

WHAT IS MY ROOMMATE GOING TO THINK?

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I am going to college.

I've been waiting for this point in my life for six years. I thought I would be ecstatic - but I'm terrified. You'd think there would be no problem, right? Freedom, new experiences, and of course other gays.

Well, wrong. I will be living with a total stranger. My college, like most colleges, randomly pairs you up with another person of the same sex and discards you in a room somewhere. My roommate could be a total homophobe and I wouldn't even know.

I am not too comfortable living with someone I don't know, period. Having no idea what this person thinks about homosexuality and how he is going to deal with mine makes it even worse. I have no idea what kind of things he likes, if he does drugs, if he beats up fags. I am quite worried about this. I will be living with this person for 8 months and he could totally hate me for something so small as being gay.

I have been out for 2 years now and I have no choice but to go back into the closet. I can't just go strutting up to my new roommate, pride flag in hand, and go be my normal queer self; I have to assess the situation first. He may be a really nice guy who doesn't give a thought about homosexuality - hey, for all I know, he could even be a fag himself - but the chance that he could be homophobic gives me nightmares. I have to act "straight" for a while until I figure out if he is tolerant with gays and if he is ok about living with one. I have to tone down my flames and turn up my testosterone - or maybe turn down my testosterone - well you get the picture. But from there on my plan is basically nonexistent. If he is ok with me being gay, then good, I can be myself and go on and have a normal college experience. If he is some ignorant, intolerant jerk, then I am at a loss for what I am supposed to do.

My dorm room is supposed to be my new home. How can that be if every time I go home I'm afraid of what my roommate might say or do?

There is no way I can be comfortable at school if I'm not comfortable with where I live. My idea of home is not a place where there is a potential situation of harm.

There is no way I can fool my roommate for very long. He is eventually going to figure out I'm gay. Whether it's my love for theater and music, not trying to sleep with every girl I see, or constant calls from my guy "friend" in New York, something is going to give it away. I mean he is going to be living with me; he won't be deaf, dumb, and blind.

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So what am I supposed to do? If it is that bad of a situation I can contact residential services and try to move out, a process that will no doubt be long and tedious. Even then, I could end up with a roommate who is just as homophobic or even worse! My alternative is to not mention the whole gay thing and be completely unhappy. My boyfriend will not be able to visit me and I will have to live a double life again. I'll have to be "straight" in front of my roommate and hopefully I'll be able to be



myself with my friends. Now why does this feel like high school? I thought things would be different in college.

The problem is, the college is not allowed to ask if you are gay. There are two sides to this issue. They could see that you are gay and treat you worse because of it, or they could pair you up with someone who is gay or tolerant of it so you do not have to have the stress of having a homophobic roommate.

I do not want to be discriminated against because of my sexual orientation, but I sure as hell don't want to live in a potentially bad situation. So what is the answer? At this point there is none. The only thing gay people can do is try and find a "gay friendly" college and hope for the best. But for people in my situation, where the college they are attending is not exactly liberal, things are much more complicated. All I can do is pray I luck out and have a roommate who is tolerant, and unfortunately I don't have that great of luck.