



Rent Smart



Module E

Communications





Communications

Module Notes:

The difference between business and personal relationships.

Active listening skills.

“I messages”.

Living with roommates.

Questions to Consider:

- What is the difference between an I statement and a You statement?
- What are some ways to actively listen?
- What information do you need to gather before you call the landlord about a problem?

Remember:

The Practicing “I messages”

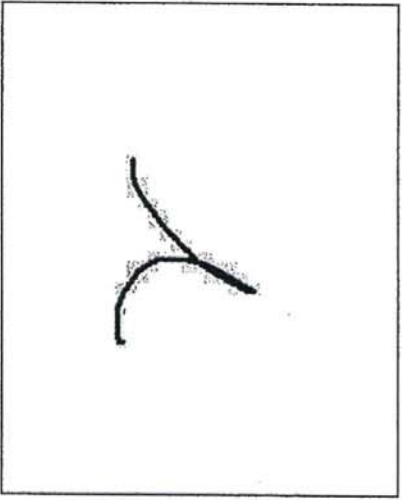
- **When** (state the facts—what needs repaired or changed? Avoid using the word YOU here)
- **I feel** (must state a feeling here—angry, disappointed, frustrated, confused, happy, sad...)
- **Because** (how is it affecting you/your family/ what have you already done to fix it?)
- **Would you please** (what do you want/hope will happen?) or **Can we please** (I'd like it if...)



Listening Activity

1

2

	MB	PB
	BB	

3

4

5

Reproduced from *Warmups for Meeting Leaders*, Sue Bianchi, Jan Butler, and David Richey. San Diego, California: University Associates, 1990.



“I Messages”

When (Just state the facts: What needs repaired or changed? Avoid using the word **YOU** here.)

I feel (One must state a feeling here: Angry, disappointed, frustrated, confused, happy, sad...)

Because (State the consequences of the behavior and/or facts: How is it affecting you/your family?
What have you already done to fix it?)

Would you please: (What do you want to happen? What do you wish or hope will happen? Can we please... I'd like it if...)



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Active Listening

- Face the person who is speaking.
- Focus your attention on what she/he is saying.
- Let the person finish speaking before asking questions or responding.
- When the person finishes, restate in your own words what you heard him or her say.
- Ask the person if she or he thinks you heard what he or she said correctly.
- Respond to what the person said.

Positive Messages

- Own the message. Use the word "I," not "you," "they," or "we."
- Discuss one issue at a time. Don't use the "laundry list" approach.
- Describe the facts:
 1. What needs to be repaired or changed?
 2. What you have already done to fix it?
 3. How it is affecting you and your family/household?
 4. What you want/hope will happen?
- Don't call the other person names or tell him what he/she has done. This will put the other person on the defense and meet your negative expectation.
- Start a conversation in a conflict situation only when you are, and can remain, calm.



“I Messages” Scenarios

Scenario 1

When you got up this morning, you found water dripping into your bathroom from the rental unit above. In addition to the mess and the fact that the water has made the floor slippery, it is causing damage to the ceiling tiles.

You haven't spoken with the landlord for several months, but you have heard other tenants complain that he doesn't fix things. You call him and say...

Scenario 2

Chris is a single parent of three children, ages 5, 8, and 10. Chris has just returned from work and picking up the children from school. Chris works from 6:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. It is a rainy day. The three children are playing games in the hallway, chasing each other, and screaming.

To you, the next-door neighbor, the children seem to be getting louder and louder. You work from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. and you just want to sleep. You knock on Chris's door and say...

Scenario 3

You are responsible for paying the electric company for heat and electricity. When you moved in three months ago, you were working 40 to 50 hours per week. You were just keeping up with the rent and other bills. The electric bill is usually \$60-\$70 each month.

Now you've lost work and work only 30 to 35 hours each week. You did not pay the electric bill last month. This month's bill just came. You owe \$160 and do not have the money to pay it. You call the electric company and say...

Scenario 4

When you moved in two months ago, you noted on the check-in form that two windows did not have screens on them. This is in violation of local housing code. When you submitted the check-in form to the landlord, you mentioned the need for these screens. She said, "I'll have to order them." Nothing has happened since then. The weather is warming up and you'd like to open your windows. You do/say this to address the issue...

