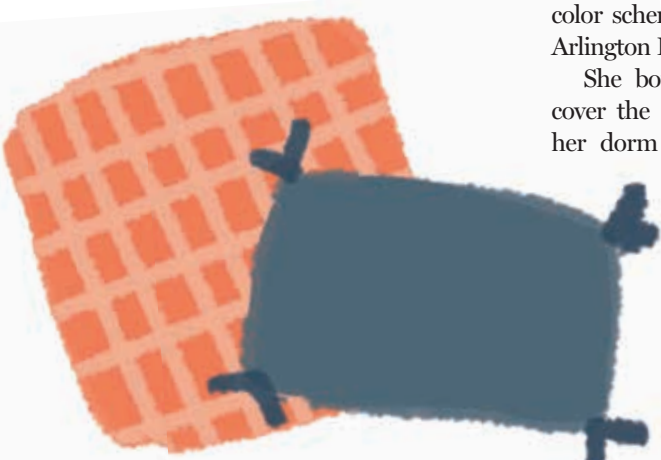


Illustration by Kirby Teegarden

How to be a mindful guest

Mavericks discuss the rules their guests or roommates should follow when planning get-togethers amid the pandemic.

BY DEJAH ABRAHAM
The Shorthorn Staff

Due to COVID-19 safety precautions, UTA students are making adjustments to accommodate their roommates when guests come over.

Nursing freshman Lynae Perez said it gets lonely being by yourself and is ready for the opportunity to have gatherings again.

However, depending on how well she knows her guests and their partying habits, she will still require them to wear masks.

Some students, like criminal justice sophomore Emma Haak and music education freshman Neely Aqskisson, believe that even without COVID-19, having too many people in their living space is stressful.

“If I was going to have a lot of people together, I would do it at a restaurant since

those are more open now,” Haak said. “But I don’t even think I would want to have a lot of people in my dorm, even if we were allowed to.”

She believes after more vaccinations have been distributed, one or two-person gatherings should be allowed.

When having guests over, students must be respectful.

Construction management freshman Angel Floriano, said one of his rules is to not interrupt his sleep.

“Don’t go outside if you know you’re not going to be able to get back in,” he said.

Students believe being clean, courteous and respectful are important things for roommates to remember when having guests over.

Students like aerospace engineering sophomore Scott Booth said communication plays a major role.

“I would say that’s like the most important thing,” he said. “If you’re not telling people what the problem is and what’s bothering



Illustration by Kirby Teegarden

you, you can’t really expect them to fix it. We don’t read each other’s minds.”

Although we’re still in a pandemic, social work senior Jacinto Treviño said when having company over, you should be mindful and considerate about what is happening. He also stresses the importance of being clean.

“If you’re going to have company over, at least have the place clean,” Treviño said. “Why would you want to have someone walking into a tornado of a mess?”



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BE IN YOUR ELEMENT

RLCs for freshmen with mutual interests

Residential Learning Communities connect students to their peers and gives them a leg up in their major.

BY DANG LE
The Shorthorn staff

Residential learning communities offer accommodations for freshmen who want to live on campus with peers of shared majors and interests.

A residential learning community consists of about 15 to 30 freshmen who are enrolled in similar schedules. There are currently 132 students living in multiple communities across all four residence halls, said Nandini Bissessar-Grant, auxiliary services associate director, in an email.

Residential learning communities are a collaboration between University Housing, Apartment and Residence Life and the Office of New Student Courses in the Division of Student Success.

“An RLC is a good choice for [freshmen] because it provides students with opportunities to build community, make friends, connect with faculty and have access to fun programming,” Danielle Klein, New Student Courses director, said in an email.

Klein said all students who

would like to be in a residential learning community need to live in the associated residence hall.

Interested freshmen can visit the University Housing website and apply through the Housing Application system. Students will move in during the Residence Hall Move-In event on Aug. 22, Bissessar-Grant said.

