

Sharing where we live ~
A guide on how to share
things, save money,
learn things and live
more lightly on earth!



This is part of a series on **degrowth sufficiency**, sufficiency meaning having enough to live in modest comfort. This series includes tips and frameworks for local sharing, as well as for the creation and upkeep of truly sustainable alternatives to our current ecologically and socially destructive society. Sharing and creating alternatives are an important part of what needs to happen to reduce overconsumption and increase equality. We hope to create *degrowth sufficiency* editions on food, technology, transport and more. Living sufficiently can help create room for more community organising to create the systemic change we need to achieve true sustainability.

👉 What is degrowth? 👈

Degrowth is an idea that critiques the global capitalist system which requires economic growth at all costs, causing human exploitation and environmental destruction. The degrowth movement of activists and researchers advocates for and works towards societies that prioritise social and ecological well-being instead of corporate profits, over-production and excess consumption. This requires radical redistribution, reduction in the material size of the global economy, and a shift in common values towards care, solidarity, autonomy and sustainable prosperity for all. Achieving degrowth means transforming societies to ensure environmental justice and a good life for all within planetary boundaries.

Disclaimer – this booklet is not saying that changing individual consumption is a strategy for system change. Capitalist firms have put in a lot of effort to persuade us that we are responsible for ecological destruction as individuals, and should focus on things like shorter showers and buying “green” products. This can be, at best, a distraction, and at worst, it can pit us against each other in purity politics and seeing ourselves as ‘holier than thou’ for buying the right things, without understanding the class and access issues related to living in a perfectly designed eco-commune or buying organic/waste free/local at expensive health food and lifestyle shops. This booklet is about carving out more individual and communal space in our lives, needing less money so we don’t need to work as much and have more time for looking after ourselves and our human and beyond-human communities, and organising for degrowth. Also, the skills and practices in these booklets show how we could live after peak fossil fuels and post capitalism.

(For more ways to have more time to do activism see

<https://radicalliterature.noblogs.org/post/2025/04/14/why-and-how-to-be-less-employed/>)

This was written by members of the Degrowth Network Australia, led by Anisa and helped by Teq, Laura, Peter, Jon, Anitra, J, and Guy. Artwork by Sandy. You can contact us at degrowthnetwork@proton.me.

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What do we mean when we say ‘sharing where we live’?

There are many ways to share houses. What often comes to mind is a group of young people renting a house together, and this is a great way to have a sharehouse. We can also think beyond that, to houses of people of all ages, families with kids sharing houses, older people inviting people to live in their spare rooms in exchange for helping with the house, and intergenerational families. There are also housing cooperatives, co-housing, intentional communities and so much more.

This booklet aims to give tips for any way that we might share where we live. If you find it is useful, share it with those you live with, or those that you want to live with.

Sharing where we live can be difficult – why?

Many people have a shitty experience in shared housing. Living with people who don't clean up after themselves, passive aggressive communication, too much noise or people who keep telling you to be quiet, big conflicts that blow up and aren't resolved. Living with family can have the same issues, plus a host of different ones. Have you had experiences like this?

There is a cultural story that sharing houses is what people do when they are young, and then they grow out of it, and that ‘success’ means having your own house. Another cultural story is that living communally was something of the past that we don't need to do anymore because we are affluent enough now. Parts of those stories are true. But they also miss a lot of other important factors, as we'll discuss in the next section.

Sharing can be difficult, especially if we don't have much practice or skills. It can feel easier, and in the short term it can actually be easier, to just go it alone or with your significant other. It can be tiring to work through issues arising from shared space, to regulate your emotions when dealing with a conflict, to make collective decisions.

Part of deciding to do something well, in this case sharing housing, is to acknowledge what hasn't worked or doesn't work, and to learn from it. My experience tells me that a lot of the negative experiences people have had sharing homes have been due to lack of skills and constructive processes, not because living together is inherently bad. Each of us need to understand our boundaries, and what we are willing to compromise on. Working through the difficulties of communication and boundary setting can be very rewarding, you can improve your skills and self-understanding which will help you for life.

Sharing where we live can be great – why?

You probably have a few ideas which is why you've picked up this booklet. To go into more details:

Save money – housing is one of the biggest expenses for most of us, and there is a big difference between paying \$180 a week in rent or \$5000 a month in rent or a mortgage. Whether you are looking for something cheaper to rent temporarily or a more permanent place, sharing where you live will often save you a lot of money. You can also save a lot of money by sharing utilities, appliances, food and more. This takes the pressure off needing to work full time or more than you want, and staying in a job that you feel is sucking the life out of you. It can give you a lot more time to do what you love, look after yourself and those around you, and organise for a more socially and environmentally just world.

Be around people – living with others can lead to meaningful friendships, meeting new people, and a lot of fun. Having incidental contact with people on a day to day basis can be really good for your mental health, and doing day to day activities together makes often boring tasks more fun. As a long-term sharehouser, Laura, says 'I get my baseline social needs met while I'm cleaning the kitchen in my pajamas'.

So many people in our modern societies are lonely and depressed, and being around people can really help with that. Sometimes you don't even need to talk, you can just feel comfortable being around others in silence. As long as there are good communication channels, norms and adequate private space, living with other people can be a wonderful and meaningful experience.

For those people who are very busy, doing creative projects or working an intensive job, having other people in your space means that you get your social needs met even when you are so busy that trying to organise a catch-up with friends feels impossible or unwise.

Being around others can also help us avoid common issues in modern day life. It's harder to scroll on your phone all day when you can hear people in the kitchen cooking and having a good time. It's easier to ask for emotional and/or material support if the people you are asking live in the room or tiny house next door.

Save time – cooking, cleaning, gardening, fixing things, building things and so much more is usually quicker with others, as well as more fun.

Live more ecologically – people sharing homes generally use a lot less resources. Instead of multiple garden tools, vacuums, stoves, etc, sharing allows us to live more lightly on the earth.

It is difficult to measure how much consumption and resources each person ought to use so that we can stay within planetary boundaries while being fair to all 8 billion + people on the planet. One measurement around how much housing space is fair to stay under 1.5 degrees warming says each person should have a maximum of 15-20m²¹ of floor space. This is much easier if you share housing.

