

IS THERE STRIFE ON MARS?

- Flatshare site SpareRoom turns to former NASA astronaut to help flatmates avoid conflicts in shared living spaces -

- **SpareRoom has appointed former NASA astronaut and International Space Station commander Terry Virts as ‘House Share Goodwill Ambassador’**
- **Using his NASA training and the key principles of astronaut psychology, Terry will share tips and advice to help flatmates avoid conflict and live together in harmony**
- **Living in close quarters can be difficult – there’s no more heightened version of that than the ISS so SpareRoom decided to get someone who’s lived through it to help**
- **25% of flatmates have had a bust up over toilet paper and 69% have feuded over their flatmate not cleaning up after cooking. 37% have even moved out of their flatshare because of clashes with flatmates**
- **A film of former NASA astronaut Terry Virts passing on his advice as House Share Goodwill Ambassador can be viewed [here](#)**

The International Space Station: a cramped assortment of corridors, labs and claustrophobic crew quarters. But despite the lack of privacy and personal space in space, astronauts live in peace for months on end and get on like a house on fire. Down on Earth, however, the harmony in a typical flatshare can be easily unsettled - often triggered by toilet paper, dirty dishes, loud music and milk theft.

Today, in a bid to help Earth’s flatmates achieve the kind of shared living serenity that comes so easily to astronauts, leading flatshare site SpareRoom has appointed former NASA astronaut and ISS commander Terry Virts to the unique role of ‘House Share Goodwill Ambassador’

In his new role, Terry, 50, will draw on his NASA training, extensive experience of living with others in space for seven months and knowledge of astronaut psychology to help British flatmates avoid everyday flatshare conflict and live together in peace and harmony. A film of Terry in his role as House Share Goodwill Ambassador can be seen [here](#).

SpareRoom turned to one of NASA’s former top astronauts after research* highlighted some of the key conflict zones in shared homes across the UK. Research carried out by SpareRoom revealed a quarter (25%) of flatsharers have had a bust-up over toilet paper (or

a lack thereof), a whopping 69% have seen red after their flatmate hasn't cleaned up after cooking and over a third (38%) have fallen-out over accusations of stealing food and drink belonging to other flatmates. What's more, one in 10 (11%) fall out on a regular basis and 37% have gone as far as actually moving out of their flatshare as a result of everyday cohabiting conflicts.

Matt Hutchinson, Director of SpareRoom: "We know living with flatmates can be an amazing experience, but we also know it can prove difficult at times. We're on a mission to help the UK's millions of flatmates have those great experiences. What better way to learn how to live in harmony with others than from a real life astronaut who has shared his space at the most heightened level - having spent months on end in close quarters with others.

We appointed a former NASA astronaut to be our House Share Goodwill Ambassador so we could learn from the best and be able to help our flatsharers avoid conflict altogether, or navigate their way out of arguments quickly when things get a little tense. Following Terry's tips means taking small steps, but they can turn into giant leaps for flatmate relations."

Former NASA astronaut, and current SpareRoom House Share Goodwill Ambassador Terry Virts added: "The ISS cost over £100 billion and is arguably one of the most important shared living spaces for the human race. So you can see why space agencies spend so much time and money ensuring their astronauts have the right personality traits and training to all get along in space. Because, let's face it, it's not so easy for them to just move out when they're orbiting 250 miles above the Earth! But astronauts are still people - which means conflict will happen sometimes - so knowing how to relate to others and deal with stress is a valuable skill that can make a big difference.

While the stakes might be higher on a space station than in an apartment, the psychology and training used to ensure astronauts don't get into arguments can be easily adapted and applied to flatmates. I hope that by passing on some of what I've learned from my time in space I can help flatmates across the planet live together in peace and harmony."

Terry Virts, SpareRoom's House Share Goodwill Ambassador, will be answering flatsharers questions in an online Q&A. If you have a question you want to ask Terry, simply head over to SpareRoom's Facebook page and submit your questions from 15th - 18th June.

Terry Virts's tips for achieving house share harmony

TIP 1 - It might sound obvious, but it is important to respect each other's personal space, as in both space and flatshares, sometimes it can be limited! As great as it is to spend time with each other, make sure you give yourself and others some room to breathe now and then. NASA taught us that mentally stimulating tasks like playing a game or reading a book were a good way of having some solo downtime, so give it a go!

