



Help!

Tips and tricks on how to
keep your home happy

Still need some help after reading this guide?

Log a job with the Helpdesk:

01245 686464

facilities-helpdesk@aru.ac.uk

or contact the Housing Management Team

01245 683110

essexhousing@aru.ac.uk

aru.ac.uk/housing



What's inside

- Using and cleaning the microwave
- Using the cooker
- Cleaning the fridge
- Defrosting the freezer
- Changing the vacuum cleaner bag
- Electrical safety
- Heating
- Preventing mould
- Keeping pests away
- Keeping your drains clear
- Smoking areas
- Reporting repairs

Using the microwave



Here is a guide to tell you how to whip up some delicious food in your microwave.

Step by step

1. Read the instruction booklet

There's a lot of stuff you need to know in that little booklet. There are some basic instructions below, but if you want the full user manual they're available online: search for the microwave make and model.

2. Ensure that the microwave is plugged in and turned on at the wall socket

Unplug some other items if you need to as switching on too many appliances at once can cause a power cut.

3. Set the time that you want to microwave something for

If your microwave has a dial, turn it clockwise until the screen displays the cooking time you need.

If your microwave has a number pad, type in the number of minutes followed by the number of seconds you require.

Press 'Start' on your microwave to cook your food. The microwave will beep when it is finished.

Safety tips

Metal and microwaves don't mix

Anything metal put in the microwave will explode – this includes tin foil, pans, cutlery and plates that have a metal edge / pattern.

Check for logos



Microwave Safe logos

Make sure any glass, plastic containers, and plastic wrap you use have a microwave-safe logo (see above). If they don't have one, they'll melt in the microwave – messy.

Be careful with heating liquids.

Water and other liquids heated beyond the time given by the manufacturer or any recipe can be very dangerous. The liquid will look normal, but when moved it can literally erupt out of the cup and cause burns.

Never operate a microwave if the door is damaged or does not close securely.

Let the Residential Service know.

Do not operate the microwave while it is empty.

This can start a fire.

Cleaning the microwave



Give your microwave a quick clean regularly to keep it smelling and looking as fab as your cooking!

Step by step

You will need:

- A microwave safe bowl (look at the previous page for the logo)
- A washing up sponge or scrubbing brush
- Washing up liquid

1. Take a microwave safe bowl and fill it with warm water and a dash of washing up liquid.

2. Put the bowl in the microwave until it starts to steam.

Don't heat for more than one minute. The steam will have loosened any dirt so cleaning will be a breeze!

3. Carefully take the bowl out.

Get a damp sponge and wipe the inside of the microwave.

4. Wipe the inside of the microwave with a damp sponge or cloth.

5. Leave the microwave open for a few minutes after cleaning

in order to let it dry and air out a bit inside.

Safety tips

Use soap and water

Do not use harsh cleaning products on your microwave – soap and water should do the trick.

Never heat the water for more than 1 minute.

If you let it steam too long; the door may burst open and spray hot water everywhere.

Tips to help you keep your microwave clean

- 1. Cover food loosely when heating it.**
- 2. Use a scrubbing brush that can be used for washing dishes to get off any greasy food build-up you may find.**
- 3. Clean up mess in your microwave right away.**

Using the cooker



Your cooker will have a hob, an oven and a grill. Basic instructions on how to use it are below, but if you need more info and don't have a manufacturers guide available, you can search online by the oven's make and model to find one.

Using the oven and hob

- 1. Check the instructions on your food packaging or recipe.**
This should help ensure the food is cooked properly.
- 2. For the hobs, turn the dial clockwise from the 'off' setting to the required setting.**
The highest number is the hottest setting; the lowest number is the coolest.
- 3. For the oven, turn the temperature dial to the required setting.**
It will take several minutes for the cooker to reach this temperature if used from cold. (Most ovens have a light which will turn off when the required temperature is reached).
- 4. Only put hot pans on heat resistant surfaces so that you do not damage the worktop.**
Damage to the worktops will be recharged to tenants.

FACT! 50% of unwanted fire alarms in our accommodation are caused by cooking. Do not leave appliances unattended when in use, keep appliances clean and avoid any buildup of fat, keep kitchen fire doors closed and always use the ventilation systems provided.

