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Dorm rooms: Don't overdo it

BY JOY KRAFT | ENQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Outfitting a first dorm room can easily get out of hand as parents and freshman try to cram all the comforts of home - for two mind you - in a glorified box often no bigger than 11-by-15 feet with a window. On move-in days, parents pull up with U-Hauls or trailers stacked with chairs, big-screen TVs, lamps, microwaves, futons, corn-poppers, computers, air conditioners, fans ... and leave hours later with the "necessities" that just didn't fit.

With that in mind, here are a few tips for getting the most out of the assigned college residential box:

Get room measurements from the school. Know whether your beds are bunked or lofted. Contact your roommate to split the mini fridge, microwave, TV and AC responsibilities and coordinate colors.

ADVERTISEMENT Take a small tool kit on move-in day with picture hangers, hammer, screwdriver, masking tape, batteries, nails.

Dorm mattresses are "iffy" at best. A plastic, zippered cover will restore hygienic confidence and an "eggshell" foam pad, extra-long, will loosen the lumpy feel.

Double-duty is the key. An ottoman with a removable top can store sweaters, clothes, books, etc., and serve as a coffee table or seat for visitors. A trunk can store winter clothes - or dirty duds - and be used as a coffee table - or slide under the bed.

Don't forget hangers, extension cords, power strips, cord-sorters, surge protectors, wipes for quick-cleaning.

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BED, BATH & BEYOND

Xavier grads experts on maximizing space

Free-standing shelving that fits over a bed or on top of a desk will double space. Look in stores or keep an eye out for entrepreneurs selling homemade versions on move-in day. Call the school and get desk dimensions to make your own shelves.

Laundry requires no more than a roll of quarters or credit, a collapsible basket and laundry detergent tabs - much easier than lugging around a box and measuring cup.

Shower tote and flip-flops.

Have an Ipod? Get a radio/alarm/player that charges at the same time.

E-mail jkraft@enquirer.com

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Xavier University 2001 graduates Deryl Sweeney and Jeff Gawronski have made it their business to help college students stretch uniformly small dorm rooms with innovative products.

From Louisville, the pair operates Dormbuys.com (www.dormbuys.com), an online catalog of more than 800 items that started with one product, the Mini-Mantle (pictured on cover, \$14.99), billed as the "original bedpost shelf."

Sweeney and Gawronski met in their first year at XU. Sweeney majored in business management, Gawronski in entrepreneurial studies. Here are some of their ideas:

Loft your bed. By elevating the bed, you free space beneath for other dorm necessities, including a desk, minifridge and dresser. Another alternative is to bunk your bed.

Organize with storage boxes. Plastic and mesh organizers can hold a lot of items to keep clutter at a minimum. There are specially designed storage boxes that fit under the bed or in any size closet. Boxes that collapse for storage are most useful.

Buy small furniture. Choose small, dorm-specific furniture. Foam-filled chairs, minifutons and rocking chairs are leaders in dorm room seating.

Condense your closet. Use hangers that can hold more than one item and purchase a laundry hamper that takes up minimal space or hangs over the closet door.

For more tips on uncramping a college dorm room, check out www.dormbuys.com.

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