



Empty side of former roommate



My (Sofia's) half of the room

## Greyhound Guide: Picking Your Packmate at *Loyola*

By Sofia Viganola

### MY EXPERIENCE

Navigating the roommate rollercoaster can be a whirlwind of highs and lows. The notion of a perfect or near-perfect roommate is often underrated; we sometimes don't realize how much of a difference the right match can make until we're in a less-than-ideal situation. Not every living arrangement unfolds as we hope, but the beauty of college life, especially at Loyola University Maryland, is the robust network of support designed to help you find your place. Facing these realities not only shapes us into more adaptable and empathetic individuals but also shows us how to effectively utilize the resources, services, and support systems that the university provides.

**Two weeks into my freshman year of college, my roommate *withdrew*** from the university. This news hit me hard; I was shocked, concerned, scared, isolated, and alone. For a whole week, I lived by myself. My room echoed with silence, leaving me to wonder if I'd ever find that roommate—the one who becomes your confidant and partner in navigating college life. That profound loneliness was something I had never experienced before. All my life I have never lived alone. From when I was a baby, cradled in a crib in my parents' room, to the subsequent fourteen years bunking with my sister, sharing a room has always been part of my life. Speaking for myself, I hate being alone, especially in an unfamiliar place let alone college. The whole situation was terrifying, and I won't lie—it wasn't easy facing the uncertainty of whether I'd find a new roommate. But don't get me wrong, that space also gave me the chance to focus, catch up on work, reflect, and enjoy some much-needed me time. Now to many, this may seem daunting, but don't let me scare you with this reality.

Despite the rocky start, I eventually found joy and companionship with a new roommate, who I now call my best friend. Even though my roommate has a scary obsession with pickles, while I get nauseous at the smell of an open jar, I don't regret my decision to room with her at all. Something I live by to this day, and want to remind you: "**Roommates** by chance, **friends** by choice."

My experience may seem shocking to most, but I'm glad I went through this loss because it taught me this school is well-equipped to support students through any challenge as a first-year. This bump in the road highlighted the invaluable resources at my disposal. From the attentive guidance of Residence Life & Housing ([residencelife@loyola.edu](mailto:residencelife@loyola.edu)) to the compassionate support of the [Counseling Center](#), the community was there for me. Resident Assistants, Messina, and Evergreens all played a pivotal role in steadying my ship during those turbulent times. These resources are not just safety nets; they are stepping stones to a more fulfilling college experience, ensuring that even when things don't go as planned, you're never truly alone.

## RESOURCES (RESIDENCE LIFE & HOUSING, ETC.)

Loyola Maryland's [Residence Life & Housing](#) services are dedicated to providing a supportive and inclusive living environment for students. They serve all students on campus, helping them find housing, assisting with roommate assignments, and coordinating residential programs and events.

Moreover, many students can also get involved by becoming Resident Assistants, serving as peer mentors, or joining the Residence Hall Association to contribute to the vibrant community here at Loyola.

***The Office of Residence Life & Housing “wants you and your family to have a positive move-in experience” (“Welcome Incoming First-Year Students”).***

To delve deeper into the Residence Life & Housing website, the “Welcome Incoming First-Year Students” page provides many resources. They assist with the housing application and room assignment process, provide a packing checklist, as well as, what to do before move-in, on move-in day, and after settling in on campus, and so much more. From my experience at Loyola University Maryland, it's not uncommon for some first-year students to have concerns or challenges with their original living situation. Residence Life & Housing understands that the transition to college can be a big adjustment, and they are there to support you through any difficulties incoming first-years may encounter. They have resources and processes in place to address roommate conflicts and provide guidance if a student wants to explore different housing options. It's important to communicate openly with Residence Life and Housing if you're not happy in your original living situation, as they are dedicated to helping students have a positive residential experience...fear not, they've heard it all before.

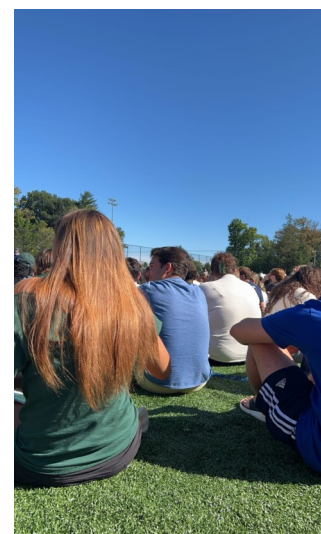
## ISSUES WITH ROOMMATE: MOVE WEEK!

My new roommate told me that two or three weeks into school she saw herself unhappy with her roommate situation and was just going to stick it out because she didn't think that she had options. As a freshman in college, she “didn't know what to do and then someone told [her about] something called “Move Week.”