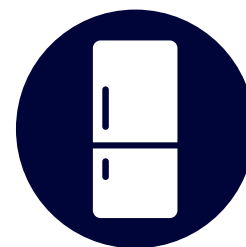
Cleaning the cooker

- 1. Wait until the cooker is cold.**
Switch it off at the wall before you clean it.
- 2. Don't use bleach to clean any part of the oven.**
Follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding what to use to clean it.
- 3. Clean the inside of the oven with a specific oven cleaner.**
Follow the instructions on the packaging. Do not use bleach or mix different cleaning materials.

Safety tips

- 1. Check that the oven is switched on at the wall**
The oven being turned off is the most common reason for reported faults!
- 2. Never leave your cooking unattended.**
Flatmates won't be happy if you set off the fire alarm or worse, cause a fire.
- 3. Don't put anything plastic in the oven or on the hob.**
It will melt and be very hard to clean.
- 4. Never line the grill or any part of the oven with aluminium foil.**
It can cause fat to overheat and catch fire.
- 5. Leave the oven door open when grilling food**
This prevents smoke and reduces the likelihood you'll burn your food.
- 6. Report any problems with your oven to the Residential Service immediately and do not use a faulty appliance.**
Never attempt to make repairs yourself.
- 7. Don't leave food in dishes in the oven, under the grill or in pans on the hob as someone else may not realise and switch them on again.**
This will not only spoil your chance of second helpings or leftovers, but could also cause a fire.
- 8. Steam will rise out of a boiling pan of water when you take off the lid.**
Use a dry cloth or oven gloves to remove the lid to avoid scalding. Always stand back from the oven when opening the oven door to allow the heat to come out. Always use oven gloves to put things in and take things out of the oven.
- 9. Make sure there are no small electrical appliances with cables trailing near the hobs.**

Cleaning the fridge



If your fridge is not cleaned regularly this can cause bad smells and a build-up of bacteria. It can also mean that your fridge could stop working.

Cleaning the fridge

1. Remove items from the fridge

It's a good idea to clean the fridge when there's not a lot of food inside just to make it easier!

2. Remove each shelf/drawer

Wipe with a sponge, hot water and washing up liquid over the sink

3. Wipe down the inside of the fridge

Again, just with soap and hot water. Don't use any cleaning products in case they aren't suitable for use on surfaces that come into contact with food.

4. Dry and replace the shelves/drawers

5. Replace the food

Keep the door closed for a while after you've cleaned the fridge to help it get back down to the right temperature quickly.

Troubleshooting

My fridge is leaking

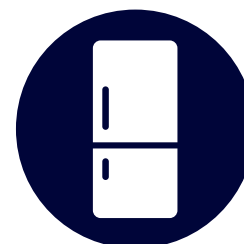
If there's a puddle inside your fridge or its leaking, this is normally because the drainage hole at the back is blocked by food or ice. You can clear the hole with a cotton bud or similar sized object.

To prevent the problem re-occurring, try to avoid putting food at the back for the fridge so air can circulate.

There's ice in the fridge?

If your food is freezing or there is ice in the fridge, it's likely the temperature is set too low. Try turning down the numbered dial inside the fridge. It may also be caused by too many items in the fridge!

Defrosting the freezer



When a thick layer of ice builds up in your freezer, it can become tricky to get food in and out, and reduces the efficiency of your freezer, which is bad for the environment. If ice is left, the freezer could stop working, and the food will go off.

Step by step

You will need:

- Rubber gloves
- Old newspapers or towels
- Your mop and bucket
- Hot water
- Cloth or sponge
- Washing up liquid
- Cleaning product
- A couple of pots or bowls
- Paper towels or tea towel
- Cool bag or box

1. Switch freezer off at the power supply.

If you have a fridge/freezer you don't have to take the food out the fridge too – as long as you keep the fridge door shut, your food should remain chilled for up to 24 hours.

2. Empty the freezer.

Put the frozen food in a cool bag or box, then put this in the coldest place in your house. If you have ice blocks, add these in too.

3. Remove any drawers as you go.

Give the drawers a clean and leave them to dry.

4. Prevent a puddle.

Put newspapers or old towels around the base of the freezer.

5. Get rid of the ice.

Fill a bowl with very hot water and place it inside of the freezer. The heat from the water will make the ice crack and melt. Use another bowl of hot water to dip a cloth or sponge into, and dab it onto the ice and shelves. Wear gloves to protect your hands.

6. Don't use any sharp objects to remove the ice.

You could damage the freezer.

