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As this semester quickly comes to an end, everyone is exploring options regarding housing for the next school year. Some may choose to live off campus in an apartment or house with friends, and one of these friends might propose the idea that there should be a household pet.

There is nothing wrong with this. Pets are a lot of fun, and they can be great companions in your new home. However, quite a few of my friends have had frustrating experiences with pets. One friend said her boyfriend's roommates insisted that they all get a dog.

First of all, a large dog, which is what they got, does not belong in a tiny apartment. It becomes bored and restless and will probably destroy things. Second, I don't think it's ever a good idea to insist on bringing a pet into a shared living space if you are the only one who really wants it. Needless to say, my friend and her boyfriend broke up, and now they don't know what to do with the dog. This is terrible for the dog, who is probably attached to both people, especially if they end up having to give it away. No one expects to break up or to lose friends, but these things happen. This could have been avoided if the couple had simply waited until they were living in a stable environment (married, living together in a house, etc.) before they committed to taking care of a furry friend.

Another example is a personal story. My roommate at Old Dominion University and I had three pet rats and had agreed to share all responsibility and costs equally. Many people think that this is completely possible at first, but after a few months, it becomes increasingly difficult. Expenses for food and cage cleaning supplies turned out to be much more than anticipated, and we soon found out that rats despise baths and adore making messes. The situation worked out decently. The rats were cared for no matter what. It was just incredibly annoying when situations came up and I ended up having to pay for and care for them most if not all of the time. This is something to consider, even if you just want a small pet. If you do not want this annoyance, I suggest you simply wait until you're living on your own to adopt an animal.

In a case where all roommates agree to share the responsibility of a pet and are dependable enough to follow through with such promises, this could work, but you should definitely educate yourself about the animal of your choice and calculate a reasonable estimate of how much it will cost per person.

If one roommate wants a pet and the others don't care either way, that person could agree to have sole responsibility of his or her pet. But even this can backfire when that person guilt-trips the others into taking the pet for "the weekend" here and there, which could turn

into a few weeks, which could turn into, "Oh no, my new apartment doesn't allow pets. Can you take Sparky?" Please, please just avoid this situation entirely.

If your roommate wants a pet, just say no, unless you trust that person completely. If you want a pet too, make it clear who will do what for the pet. This will ensure that you, your roommates and the animal will live together happily.

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