

# The New York Times

## New Yorkers' Best Roommate Stories

This time of year, the city becomes crowded with people in search of roommates to share the rent. Nearly everyone ends up with at least one wild tale.



By **Dodai Stewart**

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Maria Petschnig at home in Park Slope, Brooklyn. She has had more than 60 roommates over 22 years in New York City, but currently lives with just one.  
Jackie Molloy for The New York Times

If there ever were an expert in roommates, it would have to be Maria Petschnig, who moved to New York from Austria 22 years ago and has had more than 60 roommates. (Ask her for details, and she will gladly explain the complicated arrangements that involved a dizzying cast of people coming and going.)

At first, Ms. Petschnig was bouncing around, sharing curtained-off spaces and rooms in other people's apartments. Eleven years ago, she became a leaseholder in Park Slope, Brooklyn.

Sharing her apartment has been, she said, "a way to survive as an artist in New York City." But it has also been an inspiration: Ms. Petschnig wrote and directed a film, "[Beautiful and Neat Room](#)," based on her roommate experiences.

Her advice for new-to-New Yorkers? "I think one should be more aware in New York of not taking up too much space," she said. "To not be at home 24-7, or have your partner or friends over all the time."

She also advises making sure that everyone understands the rules, as early as possible: "I don't want to be too friendly with the roommate," she said. "I have to make sure the boundaries and the roles are clear."