

## Dorm Life 101

Adjusting to dorm life can be one of the big challenges of college life. You may be living away from home for the first time. Maybe you're sharing a room for the first time... possibly even with a relative stranger.

On move-in day, you may find your new space a little sparse: a bed, a desk and chair, several drawers in a dresser cabinet, and a closet. The good news is that the decorating is entirely up to you. By creating a personalized, functional space in your dorm room – hopefully with help and cooperation from your roommate – you can make your room a personal retreat. A place to study, hang out with friends, and of course, sleep.

Of course, dorm rooms are not generally known for being spacious. You'll have to work at it a bit to make sure you have the things you need and some space to move around. Here are a few tips:

- **Box it in**  
Take advantage of the wide variety of sizes, shapes and styles available for storage containers. A few plastic bins tuck neatly under the bed for extra blankets or closet overflow. Smaller fabric covered boxes keep things like pens, notebooks, and power cords close at hand but out of sight.
- **Leave your out-of-season clothes at home**  
One of the best ways to save space in your dorm room is to leave your winter clothes at home until you need them. Then swap winter for summer clothes when the weather changes, so you keep just what you need. Toss in a light jacket to tide you over, though—the weather changes quickly in Alabama.
- **Go for minimalism**  
Nothing makes a small room feel smaller than elaborate decorating. Keep accessories like pillows and curtains simple, and go for a unified color scheme. A light, monochromatic palette makes a smaller space feel more open and airy.
- **Simplify, simplify, simplify**  
Changes are, you really don't need to bring all your stuffed animals or your entire model plane collection. Just pick a few favorites to personalize your limited space, and leave plenty of room for the new things you're bound to add throughout the school year.
- **Coordinate with your roommate**  
If you feel you need a coffee maker in your room, it's possible your roommate may need one, too. No need to have two... Coordinate your plans before move-in day, so you can make sure you have just one of everything you need.
- **Have fun with it**  
Your dorm room will be your home for the entire year, so make it work for you. Choose colors and patterns that make you happy and comfortable, and make sure you set aside space to work, as well as space to socialize and sleep.

Keep in mind, there are several [on-campus housing options at UWA](#), each with their own amenities – including private baths and kitchens in some cases – so be sure to check out the amenities in your specific dorm before move-in day.