

YOUR FREE READER'S COMPANION

The Dorm Door Pack

A companion to College Survival Kit · by Ellen Hartley

A free printable companion to College Survival Kit

By Ellen Hartley · bookcompanion.co

What's in this pack

If you're the one going: somebody packed a book for you, and this is the part of it you can print, fold, and stick on a wall. If you're the one who packed it: print these before you hand the book over, and put the door card somewhere they'll see it in week one.

Five cards, all pulled straight out of the twelve kits:

1. The packing list — everything from all twelve kits in one place, with a box to check as you buy.
2. The Week One card — thirteen things, none of them longer than twenty minutes, all of which become a problem later if they aren't done now.
3. The laundry & stains card — six rules and the ninety seconds that save a garment. This one goes above the machine.
4. The wallet script card — ten sets of exact words, for the moments where not knowing what to say is the whole problem.
5. The door card — the numbers to write down now rather than look for later. This one goes inside the door.

Print the ones you need. Fold the wallet card in half twice. Everything here is in the book too, so nothing is lost if the paper is.

One honest note. None of this is about being impressive. It's about the first six weeks costing less than they need to, so there's something left over for the part that's actually good.

1. The packing list

Everything from the twelve kits, in one place. Check off as you buy. Anything not on this list, ask yourself where in a room the size of a parking space it is going to live.

Sleep

- ☐ Extra-long twin sheets (not regular twin) — two sets
- ☐ Mattress protector
- ☐ Mattress topper
- ☐ Pillow, pillowcases, comforter or duvet
- ☐ Eye mask and earplugs
- ☐ Small lamp with a warm bulb

Bathroom

- ☐ Shower shoes
- ☐ Shower caddy that drains
- ☐ Two towels, one hand towel
- ☐ Toiletries, plus refills for the first month
- ☐ Hair dryer if you use one

Laundry and cleaning

- ☐ Backpack-style laundry bag
- ☐ Detergent pods
- ☐ Stain remover stick
- ☐ Dryer sheets or wool balls
- ☐ Mesh bag for socks and delicates
- ☐ Collapsible drying rack
- ☐ Disinfectant wipes and all-purpose spray
- ☐ Small trash can and liners
- ☐ Dustpan and brush or a hand vacuum

Desk and tech

- ☐ Power strip with surge protection
- ☐ Long extension cord
- ☐ Long phone charger, plus a spare
- ☐ Portable battery pack
- ☐ Laptop and charger
- ☐ Desk lamp
- ☐ Notebooks, pens, sticky notes
- ☐ Headphones, over-ear if possible

Kitchen corner

- ☐ Microwave-safe mug, bowl, plate
- ☐ Fork, spoon, knife, one small sharp knife with a sheath
- ☐ Two sealing food containers
- ☐ Reusable water bottle
- ☐ Sealed storage for dry food
- ☐ Emergency dry stash: oats, tuna, peanut butter, crackers, noodles

Health and safety

- ☐ Thermometer
- ☐ Ibuprofen and acetaminophen
- ☐ Antihistamine
- ☐ Throat lozenges, decongestant, cough medicine
- ☐ Rehydration sachets
- ☐ Bandages, antiseptic wipes, antibiotic ointment, tweezers, small scissors
- ☐ Anti-diarrhea tablets and antacids
- ☐ Hydrocortisone cream
- ☐ Prescriptions with a refill plan
- ☐ Insurance card, plus a photo of it
- ☐ Door wedge or portable lock
- ☐ Small lockbox for documents and valuables

Tools and odds

- ☐ Screwdriver with changeable heads, pliers, hammer, tape measure
- ☐ Command strips and duct tape
- ☐ Door stop
- ☐ Under-bed storage bins
- ☐ Over-door hooks
- ☐ Rug
- ☐ Two or three things from home
- ☐ \$100 in cash, hidden somewhere that isn't the wallet
- ☐ Umbrella
- ☐ One outfit for something that matters

Leave at home

- A printer.
- Your whole closet — bring one season.
- Anything with a flame or an open heating element — candles, incense, halogen lamps, space heaters, hot plates, air fryers.
- More than four pairs of shoes.
- A large TV.
- Everything from your childhood bedroom except two or three things.

2. The Week One card

Thirteen things, all of which take under twenty minutes, all of which become a problem later if they aren't done now.

- ☐ Bed made before anything else was unpacked
- ☐ Building walked: laundry, trash, RA, fire exit
- ☐ Every classroom walked to once
- ☐ Roommate conversation: sleep, guests, sharing, noise, cleaning, temperature
- ☐ Every syllabus read; grade composition, attendance, late and AI policies noted
- ☐ Every deadline of the semester in one calendar
- ☐ Add/drop and withdrawal deadlines in the calendar
- ☐ Bank card working, overdraft coverage off, ATM located
- ☐ Weekly spendable number worked out
- ☐ Health center located, hours noted, nurse line saved
- ☐ Counseling center number saved
- ☐ Campus safety number and app saved; escort service hours known
- ☐ Two-factor on email, bank, and school account

If you only do three of these, do the calendar, the syllabus read, and the roommate conversation. Those are the three that quietly decide how the semester goes.