House more people - We are in a housing crisis, and many people are finding it difficult to have a secure roof over their head. Most solutions to the housing crisis talk only about building more housing, however more housing can be provided if we share what we have! Over 75% of houses have a bedroom not being used as a bedroom², and while that doesn't necessarily mean it is un- or under-used as it could be a home office etc, that is a lot of empty rooms! House sizes are getting bigger (Australia has the biggest houses in the world!³) and the average number of occupants is getting smaller, so one part of the solution to housing more people is having more people per house. There are many creative ways that people can live comfortably together, and not everyone needs a huge bedroom!

Learn skills – about yourself and how to work with other people. Learn skills from the people you live with!

Real security for the future – in uncertain economic and ecological times, having savings in the bank or investments might not mean future security. But having the skills of working with others, feeling good in yourself, and having strong relationships will be useful, regardless of what the future holds.

Living your politics - sharing more, building resilient communities and consuming less might be part of your politics/values. If so, sharing where you live is a great way to do some or all of these things!

Have fun - living with people leads to a lot of fun; more people to play games with, to joke with, to watch movies with, to dance around the kitchen with, etc.

¹ <https://hotorcool.org/publications/a-climate-for-sufficiency-1-5-degree-lifestyles-report>

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/housing-occupancy-and-costs/latest-release>

³ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/house-size-by-country>

Sharing housing for the future

In the future it is likely that there will be recurring and more frequent economic crises, and less resources to go around due to climate change and ecological degradation. There might also be more wars over resources. Hopefully, people and communities will put in the work for change so there will be huge social and political shifts towards living more sustainably and we will avoid the worst environmental and climate crises. Sharing more and living more communally is the best way to deal with having fewer resources, so maybe it's better to choose it rather than be forced into it. Building skills of living and working with others will set us up for a better future.

Currently most people see their future security as dependent on how much money they have or have access to. A potentially more sustainable way of looking at security for the future is 'do you have a resilient community' and 'do you have the skills and mental resilience to be ok in an uncertain future'?

A caveat to this: In our current economic system, money (or inheritance) is what buys you housing. Most people who are renting live with background stress about not having their lease renewed or having their rent go up so much they have to move. There are many people who aren't materialist or consumerist, but who care a great deal about how much income/money they have because buying a home is so expensive and it feels like the purchase that buys you actual security in life. Also, having stable housing can help you build resilient communities with those you live with and your neighbours.



A happy and long term (12 years) sharehouse in Carlton, Kulin country/Melbourne

Basics for shared living

Knowing what you want/need and how to communicate it

This is harder than it sounds. So often, communication breakdowns and the building of resentment happen because we don't know what we want, let alone how to communicate it. Many of us have been socialised to put others first and to be polite, regardless of what we want. Also, many of us have been socialised to think we are entitled to whatever we want, that we need to put ourselves over all others to survive in a dog-eat-dog world. Instead, we need to find a balance between looking after ourselves and our own needs, and working in a community where we are willing to compromise and collaborate.

If you think you need practice, spend time thinking through what you want. If you struggle to say no, start with saying no to little things. When you ask things of people, remind them that they don't need to say yes. A relationship where each person will be honest about what they want and need is a much stronger foundation than one where people will agree to things just to be polite. If someone can say no to you, then it is much more likely that when they say 'yes' they really mean it. Being honest about what we want and need leaves room for negotiation.

Good communication skills are also necessary, once we know what we want or need. Unfortunately, in cultures that overvalue politeness and where many people feel quite socially insecure, directness and honesty can be jarring and uncomfortable. Speaking honestly and listening to honesty is a skill that needs to be practised. We also need to make sure that we are not communicating in ways that manipulate or coerce others into doing what we want. Non-Violent Communication has some great ideas on how to do this; by being clear about what you are observing, owning your feelings rather than blaming others for them, explaining your needs, and requesting rather than demanding. You can read more in the resources section.

Know what your personal non-negotiables are, and also be honest (with others and with yourself!) about your personal habits and past patterns of behaviour. It's easy to think or say something like, I realise that being in a shared house requires collaboration and compromise, so I'll work really hard on being tidy and I'll compromise on my preference for quiet. But if your long-established pattern is that you've failed at 198351 previous well-intentioned attempts to be tidy, and you can't focus if there's any noise at all, then you may not be able to follow through on your desire to compromise and it is likely to make everyone miserable. It would be better to look longer and find a house where you fit.

Mental health and security in yourself can really help knowing what you want/need and how to communicate it constructively. If you struggle with either or both of these, putting in the work and getting any support you need is such an important way to support your community. Suggestions on where to start are in the resource section.

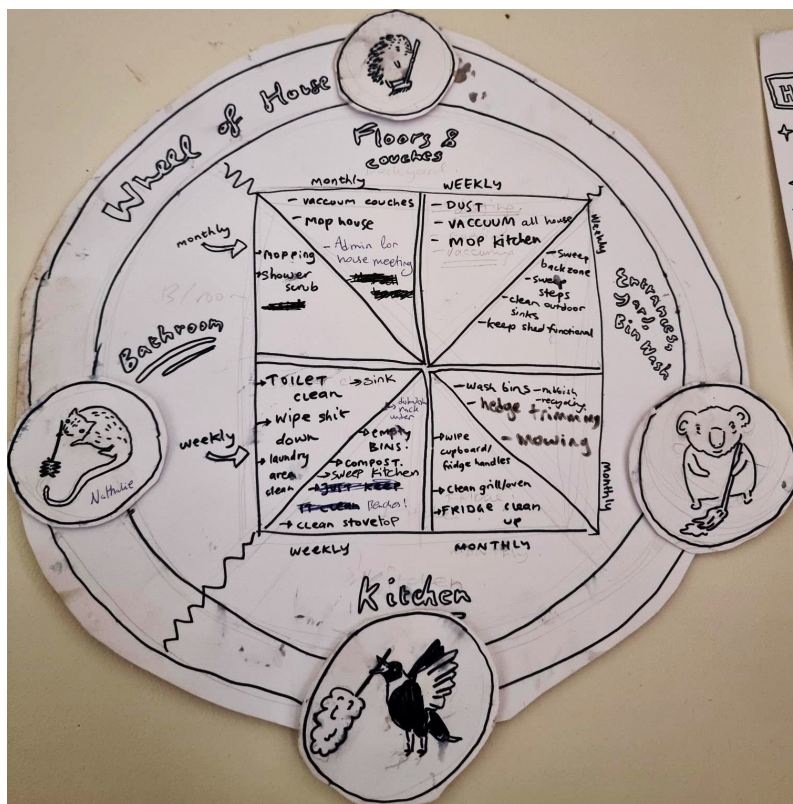
What is good for the individual is (mostly) good for the collective!

