

FAQs about Private Room Requests at Southern Arkansas University

One of the most requested accommodations is a single room. A single room is a disability accommodation only when clinical history and professional documentation clearly demonstrate a history of substantial limitations and provide a rationale that supports the student's need for a separate living/sleeping space to be able to access and utilize housing. For example, a student who needs extra space to utilize specialized medical equipment may need extra space or a certain size bathroom that is only available in a single room. This is an access need because, without extra space to utilize medical equipment, the student would not be able to participate equitably in the housing program. Legal precedence shows when a single room is assigned as a disability accommodation to create access, colleges should bill the student at the standard room double rate and not at the private rate.

ADD, Generalized Anxiety, and Depression are diagnoses commonly presented as reasons a student believes they need a single room. However, these diagnoses rarely present as true barriers to access. Here is some of the reasoning for when a single room may not be determined to be a necessary and reasonable disability accommodation required for access.

What if my diagnosis means I need a quiet space to study?

Residence halls and student housing are designed as living areas. Thus, they do not fall into the category of needing to be quiet study spaces for disabilities that affect focus, concentration, or distractibility. Because of the number of people who live in close proximity, it is not logical to assume that having a private room would provide a quiet, distraction-free space to any appreciable degree beyond living in a standard double room. The campus residential experience extends beyond the sleeping space so there are multiple settings on campus (study rooms in residence halls, computer labs, private library study rooms, outdoor areas, our *Rest and Relaxation Room* in the Reynolds Center, etc.) that provide quiet and private places where students can study, relax, or be alone. Tools like noise-canceling headphones, white noise devices, or phone apps also can help block distracting sounds.

What if I need to be alone or have a single room to decompress?

Having a diagnosis of anxiety or depression and wanting a private space to be alone or to decompress generally does not rise to the level of having a disability that requires a single room to remove barriers related to access. Students have access to many places on campus and in the community to decompress, unwind, or process their emotions other than the room where they sleep. Here are several ideas:

~ Enjoy solitary walks on campus grounds or along the Farm Road located around the campus which provides a paved path

~ Find a private nook in the library or other academic buildings to nestle in and read or think

~ Reserve the *Rest and Relaxation Room* through our Counseling Center in the Reynolds Center

~ Sit at a picnic table or park bench provided at various locations throughout the campus

~ Discover the many nooks in academic buildings or the Residence Hall study rooms

~ Use a white noise machine/phone app or earplugs/earphones to help block out extraneous sounds

~ Work with Residence Life live-in staff for guidance on conversation starters and boundary-setting

~ Work with Residence Life staff to set up and host a Roommate Agreement meeting. They are skilled at working with roommates neutrally to help with boundary setting and expectation management to create a healthy living environment for each roommate.

What if I need to have control over my space?

On a college campus, students share spaces with peers in multiple settings including classrooms, campus dining, athletic and performance facilities, etc. Rarely does a student's disability rise to the level of being unable to do so in a shared living space. In the standard shared residence, students are assigned their own bed, dresser, closet, and study space. When it comes to issues like quiet hours, noise levels, visitors, cleaning responsibilities, etc., living with a roommate can help students learn essential skills like communication, compromise, and respect for others' boundaries. However, these may be new skills for many students who have never had to share a room with another family member. Community standards for behavior are listed in the current Student Handbook and housing staff members are available to assist students who need assistance with negotiating concerns.

What if I don't want to deal with a bad roommate?

Although many college alumni remain lifelong friends with former roommates, most who have attended college can recall a less-than-perfect roommate situation. However, Campus Life and the Student Handbook have tools and procedures for dealing with roommate concerns.

Work with the Counseling Center to talk through your past experiences, work through current concerns, determine possible strategies, and receive support.

Make an appointment with Residence Life staff to discuss how to resolve current roommate concerns.

What if I have medications I fear might be stolen?

All students should consider locking valuables, including medications.

Buy a lockbox or small safe to keep tucked away and out of sight.

Lock your dorm room door when you leave.

What can I do if my request for a single room as a disability accommodation is denied but I still want a single room and none are available?

Students may request to be placed on a waiting list for a single room if private spaces are filled at the time of the request. Often, single rooms become available after the start of the semester. An extra fee applies to private rooms in residence halls for students who are not approved for a private room.