7. Never use a hairdryer to help you defrost your freezer.

There is a risk of electrocution and it can damage the cooling system.

8. Clean the seal.

Run the hot, wet cloth along the seal of the freezer door.

9. Be patient.

Depending on how badly iced up your freezer is it could take up to a couple of hours to defrost.

10. Clean the freezer.

Once all the ice has melted, use a suitable cleaning product to thoroughly clean the inside of the freezer and door.

11. Dry it.

Dry inside the freezer with a tea towel or towel, including the door and seal.

12. Put the food back in.

Put the clean, dry freezer drawers back in. Put the food back in the freezer, it should still be frozen.

13. Turn it back on at the power supply

Check the thermostat. If your thermostat is on the outside of the freezer, set it halfway between Min. and Max. If you have a fridge/freezer the thermostat is inside the fridge and should be set at 3.



Tips to help your freezer stay less frosty

- Always make sure the drawers are pushed in fully
- Close the door properly after use
- Do not over fill the drawers or shelves
- Don't leave the door open for longer than necessary
- Defrost the freezer when it is just starting to ice up – it will be much easier than if you leave it.

Changing the vacuum cleaner bag



If your vacuum cleaner isn't picking up dirt very well, you might need to change the bag. Gross, we know – but sadly it's got to be done if you want your vacuum cleaner to actually clean your room.

Step by step

You will need:

A new vacuum cleaner bag – a new bag can be collected from the Residential Service office in the Eastings Building, or you can buy them quite cheaply at the supermarket.

1. Unplug the vacuum cleaner.

You don't want to accidentally turn the appliance on while you are replacing the bag – things could get very messy!

2. Remove the top of the vacuum cleaner.

There are two clips located on the side of the appliance. Lift these clips and lift off the top of the vacuum cleaner.

3. Remove the internal filter (the white cloth section).

You will see the vacuum cleaner bag.

4. Check how full the bag is.

More than half full? Bulging at the base? Time for a change.

5. Remove the full bag.

Carefully remove the bag and chuck in the rubbish bin (gently, or you'll create a dust storm).

6. Put in a new vacuum cleaner bag.

Make sure the bag is sitting in the proper position, with the opening snugly against the inside of the vacuum and over the start of the hose. Adjust the bottom of the bag in the vacuum cleaner so dirt can collect properly.

7. Replace the internal filter and the top of the vacuum cleaner.

Re-secure the two clips at the side. Now you can get on with cleaning your room – yay!

Safety tips

Broken glass

Never attempt to vacuum up glass or sharp objects, broken glass or crockery should be wrapped in newspaper and disposed of in the bin.

Blockages

If the vacuum cleaner stops suddenly it could be blocked and will not restart until you have removed the blockage. Unplug it before investigating.

Liquids

The vacuum cleaners provided are not for vacuuming up liquids – use a mop and bucket.

Storage

When you have finished with the vacuum cleaner, wrap the cord around it and store it safely. Rogue cords or vacuum cleaners in corridors could result in injury.

Be kind to your vacuum cleaner

Don't pull or lift it by its cable.

Dry your hands

Do not handle the plug or vacuum cleaner with wet hands this is dangerous and you could be electrocuted.

Cable damage

Don't use the vacuum cleaner if the cable is damaged and don't try to change the plug or fuse or repair it. Notify Residential Service if anything is wrong with the cable or plug.

Cable safety

Do not trail the cable across the corridor unplug the cable and plug it in to a nearer socket.

Electrical safety

PAT testing

When you first move in to halls all your electrical items will need a Portable Appliance Test (known as a PAT test). This is so we can make sure that all the electrical items you bring with you are safe to use. Items that pass the test are given a pass sticker.

If your item fails a PAT test it will be removed from your room and taken to the Residential Service office. You won't be able to use the item whilst living in University accommodation.

What you can use

- Students are responsible for any personal electrical equipment they bring.
- Please check your items have a correct 3-pin plug or appropriate British Standard adapter and correct size fuse.
- Operating appliances designed for use on voltages other than 230V can cause fires.

Safety tips

- Switch off electrical equipment when leaving a room.
- Avoid using square multi-plug adaptors – use suitable extension lead sockets and do not plug one extension lead into another.
- Keep trailing wires off the floor
- Never cover your heater or place furniture in front of it

If you are worried about any fixed electrical item, such as your cooker or fridge freezer then please contact the Helpdesk on 01245 686464 / facilities-helpdesk@aru.ac.uk or call into the Residential Service office and speak to a member of the team.