Scenario 5

When you moved in with your friend, you both signed the lease. For the first seven months things went reasonably well. Now, the two of you rarely speak to each other and have started locking your food in separate rooms. Your roommate has recently threatened to move out. You do/say this to address the issue...



When Repairs Are Needed Fact Sheet

If something goes wrong in your rental unit, first figure out if it is something you should fix yourself. Unplugging a toilet or sink, changing light bulbs, or replacing batteries in a smoke detector are things most landlords require residents to handle themselves. If you aren't sure, check your rental agreement or call the landlord.

If it is clearly something that the landlord should fix:

Call the landlord or his/her agent; the name and phone number should be on your rental agreement. Before you call the landlord, gather the information:

- What happened?
- When did you notice it?
- What have you already done about it?
- What do you want done?

Give the landlord the following information:

- What needs repair—be as specific as possible.
- What type of a problem it is causing for you.
- Your name and address.
- Times when it would be convenient for the repairs to be made.

Ask the person who answers your call for his or her name. Ask when you can expect the repair to be made. Make notes on your conversation and keep them until the repair is completed.

If the repair is not made when promised...

Wait two days, and then write a letter to the landlord, repeating the information in your phone message and stating what you were told in the phone conversation, along with the name of the person with whom you talked. Be polite but firm in your letter and other contacts. Keep a copy of the letter. Handout 5 is a sample letter you may work from.

If the landlord has not made the repair after several requests...

Contact one of the resources listed in Renter Resources for advice on what to do next. Depending on the situation, you may be advised to report the problem to the local building inspector, take specific actions with the landlord, find a mediator, or file a complaint with a consumer protection agency.



Sample Letter Requesting a Repair

January 7, 2016 (today's date)

Jane Smith
Sunrise Rental Units
1111 Eastview Blvd.
Somewhere, WI 55555

(This should be the full name and address listed in your rental agreement of the person to whom you are supposed to report the need for repairs.)

Dear Miss Smith:

We first contacted your secretary, Jim Jones, on January 4, 2016, about the lack of hot water in our rental unit. We initially noticed the problem that morning when we were showering. Mr. Jones said he would have someone look into it on that day, January 4.

We called again on January 5, and Mr. Jones said that the maintenance person had been busy, but he was sure that he would be there that day.

It is now several days later and we still do not have any hot water. I am not able to clean the rental unit effectively without hot water and my kids are complaining about having to take showers with cold water. (Be specific about the repair, when you first noticed the problem, what you have done to fix it, and prior contacts requesting repairs.)

Please call me with a firm date when you expect to have the repair made. If I do not hear from you by January 12, I will contact the building inspections department. **(Do not make threats unless you know that you can legally carry them out and have specific actions in mind. For example, do not threaten to withhold rent unless you have checked with an attorney or an agency that counsels renters.)**

Sincerely,

Jill Nelson
Rental Unit 201, Sunrise Circle
Somewhere, WI 55555
Tel. 234-5678



Life Skills: Living with Roommates

SELECTING A ROOMMATE

- Friends do not always make good roommates.
- If you are going to share a room, you need to consider a person's sleeping habits and cleaning habits.
- Are your work schedules compatible? Will one of you be sleeping while the other is up and about making noise in the apartment?
- Strongly consider cleaning habits. Both people may consider themselves messy. However, there is a difference between doing dishes every other day and doing dishes every other month.
- Does the person smoke, drink, or use drugs? If so, is it more or less than you can tolerate?
- Does the person have any hobbies? There is big difference between stamp collecting and playing the drums, especially if the person likes to do a hobby at 3 a.m.
- Does the person have pets?
- Does the person have a "significant other" that may become a third roommate?
- Does the person have friends that will spend a lot of time at your place?
- Has the person had financial problems?
- Do you have similar religious and political beliefs? If not, are both of you willing to keep your beliefs to yourself or enjoy a good friendly debate?
- Finally, is the person nice and considerate? When differences arise, a courteous person is more likely to be willing to change.