Freshmen who live in residential learning communities in Vandergriff Hall and West Hall would live in double rooms, meaning two residents must share one bedroom and bathroom.

In Arlington Hall and Kalpana Chawla Hall, students live in a double room or private suites, which include three single bedrooms and a shared living room and bathroom area.

Residential learning communities are only available for freshmen. However, transfer students can live in a Theme Housing community, which may include one or more residential learning communities and upper-class residents who share similar majors or interests, Bissessar-Grant said.

Architecture

Freshmen interested in architecture and interior design will live in the Architecture Resident Living Community within the Designing The 21st Century Theme Housing, located in West Hall.

Science & Pre-Med

Located in KC Hall, this residential learning community houses biology students. Combining with other students in the Science and Discovery Theme Housing, this community will put freshmen ahead in pre-med, pre-pharm, pre-dental or pre-vet majors.

Engineering

Freshmen engineering majors will be separated into two Theme Housing units. Students interested in the designing aspect will

live in the Engineering residential learning community within the Designing the 21st Century Theme Housing located in West Hall. Students who share interests in applying technologies to solve problems will live within the Engineering Your Future Theme Housing in KC Hall.

Nursing

As one of the larger residential learning communities, nursing freshmen are also separated into two different Theme Housing units. Nursing freshmen interested in kinesiology or leading a well-balanced, healthy lifestyle will live together in the Residential Learning Center within the Healthy Lifestyles Theme Housing in West Hall. The Nursing Theme Housing, located in Arlington Hall, consists of students in the nursing residential learning community who share a passion for empathetic care. Both communities will help students network with professional nurses, develop a professional portfolio and experience expedited advising and registration.

Liberal Arts

Freshmen interested in literary and artistic expression can live together in a residential learning community within the Arts and Society Theme Housing in Vandergriff Hall. This residential learning community will allow students to explore academic and career options, evaluate strengths and aspirations, and apply them to each discipline. Freshmen will also gain critical thinking and writing skills, which will help in their future careers.

LGBTQ+

Freshmen who identify as LGBTQ+ or allies can live together in Vandergriff Hall no matter their major. Participants in this community will complete two classes each semester together.



Illustrations by Vivian Santillan

Freshmen will actively participate in educational programming related to gender, sexuality, social justice, intersectionality and on-and-off-campus activities. This is one of the two new residential learning communities available next semester.

The living community will be a support system for LGBTQ+ students and help ensure academic success.

Men of Distinction

This is another new residential learning community that will start next semester. It's part of an expanding partnership with the Division of Student Affairs, Klein said.

The Men of Distinction residential learning community is a community open to all students that focuses on the retention and recruitment of Black and Latino men at UTA.

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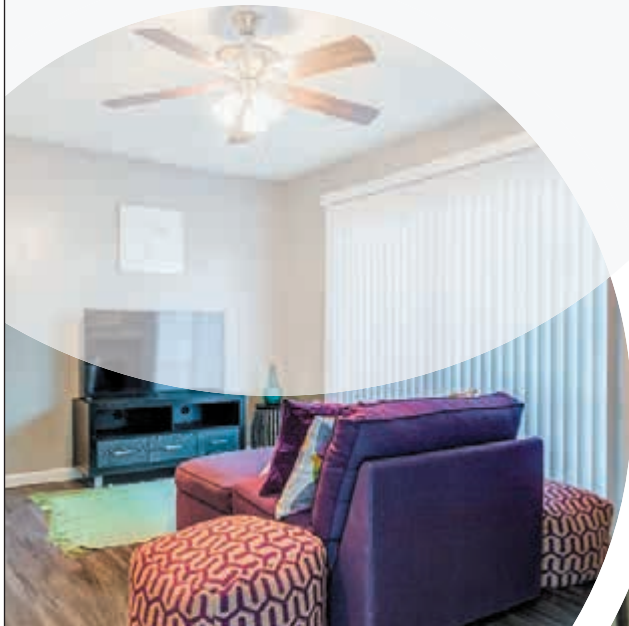
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