



UNIVERSITY OF  
NEW ENGLAND

Office of Housing and  
Residential/Commuter Life

## **Health and Safety Inspections:** **Frequently Asked Questions**

- Wall
- Decorations
- Electronics
- Appliances
- Miscellaneous

## WALL DECORATIONS

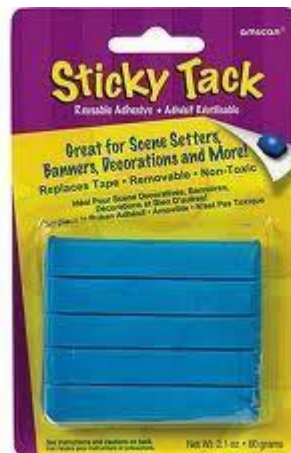
What are the rules for poster placement? How close can decorations be to the ceiling?

Students are encouraged to personalize their living space by hanging posters and decorations while maintaining the following guidelines:

- No decorations may be hung from the ceilings or attached to ceiling tiles
- Decorations should never cover or be attached to fire safety equipment.
- Empty beer boxes and other alcohol paraphernalia are prohibited as decorations.
- Decorations may be hung within 18” of the ceiling. (Note: this rule tends to be confused with the 18-inch rule for appliances and large items. See the appliances section for more information.)

What should I use to put my posters on the wall?

Students are required to use “sticky tack” or “poster putty” products to adhere posters to the walls, as these products can easily be removed without causing damage. Other items (such as tape, decals, and 3M products) tend to cause permanent damage to the walls when removed, and will result in the residents of the room being charged for repairs.



How much of the wall can be covered in a bedroom?

Up to one-third of your bedroom wall space can be covered by decorations. Any more than this is considered a fire hazard, as sparks and flames can travel quickly through wall decorations.

All curtains and tapestry's must be fire treated, this should be indicated on the tag of the item.

## ELECTRONICS

What does “UL-rated”, “UL-Certified”, or “UL-Tested” mean?

Underwriter’s Laboratories (UL) is an organization which tests and certifies appliances and electrical equipment to ensure these products meet certain safety specifications. Items such as lamps, power strips, and extension cords must be UL- rated to be in a residence hall space. Look for one of the following symbols on your item to determine if it is UL-tested:



For more detailed information on the various UL labels, please see:  
<http://www.ul.com/global/eng/pages/corporate/aboutul/ulmarks/mark/>

What types of plugs can I use in my room?

Anything that is plugged into the walls of your living space must be “grounded”. A grounded plug will always have 3 prongs, rather than 2. For example:



Non-Grounded = Do not plug into walls



Grounded = Plug in to walls

Non-grounded units may be plugged into approved powers strips and extension cords, but they may not be plugged into wall outlets.

Are there any restrictions on extension cords or power strips?

Students are encouraged to utilize power strips to plug in multiple electronic items; however, a power strip cannot be plugged into another power strip. Also, extension cords which end in multiple plugs are prohibited for similar reasons as “cheater units” (see next question).

What is a “cheater unit”?

The term “cheater unit” is used to refer to multi-outlet wall adapters. The most common versions of these adapters are used for 3 or 6 outlets:



Unlike power strips, many of these adapters are not grounded, and most do not include a built-in surge protector. As a result, these adapters create serious fire hazards when they are maxed out with plugs, and they are prohibited from residence hall space.

Important Exception: Some newer types of these adapters do include surge protectors, and are therefore approved for our residence halls. If you are unsure of the appropriateness of your item, please see an RA (Resident Advisor) or AC (Area Coordinator).

Can I have Christmas lights in my room? If so, where can I keep them?

Yes. UL-Approved “Christmas” lights are appropriate; however, you must be careful regarding where you keep them. It is popular to weave these types of lights through the mattress springs underneath a lofted bed frame, BUT this is not allowed as the wires easily fray and come into contact with the mattress, creating a fire hazard. Alternatively, these lights can be attached to (not wrapped around) headboards and footboards of a bed, and room walls. These lights can be placed within 18” of ceiling tiles. Lights should never be hung over doorways or windows.

Can I tape a cord to the wall or loop it through my bed frame?

Cords and cables for electronics may be attached to the walls of a living space. Regarding bed frames, the guidelines for cords and cables are the same as the guidelines for “Christmas” lights (see previous question)

Can I have a lava lamp?