Housework/cleaning

This is the biggest issue that comes up with sharing space, and so many houses and relationships have fallen apart because of it. Being explicit about expectations and agreements is important to stop resentment building.

Cleanliness – different people have different wants and needs about this. Some people are fine and happy to have dishes and stuff left around the house, for others it is quite stressful to have clutter in shared spaces. Be clear with each other what your preferences are. This is an important question when getting new people into your house.

Chore rotation – how often do you want shared space cleaned/looked after? Many houses have a rotation of shared spaces so that everyone is responsible for one area of the house each week/fortnight/month. This can include deep cleaning the kitchen/bathroom/laundry, vacuuming and mopping, mowing lawns and trimming hedges, etc. Have the rotation visible somewhere and check in on it at your house meetings. You could even create a list of jobs for each space/rotation, so that it is clear to whoever is cleaning that space.



An example of a chore rotation system from a sharehouse.

You could also have a retrospective, rather than prospective, chore rotation.

Prospective: there's a roster that says Alice has to clean the kitchen on Monday, Luis has to do it on Tuesday, Cam has to do it on Wednesday. This works great if everyone has free time and

is conscientious, but it can fall apart (resulting in conflict) if someone is away, or very busy, or if Cam cooked a meal for 5 friends when it's Luis' turn to clean, etc.

Retrospective: on the fridge there's a list of the chores that need doing. Every housemate has a different coloured marker pen. Every time somebody does a chore, they put a tally mark in their colour next to the chore. It's easy to see at a glance who is doing the work and who isn't. This works great in houses with busy people with unpredictable schedules, who are mostly conscientious and will do things when they see it needs to be done.

This retrospective way is also a good practice to make housework visible. Sometimes it can feel like you are the only one putting away dishes and taking out the bins, especially as you are usually the only one that knows you've done it. Creating a way for housemates to mark each time they do these sorts of jobs can help each of us understand how often jobs are getting done when we don't see it. This isn't to make sure everyone does these jobs equally, as there is a lot of house labour that won't be on the chart, and some people cook more or spend more time in the house than others and so will do more labour. It can be useful to do this, even for a month or two, to understand who is doing what, especially if anyone is feeling like they are carrying too much of the load of certain jobs in the house.

Hour of power – for some houses it works to have a specific time each week/fortnight/month where everyone is cleaning, and is much more fun with music pumping!

Dishes (if you share a kitchen) – there are different approaches to this. Some like the norm where everyone does their own dishes, and if they can't wash a bowl or cup promptly, they leave it in their room where it is clearly their responsibility. Others are happy for everyone to leave their dishes in the kitchen and take it in turns to wash them all. Who is putting away the dishes? Are the dishes actually getting cleaned properly? These are great things to bring up in the house meeting if they are bothering you.

Important things to agree upon (or at least discuss)

There are lots of different ways of living, and some preferences/styles do not work well with others. Here is a list of conversations to have in your shared living space, or ideally before you decide to live with others. Some shared living spaces will want explicit agreements about these things, others will be fine to be more flexible and informal. If you don't talk about them and go with an unspoken 'vibe', this can make it quite hard for people to understand what others want and how to communicate about it, so we encourage at least a conversation!

Pets/children

- Do you want to live with pets and/or children?
- What are the expectations and boundaries?

Eating habits

- Are there many shared meals?
- Are people expected to cook and clean for each other?
- Are people vegetarian or vegan?
- If so, are they alright with animal products in a shared kitchen?
- Do people prefer local/bulk/pesticide-free food?
- How do people feel about lots of plastic packaging?

Visitors and guests

- Do you want a lot of people coming over?
- Do you want to have parties and social gatherings?
- Is it a quiet house?
- What are the expectations of visitors and guests? How often can somebody stay over before they need to start contributing to household expenses, especially partners?
- You could have a clear list of guest expectations up somewhere.
 - A big communal house in Germany created a beautiful booklet to explain the culture and workings of their house to guests:
https://hausdeswandels.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Care_Book_druck-Kopie.pdf

Noise

- How much noise is too much?
- At what times do people sleep/want a quiet house?
- Can you retrofit your space to improve acoustics?

Social interactions

- How do people want to be interacted with in the house?
- Are people always up for a chat?
- What does a door shut mean?
- Do people want to be talked to if they have headphones in?

Exit plan

- What to do if it really isn't working. All projects that involve more than one person have conflicts (and even one person can have inner conflict), so conflict is inevitable. Putting in the time to understand the disagreement and try to come up with collective solutions is very important. However, sometimes things just aren't working and it is because there are incompatibilities with how different people live.
- Who leaves? What happens if multiple people own the property?

Gardening

- Is food being grown? What food? Who is eating it?
- Who is looking after the garden?
- Are there any costs that should be shared?

Different use of spaces

- Are different people using different spaces or things more or less, for example rooms, appliances, amenities. Mostly this is fine, but it can be good to make this transparent. If the discrepancies are big and bother some people, then individuals being more responsible for cleaning, upkeep, paying etc can balance differences.

Sharing communal spaces

- Is the pantry and fridge completely communal or do people have their individual sections?
- What about in communal spaces, for example cupboards, book cases, shed space, etc.

Sharing communal items

- What is shared and what isn't?
- What is the general standard of communal items in the house?
- When there's a direct tradeoff between price and quality, where does the household fall on that continuum?
- Does anyone feel strongly about mismatched furniture or dishes etc?

Repairs

- How to split the costs of repairs, as well as who will do them and how, is a big conversation, especially if you own the house and therefore are responsible for repairs.
- Who will do the repairs?
- What about renovations, as often they benefit some more than others, but can raise the overall value of the house?

