

Practical Stuff: Helping your Student Set Up a Dorm Room

Before You Do Anything

- Read the college's housing page on what is provided and what is allowed/ prohibited. Is there carpet? How much shelving is provided? Often, items like candles, space heaters, grills, or halogen lamps are prohibited.
- Figure out what you already have. Do you really need more of everything?

If Your Student Will Be Far Away

- Consider using Bed, Bath, and Beyond's [Pack & Hold](#) for bedding and accessories. It is handy to simply walk into the store nearest the school and have your stuff ready. In many areas, these stores are really busy during college move-in and run out of stock, so walking in with a shopping list might not work.
- If you need a refrigerator, microwave, or air conditioner, you can order online from HomeDepot or similar and pick up at a local store. You may have to make these purchases just a few days before you leave.
- If you would like bedding washed, build in time to visit a laundromat the day before move-in.
- Inquire whether items can be shipped to the school prior to the school year and held for your arrival.

Communicate with Roommate(s)

Both kids don't need refrigerators/ microwaves. Save space and don't duplicate.

Do Ahead of Time

- Share contacts: be sure your student has email addresses & phone numbers of family and friends.
- Check banking branch/ ATM availability close to campus & consider changing institutions if necessary.
- Find out if bedbugs are an issue. If they are, you might want to purchase mattress and pillow protectors.
- Identify the nearest stores, both for dorm setup and for your student's use.
- Set up Skype accounts.
- Set up Amazon Student Prime, which costs less than regular Amazon Prime.

Compile Four Small Kits

1. Self-care: extra toothbrush & floss, nail clippers/ file, cotton swabs, razor blades, decongestant, cough drops, bandages, anti-diarrheal, tweezers, ibuprofen &/or acetaminophen, thermometer. Easy on the meds.
2. Desk supplies (don't overdo): small stapler, scissors, a few stamps, envelopes, pens, Sharpies, tape.
3. Important papers: insurance card, passport, birth certificate, etc. Originals may be needed for employment.
4. Tools: basic small tool kit, duct tape, hooks.

Moving In

- Get there early. Your student can meet people after you finish setting up.
- Know where you packed the scissors.
- Have the disinfecting wipes out. Most rooms will be dusty from the summer.
- Tackle the bed setup first, then move to the smaller things.
- Let your student decide how to arrange the room.
- Keep the door propped open so others can see who is moving in.
- When your kid isn't looking, slip a note and \$20 under the sheet of the clean, made bed. It will be found the first time your student washes the sheets.
- Meet the roommate & the roommate's parents if possible. Exchange phone numbers & establish any parameters (only in case of emergency?) for use.

Other Tips

- Send a small photo collage or a framed photo of a fun family time.
- Plan what you are going to say when you part. If you don't get the chance, handwrite a note and send it.
- Send a care package a few weeks into the school year.

Packing/ Buying

This list and most of the online lists (like Big Future's [Off to College Checklist](#)) have more than a student actually needs, so **when in doubt, don't buy it**, or get the smallest size. It is easier to buy more stuff later than to return items.

*=Essential. All other items you decide.

Linens

- *Extra long twin sheets (1-2 sets)
- *Blanket(s)
Comforter
- *Pillows (more than one)
Pillowcases
- *Mattress protector
- *Mattress pad
- *Mattress topper (consider natural latex)
- *Towels, washcloths
Lots of hand towels

Appliances (check for size limits)

- Microwave
- Refrigerator
- Compact vacuum ?
- Coffeemaker ?
- Iron & small ironing board

Organization

- Storage cubes/ plastic crates
- Risers for bed (check dorm specs)
- Trash can
- *Laundry bin/ bag
- *Hangers
- *Shower caddy to take to bathroom
- Bulletin/ dry erase board
- Lockbox for important stuff
- Small organizer for desk drawer
- Basket/ bin for kitchen stuff
- Hooks that stick on the wall
- Door wedge
- Shoe rack

Technology/ Electric

- Laptop & lock
- *Power strip/ surge protector
- Printer (or use campus printers)
- Flash drive

Food

- Dishes (start w/ 2 plates, 2 bowls)
- Flatware (2 ea. fork, knife, spoon)
- Cups/ glasses
- Water bottle, insulated mug
- Food storage containers
- Can/ bottle opener
- Sponge for cleaning
- Dish towel
- Paring knife & small cutting board
- Nonperishable food items

Body Stuff

- *Shampoo & conditioner
- *Facial cleanser, body wash
- *Personal products
- *Toothbrush & paste (plus extra)
- *Flip flops (wear in shower!)
- Razor, hair dryer

Desk (needs & habits vary!)

- *Scissors
- Envelopes, stamps (only a few)
- Pens, highlighters
- Small stapler, few paper clips
- Post-its
- Few rubber bands
- Ruler (depends on classes)
- Notebooks, binders, paper (style & quantity depend on classes)
- Three-hole punch
- Index cards

Tools

- Small tool kit
- Duct or masking tape
- Batteries
- Small sewing kit, few safety pins

Cleaning Stuff

- Disinfecting wipes
- Dish detergent
- *Laundry detergent
- *Laundry stain remover
- *Dryer sheets

Comfort/ Decor

- Area rug
- *Posters (may be best to order later)
- Photos
- Desk lamp (might be built in)
- Strings of lights

Paper Products

- Paper towel roll
- Tissue box + one extra

Other/ Optional

- Bicycle? some schools have bike share programs or used bike sales
- Small locking document safe for passport, birth certificate, etc.
- Cleaning supplies if your student will be in an apartment

