



## **What Do I Do When Someone Responds?**

### **1. First Contact**

Your initial contact with a potential house-mate will be via email.

If you are the home-seeker, include in your initial email something about why you were attracted to this particular ad and also what are your “must haves” (E.g. a home for your pet or accessibility requirements.)

As the home-sharer, in your response to this email (assuming their “Must haves” are achievable) you should re-state your most important “Must haves/Can’t live withs,” and make sure the potential house-mate finds them acceptable. Even though you may have included them in your online profile, not everyone will have read that thoroughly. You could also ask for their User Name so that you can look at their online profile, too. Then, for example, if they say in their profile that they need public transportation, and you know there is none available, you can say so.

Don’t compromise on any of your “Must haves/Can’t live withs.” As soon as either of you have enough information to know that it’s not going to work, just say so! Thank them very much and wish them well on their search.

### **2. Telephone Interview**

If everything looks good from your email exchange, it’s time to arrange a telephone interview. This is your chance to begin to get to know the person better. Ask them how long they’ve lived at their current location and why they want to move. (If you are the home seeker, ask why they are looking for a house-mate.) Make sure the financial requirements are understood. Answer any initial questions about the space being offered. If either party feels at this point that it’s not a good fit, say so! Thank them very much and wish them well with their search.

If it still looks promising, the home sharer invites home seeker to view the home. Up until this point there has been no exchange of addresses. Ask the home-seeker



to bring with them two or three personal references, including their employer or other source of the income they will use to pay the rent.

### **3. The Visit**

If more than one person lives in the home already, it's a good idea to schedule the visit when all household members will be present. If the home-sharer lives alone, it's a good idea to have a friend be there with you when the home-seeker comes to see your home, both for safety reasons and to get a second opinion in the potential home-mate.

Show the home-seeker the room you are offering, and then give a tour of the rest of the house, explaining how spaces such as the kitchen and common areas are to be shared.

If you are the home-seeker, you may feel right away that this is not the home for you. You can then end the visit as quickly as you politely can. On the other hand, if it looks like a good possibility, ask lots of questions to get a feel for what it would be like to live there.

Similarly, the home-sharer may find that when they meet in person, they feel uncomfortable with the potential home-mate, for whatever reason. Again, end the visit as quickly as you politely can. You don't need to make a decision on the spot. Just phone or email them later and tell them you don't feel it's a good fit. You don't need to give them a detailed explanation. Thank them for coming and wish them well with their search.

If both parties are feeling hopeful about the arrangement, sit down and talk in more detail about how you would live together. If you have both completed the "How do I like to live?" questionnaire, comparing notes is a great way to have this conversation. You should also negotiate the details of any lease or household



agreement to be signed by both parties once a decision has been made – but don't sign it yet!

At this point the home-sharer should ask the home-seeker for their references and income verification documents. You could also ask them to provide a police background check and ask for authorization to run a credit check. If you ask for a background check, you should be prepared to give the home-seeker a background check on yourself. They cost about \$25, can be obtained from your local police department, and take 2-3 weeks to process.

At the end of the meeting thank each other and express your interest in going forward, but don't make a firm commitment until references and income verification have been checked.

If either party has a "significant other" who will likely be spending time at the home, or a pet, it is a good idea to schedule a second meeting with their partner or pet present. If the home-sharer is not comfortable with this other person (or animal) that could be a deal-breaker.

It's also a good idea, if possible, to schedule a meeting at the home-seeker's present residence. That will say a lot about how they really like to live!

#### **4. The Invitation**

If the home-sharer is happy with the feedback from references and the income check, it's time to invite the home-seeker to move in! At this point the new housemate should give the home-sharer payment for the first and last month's rent and the home-sharer should give the housemate a key to the house.

One last step the parties may agree to, is a two-week "trial period" before the housemate actually moves in their possessions. This would be before the agreed-upon date to start the formal home-sharing arrangement. This gives both of you one last chance to assure yourselves that it's a good match, and to get a feel for what it's like to live together. At the end of this "no-fault" period, either the home-sharer moves in or the rental payments and key are returned.



## **5. Happy Home-Sharing!**

If you are both happy with your new arrangement, congratulations! Both parties should now sign and get a copy of any lease or household agreement for their records, and the new housemate can move in!