3. The laundry & stains card

Tape this one above the machine.

Laundry, the whole thing, in six rules

1. Sort into three piles: whites, darks, and anything red or brand-new and brightly colored. New red and bright items go on their own for the first two washes, because that's when dye runs.
2. Cold water for almost everything. It's cheaper, it's gentler, and it doesn't shrink things. Use warm only for towels, sheets, and genuinely filthy things.
3. One pod, in the drum first. Do not fill the machine past three-quarters — clothes need room to move or they don't get clean.
4. Read the label on anything you care about. 'Hand wash', 'dry clean only', and the crossed-out tumble dryer symbol are the three that matter. Everything else you can ignore.
5. Low heat in the dryer, and take things out while they're very slightly damp. High heat is what shrinks clothes and wrecks elastic. Hang the damp bit and it finishes in an hour.
6. Set a timer on your phone for the wash cycle and the dryer. Leaving clothes in a shared machine for two hours is how they end up in a wet heap on the floor, and it is the fastest way to be disliked on your floor.

Stains, in the ninety seconds that matter

Stain	What to do
Anything, generally	Blot, don't rub. Rubbing pushes it into the fibers and spreads it
Coffee, tea, juice	Cold water immediately, from the back of the fabric, then stain stick, then wash
Grease, oil, salad dressing	Dish soap straight on it, worked in gently, leave 15 minutes, then wash warm
Blood	Cold water only. Hot water sets it permanently
Red wine or berry	Cold water, then salt or a stain remover; don't use hot
Ink	Rubbing alcohol or hand sanitizer on a cloth underneath, blotting from the back
Deodorant marks on a collar	Stain stick, or white vinegar, before washing
Sweat yellowing	Soak in warm water with laundry detergent and a little baking soda for an hour

The three that ruin a garment permanently

- Wool or cashmere in a hot wash and a hot dryer.
- A new red item with white clothes.
- A tissue left in a pocket, which coats an entire load in white lint.

4. The wallet script card

Fold this in half twice. Square brackets are the bits you fill in.

To a roommate you've never met

Hey — I'm [name], looks like we're rooming together in [hall]. Wanted to sort out the big stuff before we both buy it twice. I was going to bring a mini-fridge and a rug if you don't have one — could you cover the microwave and a lamp? Also, what time are you moving in? Would be good to not be carrying furniture past each other.

To someone on your floor

Hey, I'm [name], I'm in 314. Have you found where the laundry is yet?

A question with a practical answer beats 'what's your major' every time.

First email to a professor

Dear Professor [surname], I'm [name], in your [course code] section on [day]. I had a question about [specific thing]. [The question, in one or two sentences.] I'll be at your office hours on [day] if it's easier to talk there. Thank you, [name].

Asking for an extension — before the deadline

Dear Professor [surname], I'm writing about the [assignment] due on [date]. [One sentence, honest, no essay.] I'd like to ask for an extension until [specific new date]. I've completed [what you've actually done] so far. If an extension isn't possible I'll submit what I have on time. Thank you, [name].

That last line is what makes people say yes.

When you don't understand and you're embarrassed

I've been stuck on [topic] since [when], and I've re-read the notes and the chapter without it clicking. Could you point me at where my understanding is going wrong? Here's what I think it means: [your honest attempt].

Booking your first appointment on your own

Hi — I'd like to make an appointment. I'm a student, my ID is [number]. I've had [symptoms] since [when]. Is there anything sooner than [what they offered], and do I need to bring my insurance card?

Telling home you're ill without setting off a panic

I'm ill — [symptoms], started [when]. I've got an appointment at the health center on [day], I've got medicine, and [friend's name] knows. I'm telling you so you're not surprised, not because I need you to do anything. I'll message you after the appointment.

Asking for a safety escort

Hi — could I get a safety escort back to [building]? I'm at [location].

Routine, free, and what the service is for. Nobody thinks anything of it.

Calling campus security when you're not sure it's serious enough

Hi — I'm not sure this is an emergency, but I'd rather tell you. I'm at [exact location]. [What's happening, in one sentence.] What should I do?

Getting out of a situation that feels wrong

I've got to go — my roommate's locked out and I've got the key. Sorry, I'll message you.

You do not owe anyone a truthful exit. Have one ready before you need it.

5. The door card

Write these in now, rather than looking for them later. Then tape this inside the door.

In immediate danger — yours or anyone's

Call 911.

In crisis, or thinking about hurting yourself

Call or text 988 — the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Free, confidential, any hour of any day. Your campus counseling center will almost always see someone in crisis the same day. Say the words: "this is urgent."

After a sexual assault

RAINN, 1-800-656-4673 — free and confidential, any hour. Ask your school for a confidential advocate rather than starting with a formal report. It keeps every option open and commits you to none.

Ill, and not sure how serious

Your student health center's after-hours nurse line. It exists for exactly this and it is free.

And the rest of them, written down now rather than looked for later

Who	Number
Campus security	
Student health center	
After-hours nurse line	
Counseling center	
My RA	
Home	
One friend on my floor	

You're going to be alright. Most of the first six weeks is just not knowing where things are yet.

— Ellen