Household security

- Is it the type of house that always has a door unlocked or a spare key in the yard?
- Is it ok to lend your key to anyone? Is it ok for anyone who isn't a housemate to have a copy of the key?
- Under what circumstances would the locks be changed, and who is responsible for this cost? (Would we want the locks changed if someone broke up with their girlfriend, who had a key? Would we want the locks changed if someone dropped their key on the ground in the city?)
- Will there be security cameras at the house?
- In this house in this neighbourhood, do we leave doors and windows open to catch a breeze, or do we need to be mindful about security and lock up any rooms that we aren't currently using?
- Can we trust each other to lock the house up properly if we are the last to leave?

Lease agreements and subletting

- Is it the type of house where people worry about doing everything by the book in terms of real estate and landlord, or are willing to risk it for the benefits of less bureaucracy and maybe more housemates than is on the lease.

- Is the house ok with having more tenants than are on the lease, which makes it cheaper? This often means changing rooms to look like spare rooms and not bedrooms before housing inspections.
- If you are sticking to the rules, everyone who lives in a rental house needs to either be on the lease (which means paying bond, and having enough income to be approved by the property manager) OR be an approved occupant (which often just requires the property manager has your name and ID on file, but this can be difficult or impossible to get approved.)
- Adding or removing people from the lease often costs money and can trigger re-assessment of whether the group can afford the house. Doing this all the time can make it harder to keep the lease (if the property manager decides your group is a pain in the ass.)
- Having people living in the house who aren't on the lease can expose the leaseholders to risk (eg, if the non-approved occupant is discovered by the property manager this is grounds for a breach notice; if they move out or stop paying rent, the obligation to pay is shared by the leaseholders only and they have to find a way to get the money.)
- Living in the house and not being on the lease can expose the occupant to risk (eg, you don't have the legal protections of a formal tenancy agreement).
- When establishing a new rental sharehouse (ie, making group rental applications together) it can be important to decide in advance what happens if someone moves out and the group finds a replacement: do we change the lease or not? If not, how will we handle the fact that the RTA's records about who holds the bond are inaccurate now, so that everyone gets their bond back?
- When bringing in a new housemate, or joining an established sharehouse yourself, a potential first-meeting conversation is about the state of the lease. Who is on it and not on it, and why? Is subletting allowed or are you intentionally breaking your lease agreement?

Sharing rent and costs

There are a few ways to split the rent. Many of the principles can also apply to splitting other shared living costs, such as rates and upkeep if you own the house.

- Equally: You could split rent equally, regardless of who has what private space. This can be nice and simple and work for some situations, though it can also build resentment if someone feels like their private space isn't as good as someone else's.
- According to private space: Different rooms will be better or worse for lots of reasons – size, location in the house, condition, light, etc. You can split the rent in half, with half being split evenly in recognition that everyone has equal access to shared spaces, and the other split according to which rooms are better or worse. If anyone lives in a van or tent they only pay for shared space.
 - Here is a website which helps you work out how to split rent fairly so that everyone is happy - www.shareable.net/how-to/how-to-divide-rent-fairly/

- According to capacity to pay: In some shared living spaces talking about who has more access to money can become part of deciding how much rent each person pays. This would involve an honest and vulnerable conversation about what are different incomes, and if anyone would feel comfortable paying more so that others can pay less. It is really important that nobody feels pressured to do this.

As well as rent, there are bills: electricity, gas, water, rates. These are often split equally, though there may be some other variables you might want to take into account - are there people using a lot more than others? Do you want to factor in different capacities to pay?

There are also the costs of everyday items, like cleaning products, toilet paper, gas bottles for the BBQ, plus the kitchen things you might share (cooking oil, spices, sugar, flour, rice, milk, bread). One important thing to be on the same page with is how accurate do you expect household accounting to be. Some people are happy to let it all come out in the wash. This often happens when there is high trust, similar incomes and tastes, and a want to spend less time on accounting. Others find it very important to have transparency and fairness with this sort of accounting, and are willing to put in the time needed to do so.

A couple of ways to do the household accounting:

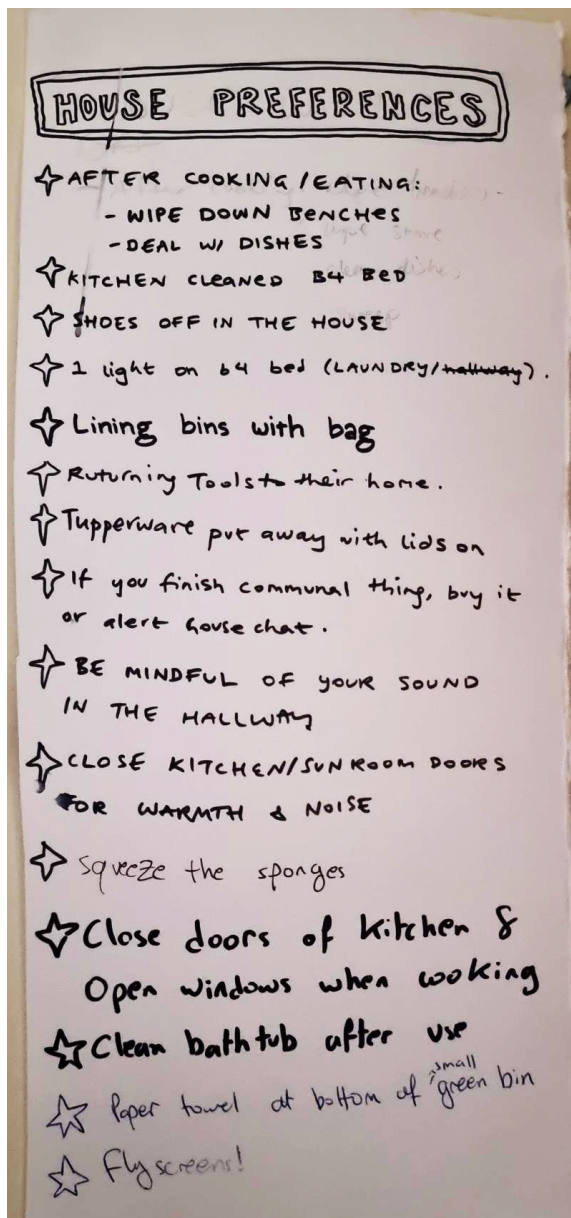
- You could have a specific chat just for money related things, and each person writes the bill/cost into that chat, and people thumbs up the message when they have paid. This works well when there aren't many shared costs, or if it is just used for the big costs.
- You could use an app like Splitwise.
- You could have a jar on top of the fridge with a highlighter next to it. Every time someone buys stuff for the household, they highlight those items on the receipt, write their name on it, and put the receipt in the jar. When the jar gets full, the housemates take turns to go through and tally up how much each person spent on communal items and determine whether anyone owes/is owed money. This can be a really efficient system for a high-accuracy household that was ok with only doing the accounting once a month.

