

Countdown to College

The Dorm Shopping List

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Ignore those glossy magazine spreads. Here's what your child actually needs:

Bedding: Extra-long fitted sheets, flat sheets (XL or regular twin), pillowcases, pillows, a cozy duvet or blankets, and a foam or egg crate pad (XL or twin) to soften the industrial mattress. A soft throw is lovely, but optional.

Towels & Toiletries: Bath towels and flip flops for the shower, plus soap, shampoo, toiletries, feminine supplies and any medication. Wait to get a tote basket till you know if there is restroom storage. Also, an over-the-door hook for damp towels.

Laundry Supplies: Detergent, fabric softener, a laundry bag or hamper, and a jar of quarters (unless your child's college uses debit cards in the Laundromat).

School Tools: A desk lamp and light bulbs, school supplies (notebooks, pens, highlighters, sticky notes, etc.), thumbtacks, scissors, tape, a stapler, a graphing calculator, a flash drive, extension cords and a power strip with a surge protector.

Storage Stuff: Hangers for the closet. Several squat Rubbermaid-style tubs for under the bed storage. A hanging storage unit for shoes is helpful only if your child has a **lot** of shoes.

Appliances: A mini-fridge, microwave (if allowed), electric fan, television and DVD player are considered dorm room essentials these days. Consider renting the fridge, instead of buying one.

Miscellaneous Stuff: Plastic trash bags, paper towels, tissues, anti-bacterial wipes for cleaning, a first aid kit, snacks, a cereal bowl, spoon and microwaveable mug.

Niceties: Posters (and clear duct tape to hang them), photos of family and friends, soft pillows and a teddy bear. Also nice: an area rug, collapsible seating or floor pillows, noise-canceling headphones, iPod speakers.

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