TIP 2 - Make sure you help out around the house and do your share of the cleaning. Astronauts are just like the rest of us when it comes to chores, they aren't fun, but they have to be done! When I was in space we stuck to a strict schedule and cleaned the International Space Station for 2-4 hours every Saturday morning - it's actually kept cleaner than a lot of places on Earth. If you don't do your share around the house it can cause resentment amongst your flatmates. 76% of flatsharers believe having rules around the house help maintain the peace, so why not start a cleaning rota to ensure everyone pulls their weight.

TIP 3 - Don't take someone else's food or drink without asking – you should always get permission first and make sure you replace anything you borrow. Astronauts, like everyone else, need to eat regularly, but unlike on Earth we don't have shops available to replenish borrowed meals. The key to living, working and thriving in outer space is taking care of your own possessions and respecting other people's possessions. The same applies in a flatshare. Form good habits, and respect boundaries and all will be well.

TIP 4 - Before heading into space for a long-duration, we were taught that crewmembers had to be open with one another and always willing to talk about any feelings of tension or stress. We also had regular private video sessions with a NASA psychologist in which we'd be candid about how we were getting on with our fellow crewmembers. The notion of getting everything out in the open applies to a flatshare just as much as it does a space station. If something is bothering you, make sure you talk about it rather than simmering in silence, or worse, leaving passive aggressive notes for your flatmates to find. From SpareRoom's research it was found that 65% would happily confront their housemates face-to-face over issues, but it's important to go about this the right way. Most of all, don't pick a fight, just be honest and work through things amicably.

TIP 5 – Using the toilet in space isn't a simple case of 'to boldly go'. They're an intricate combination of foot straps, pipes that look like elephant trunks and airtight disposable bags, plus it takes time and effort in training to learn how to use them. Even with these complexities in place, we still managed to replace the toilet paper and leave the lavatory in a good state for the next user. This is such a quick and easy thing to do in a flatshare and can prevent conflict.

TIP 6 - While on the subject of the bathroom, be mindful of how much time you spend in the shower and be aware of who is in the queue behind you. On the International Space Station we don't have baths or showers, so the upside is there's no waiting in line. But down on Earth, every minute you're hogging the shower is a minute your flatmates could be late for work. On the ISS water has to be recycled and the process isn't instant, so being mindful of water supply is part of the job. Just remember that next time you get a large water bill in the mail because you liked taking long showers every day.

TIP 7 - One of the benefits of a flatshare is that you often have free choice of who you want to live with. Before space training even starts, astronauts are rigorously put through their paces to check they are compatible with each other in order to avoid any potential conflict when in space. With this in mind, be sure to meet your potential flatmates before moving into the property to see whether you get along.

- ENDS -

For more information please contact spareroom@cowpr.com or 020 7234 9150

Notes to Editors

*1 - Research conducted with 1,000 flatsharers by SpareRoom

About Terry Virts

Terry Virts graduated from the US Airforce Academy in 1989 and was commissioned as an officer in the USAF and earned his pilot wings. In 2000 NASA selected Terry as an astronaut on February 8th 2010 he made his first spaceflight as pilot of the Space Shuttle Endeavour during STS-130 for two weeks. On November 23rd 2014 Terry launched on-board Soyuz TMA-15M from Baikonur, Kazakhstan to the International Space Station. In March of the following year, Terry assumed command of the ISS as Commander of Expedition 43. Terry spent 200 days in space on his Expedition 42/43 flight, which is the fourth longest continuous NASA space mission. He is also one of only four astronauts ever to have piloted a space shuttle, flown on a Russian Soyuz spacecraft, performed space walks and commanded the ISS.

About SpareRoom

SpareRoom is the UK's leading flat and house share site with over 7 million registered users. Founded in the UK in 2004, the company expanded into the US market in 2011 and has currently helped over half a million people find a room or flatmate.

SpareRoom holds weekly [SpeedFlatmating](#) events, helping people find their ideal flatmate in a relaxed, social setting, in London, Manchester and New York.