Meetings/gatherings/check ins

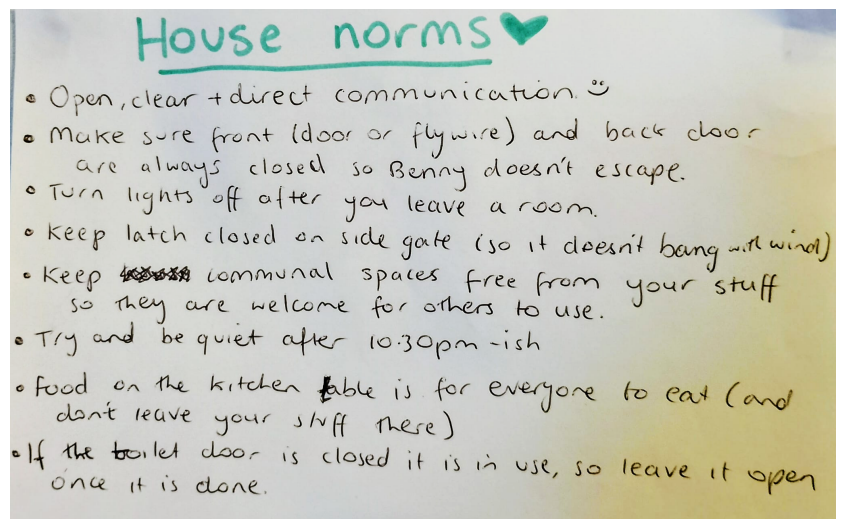
Having a regular formal time to check in with each other, discuss house issues, and provide feedback to each other can improve shared living immensely. Many people don't have much experience with formal meetings beyond paid work spaces, and it can feel awkward and strange at first. Sometimes people think that all issues can get sorted in informal ways. This can work for some situations of shared living with strong relationships, strong communication and small numbers of people. However, in most cases a fortnightly/weekly/monthly check in space is incredibly important for a well functioning house, to discuss how everyone is going, bills, chores, shared spaces, etc, and to plan fun house activities. Combining house meetings with dinners, boardgames or movies can make them extra fun.

Standard agenda items are:

- Go around to everyone to check in, how each person is going in general, if they need or want any support from other housemates.
- Check in on any shared cleaning agreements/roster.
- Any extra agenda items – eg. rent increases, new housemates, any particular issues that have come up.
- Pet peeves – this can be a good space to bring up anything that is slightly annoying before it builds. Usually things like 'clean out the kitchen sink after washing up' or 'stop leaving things on the dining room table'. Then the group can discuss solutions that work for everyone before issues build.
- Things you are happy about in the house - this can be a nice space for people to share things that have happened in the house that they thought were great, eg. if someone cleaned out the tupperware cupboard or made a great dinner, or a nice conversation they had with a housemate.



It can be good to write down any house agreements that you come up with, to make transparent what you expect of each other and anyone new coming into the house, including guests. Agreements can always be renegotiated in future meetings!



Some examples of some house norms from a long term sharehouse

Conflict

Conflict will happen. Our attitude towards it is important. Are we scared of it and so avoid it at all costs? Or do we see it as an opportunity to learn more about others and ourselves, and come up with solutions that work for everyone? Bringing up issues early means that they can get sorted early on, before they merge with other issues and resentment and turn into a hard to untangle mess. Being curious before you put blame on others can also help. There is a great booklet in the resources, all about conflict and ways to learn from it and constructively deal with it. When conflict is treated as a (sometimes difficult or uncomfortable) opportunity to learn and create solutions that work for all, we are much more likely to have constructive rather than destructive conflict!

Getting the right people

This is so important. People we like don't necessarily make good housemates, and good housemates don't necessarily need to be people we really like. When you are looking for new people for your sharehouse or community living situation, have interviews. Ask questions about communication style, noise preferences, cleanliness, pretty much everything in this booklet, and be upfront about how the living situation currently runs where you live. Some people are not compatible to share a home with and that is ok, it is just good to know before you decide to live together.

For some houses and shared living, having a 3/6/9 month trial period can be a good way to see how living together goes before it is made permanent, especially if someone is buying into a housing project or planning to live there long term.

Here is a checklist of things you could ask taken from the sections of this booklet, you could even go through the booklet, and/or give them a copy to read:

- Why do you want to move here?
- Communication and conflict style
- Previous housesharing experience
- What do you think of regular house meetings?
- Income/money situation
- Pets/children
- Eating habits
- Visitors and guests
- Noise
- Social interactions
- Sharing communal spaces and items, including the garden
- Household security
- Lease
- What sort of things do you like to share in a house?

Lowering costs

There are many variables in how much it costs to live in different places and situations, and many ways to make rent/mortgage/housing costs cheaper.

Some people create arrangements to stay in a spare room/space of someone with secure housing, help around the house and garden, and pay little to no rent. Some people fit as many people into a rental house to get the rent down as low as \$50 a week, using tents, tiny houses on trucks, sharing bedrooms and making new walls and lofts to create more rooms. Some people move to a cheaper neighbourhood, and spend more time getting exercise by bike riding or chilling out on public transport (if it's an area where those things are possible). For some people it is worth paying more to have a light filled space of their own close to where they work and play, saving money on a car, and getting what they need for their mental health. Some people do extra paid work for a period of time to buy a house/apartment and pay off debts, so they can have secure housing and work less later. Some people house-sit and stay at friends' places in between stints. Some people buy houses/land/build with friends or like-minded people they meet, which very much lowers costs, or build housing co-ops or cohousing arrangements. Many people around the world and some people here in Australia share rooms, not just houses, with friends.

