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# College Dorm Basics Checklist

What to Pack (and Skip) for a First-Year Dorm Room

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Printable digital workbook for personal, family, classroom,  
church youth, or mentoring use.

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## How to Use This Guide

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Use this checklist in the months, weeks, and final days before move-in. Dorm rooms are small — the goal is packing what's genuinely useful, not everything that might be nice to have. Check with your specific school and roommate before buying big-ticket items.

### What Is Inside

- Before You Pack: Check First
- Bedding & Sleep
- Bathroom & Hygiene
- Desk & Study Supplies
- Storage & Organization
- Kitchen & Snacks
- Laundry Basics
- Tech & Electronics
- Health & Safety
- What to Leave at Home
- Move-In Day Checklist

## Section 1: Before You Pack: Check First

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A surprising amount of dorm packing mistakes come from not checking basic facts first. Confirm these before buying anything major.

- Mattress size (twin XL is standard, but confirm)
- Room dimensions if available
- What's already provided (desk, drawers, mini-fridge?)
- Roommate contact — coordinate on shared items
- School's list of prohibited items
- Move-in day logistics (time, parking, elevator access)

### TIP

Text your roommate before buying a shared mini-fridge, microwave, or rug — duplicate purchases are a common and avoidable waste of money and space.

## Section 2: Bedding & Sleep

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- Twin XL sheets (2 sets)
- Comforter or duvet
- Pillowcases
- Mattress protector
- Mattress topper
- Pillows (2)
- Blanket for extra warmth
- Bed risers if extra storage is needed underneath

## Section 3: Bathroom & Hygiene

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If bathrooms are shared/communal, a caddy for carrying items back and forth is essential, not optional.

- Shower caddy
- Towels (2-3) and washcloths
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, floss
- Robe or cover-up for hallway walks
- Shower shoes/flip-flops
- Toiletry bag
- Shampoo, conditioner, body wash
- Basic first-week hygiene kit (see the Hygiene & Self-Care Checklist)

## Section 4: Desk & Study Supplies

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|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Desk lamp                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Notebooks/paper                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pens, pencils, highlighters | <input type="checkbox"/> Backpack                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planner or calendar         | <input type="checkbox"/> Sticky notes                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Desk organizer              | <input type="checkbox"/> Whiteboard or corkboard for reminders |

**TIP**

Buy a desk lamp with a warmer light setting — overhead dorm lighting is rarely good for long study sessions.

## Section 5: Storage & Organization

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Dorm storage is almost always smaller than expected. Vertical and under-bed storage make the biggest difference.

- Under-bed storage bins
- Closet organizers/hangers
- Command hooks/strips (check school policy)
- Small trash can with liners
- Over-the-door shoe organizer
- Drawer dividers
- Collapsible laundry hamper

## Section 6: Kitchen & Snacks

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Most first-year dorms restrict cooking appliances — check the school's list before buying anything with a heating element.

- Mini-fridge (confirm size limits and roommate coordination)
- Reusable water bottle
- Basic utensils, plate, bowl
- Meal plan card/app set up before arrival
- Microwave if allowed
- Coffee mug/tumbler
- Non-perishable snacks

## Section 7: Laundry Basics

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- Laundry detergent (pods are easiest for small loads)
- Drying rack if needed
- Quarters or laundry app set up, depending on system
- Mesh laundry bags for delicates
- Stain remover pen
- Iron or wrinkle-release spray

## Section 8: Tech & Electronics

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- Laptop and charger
- Power strip with surge protection
- Headphones
- Desk fan if no AC
- Phone charger (extra one for the dorm)
- Extension cord
- External hard drive or cloud backup set up

### CHECK FIRST

Check your school's fire safety rules — many prohibit space heaters and certain power strips without surge protection.

## Section 9: Health & Safety

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- Basic first aid kit
- Pain reliever/basic OTC meds
- Copy of insurance card
- Emergency contact list posted somewhere visible
- Any prescription medications, plus a refill plan
- Thermometer
- Campus health center info saved in phone

## Section 10: What to Leave at Home

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Space is the biggest constraint in a dorm room. These items are commonly packed and rarely used.

- Full-size furniture (unless confirmed to fit)
- Excess clothing 'just in case' — pack for the season, swap later
- Kitchen appliances not allowed by the school
- Candles (prohibited at most schools)
- Multiple sets of bulky bedding
- Anything sentimental you'd be devastated to lose or damage

## Section 11: Move-In Day Checklist

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Move-in day moves fast. Having the essentials easy to find in one clearly labeled bag or bin saves a lot of frustration.

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ID and any required move-in paperwork                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Dorm key/key card confirmation            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding set up first — it's harder later once the room is full | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone charger accessible, not packed away |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basic toiletries in a separate, easy-to-find bag               | <input type="checkbox"/> Snacks and water for the day              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contact info exchanged with roommate and RA                    |  |

### Notes for Move-In Day

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