Yes. UL-tested lava lamps are permitted

## **APPLIANCES**

What is the “18-inch rule” regarding appliances?

It is common to place televisions, storage bins, and large appliances above room closets and wardrobes. However, any and all appliances/large items must be at least 18 inches below the ceiling tiles at all times (NOTE: This does not apply to posters and wall decorations).

Anything that is placed within 18 inches from the ceiling will prevent the sprinkler system from distributing water equally throughout the room in the event of a fire, creating a documentable fire hazard.

Can we have coffee makers or hot plates?

Any appliance with an exposed heating element is not allowed in individual residence hall rooms, as it is considered a fire hazard. This includes (but is not limited to) many coffee makers, all candle warmers, and all hot plates. However, there are certain coffee makers (such as many made by Keurig) that do not utilize a heating plate to keep the coffee warm, and these are allowed in residence hall rooms.

Non-approved appliances which are found during safety inspections will be confiscated and held by the Area Coordinator until the appropriate resident(s) are able to take the item(s) home. If you are unsure of the appropriateness of an appliance, please ask your RA or AC.

Note: This question is in reference to residence hall bedrooms. The policies are slightly different for kitchens in suites (see the following question for details).

In a suite (East, West, Champlain, Sokokis) what appliances are permitted in the kitchen area?

In suite-style living areas which include a designated kitchen space, certain cooking appliances are allowed, as long as these items remain in the kitchen space. As defined by the Student Handbook, this includes items which are “used for the specific purpose of cooking food...with enclosed heating elements”. Small microwaves, hot pots

(for boiling water), some coffee pots, and George Foreman grills, therefore are allowed in these kitchen areas. If you are unsure of the appropriateness of an appliance, please ask your RA or AC

**Important Note:** The Housing staff ultimately reserves the right to request the removal of an item if it is deemed dangerous or inappropriate. Kitchen appliances which are in extreme disrepair will be removed, even if they meet the requirements outlined above.

## MISCELLANEOUS

How clean does my room need to be?

If an emergency were to occur in a residential living space, it is extremely important for Residential Education & Housing staff and emergency personnel to be able to freely move throughout a room. An unnecessarily messy room may prevent or hinder this movement. It is ultimately up to an AC to determine if a room is messy enough to create a safety hazard. If this determination is made, an appropriate note will be left on the safety inspection paperwork, and you will be required to clean up the space.

Why does the door have to open 90 degrees?

Similarly, to the previous question, large items (such as a stretcher or medical equipment) may need to be transported into a room in the event of an emergency. Therefore, it is important for every entryway to be free of obstructions so as to avoid unnecessary complications during an urgent situation.

Can I have anything in front of my window?

In the event of a fire (or other facilities-related emergency), it may be necessary for emergency personnel to enter your room through the window. Therefore, it is important for the window to be clear at all times. Nothing may be obstructing this area, including televisions, dressers, fans, bookshelves, or other items.

**Important Exception:** Because of the size of the windows in the Quad buildings (Avila, Assisi, Siena, and Padua), the bottom third of a window may be blocked.

What is the university policy on displaying shot glasses or beer steins?

Alcohol paraphernalia is inappropriate for any residence hall space, and it is recommended that students avoid displaying any items which could be considered “paraphernalia”. Students may occasionally request to display certain glasses as souvenirs, but this decision is ultimately up to the AC.

Will I get in trouble if I am given a violation as a result of a safety inspection?

Any violations which are found during an inspection will be documented by the appropriate staff. The residents who are responsible for the violation will be given instructions regarding how to resolve the issue, as well as a general time frame within which this must be completed. Failure to make the appropriate adjustments within this time period may result in a monetary fine or judicial action.

Can RAs search cabinets or fridges?

Health and Safety Inspections are not room searches, but are visual checks of each living space. Staff members who perform these inspections are instructed to simply look around each room and make note of any violations in plain view, meaning that cabinets, fridges, desks, dressers, and personal storage items are not searched through as part of a routine health and safety inspection.

Can RAs do the H&S check when the residents are not present?

Yes. If current residents of a living space are not present, the Office of Housing and Residential/Commuter Life staff members will enter the room and perform a full safety inspection. If this does occur, paperwork will be left in the room, notifying the occupants that the inspection took place and of any violations which were found.