Have a think about what are your needs, what are your wants, and what can you change to lower costs.

Sharing items

Sharing things like garden tools, vacuums, kitchen items, etc can be a great thing about sharing where we live. It can save money, and you can learn more about how different things work and how to use them.

A common problem arises when commonly used objects are damaged or broken, especially when there isn't a clear understanding of who has responsibility for what. This can lead to people not wanting to share their objects because of bad experiences in the past. A common dynamic can occur when people don't have experience with objects like expensive tools or appliances, and treat them as disposable, and those with good quality items don't want to share them.

It's important to have clear boundaries around how shared communal items are used, and what happens if and when they are broken. Make sure people learn how to correctly use something before using it. This also applies if one person is offering their tools/appliances to be used for the collective. With the power to use communal things comes great responsibility!

For tips on how to share the costs of these items, see 'sharing rent and costs' above.

Things you might want to share:

- Food.



- Buying household items in bulk can save money. Toilet paper is an easy one.
- Cars - this is a great way to save money. You might need a timetable that people can book in to make sure everyone gets the car when they want/need it.
- Cleaning tools and products.
- Gardening stuff.
- Books!
- Camping gear.
- The possibilities are endless

A free shelf out the front of your house can be a great way to share stuff with your neighbors and have less waste in your house

A free shelf outside a house in Preston, Kulin Country/Melbourne

Initiative taking

Some of the best situations of shared living are the ones where many people are taking initiative to improve the living situation, for example by fixing things, cleaning, organising shared areas (for example the tupperware!), making food to share, working on the garden, etc. It is important to have processes to make sure the minimum happens, like chores and paying rent, but when people are feeling good and watching others take initiative they often want to do so as well. If you see something you think should be improved, do it! If you are unsure, ask housemates and bring it to a house meeting. Especially if you want something changed, take the initiative to change it! Waiting for others is unlikely to work out well.

However, there can be cases when initiative isn't welcomed. For example, if someone cooks a meal to share but doesn't first ask anyone else if they want to eat. It could turn out that people have already eaten, were going to go out that night, or don't like the type of meal cooked, and the person who cooks can end up feeling unappreciated. So don't expect everyone to appreciate your initiative, especially if you don't check in first!

In some houses there can be a dynamic in which one or some people are the house 'parents'. These are the people who make sure things happen, like having house meetings, paying bills, repairing things, reminding others to do their chores. If this is happening and some people aren't ok with it, resentment can build and lead to conflicts and/or people leaving. Though this dynamic also might be fine for some people, in cases where those taking on more responsibility are happy to do so, and others bring different things to the house.

A letter to someone who has never shared housing

Some people have never lived in a shared housing, and haven't thought about many of the issues that can come up. This can be especially true for people who have lived with parents (most often mums) who have done most of the cooking and cleaning. They haven't been exposed to questions of fairness and basic sharing skills, and people simply don't know what they don't know. Here is a letter we drafted that you could edit and give to someone in your life. Who knows, it might even be useful for you.

* * * * *

Dear _____,

Welcome to our house! Here is a little reminder about how we share space with each other. Some things you might not have thought about, but much of it you probably have or we discussed when we met.

One key thing we try to think about is: Who is cleaning up after me? In practice, this might be as simple as changing the toilet roll, putting the shower mat up to dry, doing your dishes and maybe some extras now and then and so on. Essentially, this is about taking initiative in the house and actively thinking about how to contribute, as well as reflecting on how our actions impact others.

Here are some things that come up here now and then that have led to upset.

- Is too much communal work falling on too few? For example, who is replacing and cleaning the tea towels and hand drying towels in the kitchen?
- Is the effort people put in genuine? Make sure the dishes you are cleaning are actually clean!
- Are we paying enough attention to the needs of others? Some folk have a lower tolerance for perceived grotty stuff. We like to make sure the kitchen sponges are clean after using and leave them out to dry, otherwise they can gross some of us out. Also, I want to spew when the plug hole is full of gunk.

We really want to care about your needs too. Please ask for help if you are struggling. We can help you take accountability for behaviours or tasks you've agreed to, and to ask for things that are important to you.

Of course, sometimes our preferences and needs just conflict. We think managing conflict is more important than avoiding it, and have a norm that when people want to talk about an issue that is upsetting them, they try to help build understanding. It's less about apportioning blame and getting defensive than it is about ironing out kinks in shared living arrangements.

So if something is annoying you, bring it up early and with curiosity with relevant folk. This might mean asking questions before acting on assumptions. Or proposing an alternative way of doing

something. Think about how you would want to be communicated with. Ask friends for help crafting a conversation starter.

These skills can also help you outside of sharing housing. This letter can be used to check how things are going for you, with us, or in almost any context.

Anyway, welcome again. We're very happy you're going to live with us and excited to get to know you more.

* * * * *

Different ways to share where we live

A lot of this booklet is focused on sharehousing, while trying to stay applicable to many different ways to share where we live. Sharehousing is not the best option for everyone, for a lot of reasons. Luckily there are so many ways to live collaboratively! Many people can only imagine living alone or with their significant other/children, but there are many other options that may work as well, or even better, for you and those around you. If we understand the many options of living and share stories of them, we and others can create more sustainable and livable solutions.

Housing co-ops

- Co-operatives are a specific legal governance structure that ensures fairness and collaboration. Their principles are grounded in the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.
- Examples include:
 - Cohousing co-operative in Tasmania - <https://www.cohousing.coop/about>
 - When the Cohousing Co-operative was founded in 1991, they chose a Danish village housing model, cohousing, as the preferred housing model. Not all cohousing developments are co-operatives, and not all housing co-operatives are cohousing, but theirs is both.
 - Canberra student housing co-operative - <https://cshcoop.com/>
The Canberra Student Housing Co-operative was established in 2010 by a group of students committed to providing secure, affordable, quality housing for students in Canberra based on a co-operative model. We believe that a place to live while studying can be much more than a sharehouse!! We seek to create a home that fosters opportunity for personal expression and shared learning; a home where people share responsibility and can learn from and support each other.
The co-op is part of an enduring legacy of student activists fighting for affordable places to live.
Common Equity Housing Limited (CEHL) - <https://cehl.com.au/>
CEHL is Australia's largest co-op housing provider, with over 2000 properties managed by 90+ housing co-operatives across Victoria. Co-op housing offers an alternative to private rental and home ownership by providing secure, long-term tenancies at affordable rents within supportive communities. The co-op members manage their housing, an approach that promotes self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and unity.
It is a social housing provider which means there are asset and income tests and is supported by the government.
- Radical routes, UK - <https://www.radicalroutes.org.uk/>
A mutual-aid network of co-ops committed to working for radical social change.