BEING A ROOMMATE

- Look at your own behavior. Are you infringing on the rights of others?
- Be honest. Being straightforward and direct can help resolve and prevent problems.
- Do not let things build up. Address problems as they happen. Use assertiveness training to help in making appropriate requests for behavior change from a roommate.
- If you have requested the roommate to change his/her behavior, give him/her a chance to change. Thank them for making attempts to change. This will be more effective than continually harping on them.
- Be flexible about your roommate's lifestyle. It may not be the same as yours, but as long as he is not hurting himself or others do not try to impose your will on the person. If it is something that is bothersome, talk about it and get the other person's point of view. If a person's lifestyle is still causing too much strife, it is probably time to go separate ways.
- Don't get taken advantage of. Be assertive when you think your roommate is making demands that are unreasonable. If you don't, you will build up resentment and the relationship will turn sour.
- Agree to disagree. Even the best relationships will hit bad times. When there are points of disagreement in the roommate relationship, sometimes you have to agree to disagree. If it is an item that is too personal or bothersome, you may need to look for a different place.

Source: Life Skills for vocational Success Chapter 1 Handouts 13, 14, 15—<http://www.workshopinc.com/manual/>



Roommate Agreement

This agreement is made by and among the roommates named herein who have signed a lease for a shared dwelling unit that makes the roommates jointly and severally liable for all terms of the contract.

Execution of this roommate agreement does not alter the joint and several liability of the tenants under the rental contract with the landlord. However, it may be used if a dispute among the roommates arises.

Address of Rental Unit _____

Term of Lease _____ to _____

Name	Rent per Month	Security Deposit	Bedroom to be Occupied
	\$	\$	
	\$	\$	
	\$	\$	
	\$	\$	
	\$	\$	
	\$	\$	
	\$	\$	

If roommates will switch bedrooms or pay different amounts of rent at any point, those changes should be noted above. Any roommate who does not pay any or all of the amount of rent listed above shall be liable to the landlord or to any roommates who pay any amount due for the defaulting roommate.

Security Deposit

A security deposit has been paid by each roommate in the amount listed above. The roommates will divide the refund of the security deposit according to the amount each tenant originally paid as listed in this agreement. When a specific roommate is clearly responsible for fees and damages to the premises- including late fees, repairs and cleaning costs-that roommate will pay full fees and damages. The roommates agree to share equally in the cost of all other fees and damages charged.

Utility Bills

The utility bill will be in _____'s name.

The bill will be divided (strike one) evenly/as follows (for example, because one roommate has an air conditioner or a personal refrigerator): _____

Utility late charges will be paid by _____

Phone Bills

The phone bill will be in _____'s name.

The local phone bill will be divided (strike one) evenly/as follows: _____

The long distance bill will be divided (strike one) evenly/according to who made the calls.

Phone late charges will be paid by _____



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Cable

The apartment (*strike one*) will/will not have cable.

If there will be cable, the bill will be in _____'s name.

If there will be cable, the bill will be divided (*strike one*) evenly/as follows:

Cable late charges will be paid by _____

High Speed Internet Access

The apartment (*strike one*) will/will not have high speed internet.

If there will be high speed internet, the bill will be in _____'s name.

If there will be high speed internet, the bill will be divided (*strike one*) evenly/as follows:

Internet late charges will be paid by _____

Subletting

Subletting is (*strike two*) not allowed/allowed/allowed only with permission of all roommates.

(*Sublet agreements are available at the Tenant Resource Center.*)

Guests. (*Strike any part not applicable.*)

Each roommate is responsible for the behavior of his or her guests. Guests shall not unreasonably disturb other roommates. Guests must stay in the bedroom of the roommate who invited them, unless all other roommates agree that the guest may stay in a shared area. No guest may stay for more than seven consecutive days without the permission of all other roommates. New roommates may move in only with the written permission of all other roommates and the landlord.

Quiet Hours

All roommates agree to observe quiet hours for sleep, study and other purposes on the days and times listed here. (*If none, write "None."*) _____

Pets

The following pets are permitted: _____

The person responsible for the pets will be _____

Smoking

Smoking in the apartment will be (*strike one*) allowed/not allowed.

Household Duties. Household duties (take out trash, clean bathroom, etc.) will be divided as follows:

Other Terms _____

Signatures	Date	Signatures	Date
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____