“Move Week” during the fall and spring semesters at Loyola Maryland is incredibly helpful for students with roommate issues. Time and time again I've heard many people have a conflict with their living situation. During this week, students have the opportunity to participate in Pull-In Day and Direct Room Swaps. If a resident has a vacancy in their room, they can come to the Office of Residence Life & Housing with the person they want to fill that vacancy and register the move. Additionally, residents who want to directly swap rooms with another resident can also register their move during this time. This process allows students to address roommate issues and find a living situation that better suits their needs. For instance, my friend Lamon (class of '27) unfortunately “had to transfer out of [his] room due to a situation of racial discrimination with one of [his] suitemates. Going through this process was extremely stressful [for him], however, the residence life office [gave] all the support [he] needed to finding a new room during ‘Move Week’.”



Family unloading the car on move-in day



Orientation on DGA



Additionally, from personal experience, my roommate situation turned out great thanks to Move Week. When my first roommate left during the second week, I was lucky enough to have someone to share the space with through the help of Residence Life & Housing. Likewise, Lamón has now “shared lots of memories with [his new roommates] such as cooking together, eating dinner, and celebrating [his] birthday.”

## RESIDENT ASSISTANTS (R.A.)

Resident Assistants, or R.A.s, are like guiding lights in the dorms, especially when trouble arises. They’re students, just like you, who live in residence halls like Butler, Hammerman, Thea Bowman, Campion, etc. Furthermore, they are trained to provide support, enforce policies, and create a sense of community. Resident Assistants can make a difference when you’re navigating the roommate rollercoaster.

My roommate, Casey (class of ‘27), informed me that “[she] asked [our] R.A. if she could discuss [the “Move Week”] option before making the decision to actually move out.” Throughout the entire process for both Casey and me, Resident Assistants were a crucial part of the experience, offering guidance and support when we needed it most. My roommate can safely agree and “... say that [they] played a big role in helping [her] to get out of a bad situation and placing [her] into a great one. Not only did the R.A. answer immediately[, but also,] met with [Casey] in person and the few weeks after she followed up pretty consistently to see how things were going, and she was just a great support in the whole process.”

## MESSINA: SPREAD THE WORD!!!

For those of you who don’t know yet, Messina is a unique program at Loyola that helps incoming freshmen transition into college life. It’s a great way to make friends and form connections right from the start. This program steps up by offering resources to help Loyola students connect. At Loyola, every Messina is assigned an Evergreen. Evergreens, or student mentors, are upper-class students there to support and guide new students throughout their first year. Denise, my Evergreen in the class of ‘26, informed me “Loyola was able to help [her] move out of that situation and [she] went random this year. They partnered [her up] with a girl who has turned into one of [her] best friends.”

Reaching out and spreading the word in my Messina led me to find a roommate to fill in my vacancy. It just goes to show how tight-knit the community is and how these programs make a big difference in the lives of students here at Loyola. By sharing how I was looking for a roommate and had a vacancy during Fall Move Week, many in my Messina reached out. My Evergreen played a pivotal role in helping me connect with people in my Messina. The fact that my present roommate is also from my Messina group speaks volumes about the efficacy of the program in building those connections. Plus, now



Dorm door



My Messina



Flag Football Team  
(Fall Semester)



Club Field Hockey Team

you've got a new roomie who already shares that Messina bond with you!

## GET INVOLVED!—JOIN CLUBS, SPORTS, EVENTS, ETC.

Another reason why I love this school—everywhere you turn someone is involved in something, whether it's a sport, intramurals, clubs, events, or even karaoke nights by Starbucks. Joining in on these activities is such a great way to make friends and find potential new roommates. Speaking of which, playing field hockey has been awesome for me—I've met some amazing people who have become close friends. Sometimes all you need is something to put yourself out there and channel the stress of finding a roommate. Jamie Marszal '26, "experience[d] discomfort during the process of finding suite mates because the girls that [she and her friend] wanted room with already had a group...[they did not] want to split up." Jamie disclosed how she "...handled this stress through help from [the] club field hockey team." Moreover, by "focusing on the game and team practices[, it] helped get [her] mind off of everything and was a good physical outlet for any negative emotions [she] was feeling." I have also found extra-curriculars (like club field hockey), as a way to fight my worries head-on and make friends with potential roommates and girls I can count on as well.

I often take for granted how much this school provides students the chance to get involved and expand their social circles! It's easy to overlook with everything going on, but the school really does offer so much for students to dive into new experiences and meet new people. It's all about taking advantage of those opportunities.

## NEVER A LONE HOUND — IT'S DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE.

Often, it's the unforeseen challenges that end up shaping us the most. These challenges push us to dig deep and discover what we're made of. Evidently, it's all about learning to tap into the resources around us, like your Messina group and Evergreens, to navigate through those twists. These challenges also teach us resilience and resourcefulness, to learn how to better leverage these resources to our advantage. You learn to articulate your needs, compromise, and how to deal with conflict hands-on. The school's resources, like housing services or peer advisors, are there to guide you through this. Using these tools to build a living situation that works for everyone shapes your ability to collaborate and coexist, skills that are valuable beyond just college. Just know that you're in good company on this ride—others are riding the same roommate rollercoaster, facing the twists and turns just like you.



Flag Football Team who became my best friends :)