- La Balma in Spain - <https://sostrecivic.coop/projectes/la-balma/>
La Balma is a heterogeneous and intergenerational group made of 33 people grouped in 19 dwelling units. The project began in autumn 2016 and in spring 2021 the building was finished and members moved in. La Balma is a project of the housing cooperative Sostre Cívic, that promotes, facilitates and guides several projects. It aims to ensure collective property and the promotion of the grant of use housing cooperative model.

Squatting

- Squatting is the action of occupying an abandoned or unoccupied area of land or a building (usually residential) that the squatter does not own, rent or otherwise have lawful permission to use. Squatting typically occurs when people find empty buildings or land to occupy for housing.
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Squatting>
- <https://web.archive.org/web/20200513060632/https://squatting-manual.squat.net/manual-s-sorted-per-country/australia/melbourne/>
- <https://jbsolicitors.com.au/squatters-rights-australia/>

Tiny houses

- The tiny-house movement (also known as the small house movement) is an architectural and social movement promoting the reduction and simplification of living spaces. Tiny homes have been promoted as offering lower-cost and sometimes eco-friendly features within the housing market, and they have also been promoted as a housing option for homeless individuals.
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiny-house_movement

Van life

- Many people live in their vans or cars in very comfortable ways, for short or long periods of time.
- For people who want a space they can own and control, it's a more affordable starting point than land but does come with a lot of challenges, skill requirements and lifestyle adjustments.
 - Challenges include:
 - Designing, building and maintaining the van.
 - Finding reliable parking
 - Dealing with waste water
 - Limited space
 - Vehicle maintenance and operating costs
 - Finding and using a lot of third spaces (to substitute only having access to one "room")

Camping in someone's backyard

- This can be a great temporary or even semi permanent way to find cheap housing, especially if you can find a nice canvas tent and set it up to be comfortable and airy enough to avoid mold!

Moving out of the city

- Moving from a city to a town or rural area can be a way to save money when buying a house, as houses are often a lot cheaper than in the city. There is often more land to grow food and be more self-sufficient.
- Examples include:
 - Artist as Family - <https://theartistasfamily.blogspot.com/>
They live in Daylesford, Australia on a quarter-acre permaculture plot, home to our School of Applied Neopeasantry at Tree Elbow University on Djaara peoples' country.
They base their creative practice on our concept of permapoesis, which simply means permanent making or regenerative living – an antidote to disposable culture. They practice an art that participates in what it represents; an art of social warming in an era of global warming.

Sharehouse

- There are so many examples of sharehouses, from uni friends sharing a rental, strangers finding each other through the internet and living together. Sometimes the house is found through a real estate agency, sometimes one or more of the people living there are the landlord. It can be young people, old people, families. Ask around, you probably know lots of people living in a sharehouse! Here are a few examples:
 - A sharehouse in Melbourne - <https://jade.hopepunk.me/projects/radish-house/>
 - Friends living together into old age - <https://sharinghousing.com/living-together-comfortably/>
 - Many people living in a house owned by one couple - <https://sharinghousing.com/good-hearts-crowded-house/>

Cohousing

- Cohousing is an intentional, self-governing, cooperative community where residents live in private homes often clustered around shared space.
- Examples include:
 - Brougham Street Cohousing, Melbourne - www.broughamstreetcohousing.com
An intergenerational housing project in Eltham, Victoria, where the residents are the developers. It began in 2021
 - Murundaka co-housing, Melbourne - www.murundakacohousing.org.au/

Murundaka is a local Wurundjeri word meaning 'a place to stay or live.' It is an all-rental, housing co-operative. We are members of Earth Common Equity Rental Cooperative and a proud member of the Common Equity Housing program. Murundaka was established in 2011. There are 20 households that are part of our community, with 35-40 people ranging in age from infants to 60+ years.

- WINC - Older Women in Cohousing - <https://winccohousing.org.au/>
WINC is a diverse group of women aged between 50 and 80+ creating a sustainable cohousing village in Castlemaine, Victoria. They are looking forward to growing old together in a positive, healthy community. They are building 31 small homes set in private and shared gardens on a 5-acre (20,000m²) parcel of land.
- OUCH - Older Women's Co-housing- www.owch.org.uk
- Housing coop for older women in England that also includes a Lets style system where a woman can accumulate points (by commons gardening, shopping, cleaning, helping others etc) for use in later stages of life for herself allowing her to stay longer in the coop.
- Cohousing Australia - <https://www.cohousingaustralia.org.au/>
A member-based, non-profit peak body committed to advancing resident-driven collaborative housing. Their main activities include awareness-raising, support and advocacy.

Sustainable apartments

- (At least more sustainable than other apartments!)
- Nightingale Village - www.nightingalehousing.org/precinct/the-village
- The Village is a collection of six neighbouring buildings, each designed by a different award-winning architect using the social, environmental and financial sustainability principles of the Nightingale model. These principles are embedded in every building, and across the street.

Commune/ecovillage/intentional community

- Many of these words are used interchangeably, and all refer to people living together in community, with different amounts of shared space, shared governance, and commitment to the natural world.
- Examples include:
 - Anam Cara, Victoria - www.anamcarahomestead.com.au/
Nestled among the mountains of the Yarra Valley in Victoria, Anam Cara is a 50 acre farm that is home to a small group of radical humans living on the land, restoring connection with country, and working to heal both as individuals and as a collective back into right relationship with one another and with the natural world. Their inspiration and style of living draws from the wisdoms of the communities of the Findhorn Foundation, from their Celtic ancestors, from their

Indigenous First People's ancestors and from the living Earth herself. They are also deeply influenced by Vedic philosophy and the Yoga traditions.

- Commonground, Victoria - www.commonground.org.au/
Commonground is an intentional community and not-for-profit social enterprise that has been supporting social justice, environmental, disadvantaged and community groups since 1984. From the beginning their primary purpose has been 'to be of service to social change'.
- Moora Moora, Victoria - <https://mooramooraa.org.au/>
Moora Moora is a residential co-operative community made up of about 50 adults and 20 children. They have been living together intentionally since 1974.
- Narara Ecovillage - <https://nararaecovillage.com/>
An ecovillage on the Central Coast NSW.
- Ecovillages Australia - www.ecovillages.au/
A non-profit organisation that provides the legal and financial model to create collaborative housing eco-communities for small groups of people (5-15) to restore and care for the land that they inhabit.

Retrofit and Decommodify (RAD) Housing

- <https://radhousing.org/>
- The goal of RAD housing is to collectively acquire, retrofit, and decommodify existing suburban housing so that they, and others, can live in resilient and affordable housing. This goal has emerged in response to both the climate crisis and the housing crisis. The housing crisis highlights barriers to meeting our basic need for shelter within a capitalist system (that treats housing as a commodity that can be sold or rented-out on the basis of a changing market price rather than quality). Within this system, most of the available housing is low-quality and will not provide adequate shelter during the extreme weather events we will increasingly face over the coming years.

Community Land Trusts

- Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are a for-purpose development model focussed on key community needs. A CLT embeds perpetual affordability, sustainability and land stewardship into its core purpose.
- The CLT uses a carefully-calculated, capped resale formula to determine the value of the house and land. This helps ensure that the price of housing remains far more aligned with the reality of wage growth and the rising cost of living. The result is that housing can be maintained as affordable over multiple generations.
- Examples of groups promoting CLTs:
 - Grounded Community Land Trust Advocacy - <https://grounded.org.au/>
Grounded is a not-for-profit organisation established to advocate, incubate and accelerate the development of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) in Australia.

Home-share

- Homeshare is a mutually beneficial living arrangement where two unrelated people share a home. Typically, an older person or someone with support needs (the Householder) offers a spare room and access to home facilities in exchange for around 10–15 hours per week of practical support and companionship from a younger person or someone needing affordable housing (the Homesharer).
- Examples include:
 - Home-share Mount Alexander - <https://dhehkayahealth.org.au/homeshare/>
Home-share project in Mount Alexander - this links up older people with spare rooms and who need some support, with younger people looking for affordable housing and can help out.
 - Home-share can also happen without any service provider in a more informal way, though we recommend making written agreements.

Create more living spaces on one block

- This can look like a lot of things, to building multiple properties or stand alone rooms, to retrofitting and/or adding rooms onto an already existing dwelling. It can be done cheaply with DIY building skills, or through more official routes.
- Here is a good example about how this could work:
www.shareable.net/how-to/how-to-share-a-house-a-case-study/
- The Westwyk ecovillage is an example of housing many people in an old primary school - www.westwyck.com/

Public/Social/Community housing

- Public housing is managed by the state government. Rent is capped at 25% of your income (no matter what that income is, including Centrelink).
- There is currently a massive shortage and a huge waiting list, but if you can get in, it's the most secure tenure type.
- Community housing is provided by not-for-profit, registered community housing providers (e.g., Anglicare, Salvation Army) and is also intended for low-income households. While rents are similarly capped (typically at 25–30% of income), community housing is often managed by private, non-government organisations and may involve mixed-tenure developments. Tenants in community housing may pay higher rents than in public housing, and the tenure can be less secure.
- Social housing is the umbrella term for both of the above; short and long-term rental housing that is owned and run by the government or not-for-profit agencies.
- <https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/social-housing>

Further resources

Renters and Housing Union Australia RAHU - <https://rahu.org.au/>

- RAHU can help you know and fight for your rights as a renter.

Degrowth Housing substack - <https://housingdegrowth.substack.com/>

- A collective pushing the agenda of housing rooted in care, sustainability, and equity.

Housing (for) a Post-Growth World: A Manifesto 2025 - <https://substack.com/home/post/p-179264237>

Retrosuburbia by David Holmgren (book) - <https://online.retrosuburbia.com/>

- RetroSuburbia is part manual and part manifesto. It shows how Australian suburbs can be transformed to become productive and resilient in an energy descent future. It focuses on what can be done by an individual at the household level.

Small is Necessary: Shared Living on a Shared Planet by Anitra Nelson (book)

- It is open access - <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/30716>
- An in depth look into different ways we can share living, history of shared housing, and ways that the government, the market and grassroots community can impact living.

A treasure trove of housing related projects + links - hackmd.io/@Teq/CollectingHousing

Better together: exploring collaborative housing in Australia article -

<https://renew.org.au/sanctuary-magazine/ideas-advice/better-together-exploring-collaborative-housing-in-australia/>

Re-imagining Landlessness - an The Indigenous Knowledge Systems Project

- This ambitious, long-term project will design and prototype future villages responsive to itinerant populations and climate change, re-embedding humans in their custodial niche for biodiversity sinks linked by trade and embassy for collective governance and resilient supply chains. (We can't find any updates on this project at the time of printing.)
- https://wordpress-ms.deakin.edu.au/ikslab/wp-content/uploads/sites/217/2024/09/IKSL_Overview_and_Propectus_2024.pdf

Self reflection and good communication:

Non violent communication by Marshall Rosenberg (book)

The Happiness Trap by Russ Harris (book)

House meetings:

Tips for Better Activist Meetings (Commons) - commonslibrary.org/better-activist-meetings/

Liberating Structures - www.liberatingstructures.com/

Dealing with conflict:

Seeds for change conflict booklet - www.seedsforchange.org.uk/downloads/conflictbooklet.pdf

Conflict is Inevitable: Knowledge Roundup - The Commons -

<https://commonslibrary.org/conflict-is-inevitable-knowledge-roundup/>

This booklet compresses wisdom about how best to share homes with others, whether as a sharehouse or other collaborative living situation. If you are new to living with others, or want some more ideas on how to do it better, this booklet is for you!

There is also a section on many different ways to live collaboratively, beyond sharehouses, so read on and dream big.