Stop using your electrical items immediately if...

- The plug is overheating or is scorched or cracked
- The cable or wires are loose, exposed or fraying
- There is a burning smell when an appliance is switched on
- The fuse blows frequently

Heating



Bedroom Heater

Make sure the fuse switch is on

It may seem obvious but make sure you've checked this! The fuse switch will be on the wall near the heater. You may need to try the switch in both positions.

Check the temperature control dial is set

This dial is numbered 0-6, set it at 6, you can check if you would prefer the room warmer or cooler once it's warmed up.

If the heater does not have a dial

You can control the temperature you want your heater on by changing the temperature on the display so that it suits you.

If you want to boost the temperature press the 'Advance' button twice on the top of the heater this will provide heating for one, two, three or four hours.

Still feel cold?

If you need to boost the temperature in your room, on the wall you'll find a 'boost box'. There are two types of these boxes, one is a button that says 'touch'. The other type has a time indicator of how long you'd like to boost the heating for, so simply press the button and the selected time will show a red light.

Kitchen and Hallway Heater

Check the fuse is on

It may seem obvious but make sure you've checked this! The fuse switch will be on the wall near the heater. You may need to try the switch in both positions.

Check that the thermostatic temperature control dial is set

This is located on the right-hand side of the heater on the top and is labelled 'storage'. Set it at 3 initially, then you can check if you would prefer the room warmer or cooler.

If the heater does not have a dial

You can control the temperature you want your heater on by changing the temperature on the display so that it suits you.

If you want to boost the temperature press the 'Advance' button twice on the top of the heater this will provide heating for one, two, three or four hours.

Remember

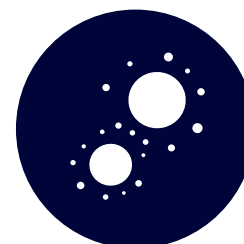
If you're cold, help the environment by layering up with a jumper and using extra bedding instead of turning up the heating. This can add 3 degrees of warmth to your body and will save energy.

Safety tip

Never cover your heater with anything or place any furniture directly in front of it as this could cause a fire.

If you think your heating is broken, contact **facilities-helpdesk@aru.ac.uk** or call 01245 686464.

Preventing mould



Sometimes mould, damp or condensation might appear in your home, often in the bathroom or kitchen. This is sometimes just caused by day to day living rather than a structural issue, so there are some key things you can do to help prevent the problems of condensation and mould.

Top tips

1. Don't dry your clothes on the radiators.

If you need to dry clothes in the house, use a clothes horse.

2. Open your windows.

Make sure that you ventilate your room and let some fresh air in regularly. 30 minutes a day when it's cold will help. If you have an air vent, keep it open all the time.

3. Keep furniture away from the walls.

Just a couple of centimetres will help air to circulate.

4. Act fast.

If you notice mould growth, report it to the Residential Service.

5. Remove condensation.

Wipe round your window in the morning with a cloth to remove any build-up of water. This usually happens in autumn and winter when it's cold outside and nice and cosy inside.

6. Let out steam after showers.

After you've had a shower make sure that you open the window to let all the hot air out.

7. Keep the saucepan lid on.

Stop steam escaping from pans by keeping the lid on whilst cooking, it also helps to keep the kitchen door closed and the window open.

8. Use extractor fans.

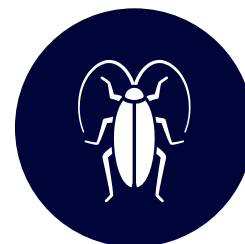
Kitchen and bathroom extractor fans will make a big difference, so please use them where available. If you're not sure whether your extractor fan is working, you can hold a piece of tissue a few millimeters away from the extractor fan – if it stays there by itself, the extractor is working. If the tissue falls down, please report that your extractor fan isn't working to the Helpdesk using the details below so we can get it fixed!

9. Radiators should be on low settings for longer periods.

Doing this ensures the heat builds up in the room and gets stored in the walls, which doesn't happen if you blast out heat for a couple of hours at a time.

If you're following these steps but the problem persists, or there is a lot of mould, please report this to the Helpdesk (01245 686464 / facilities-helpdesk@aru.ac.uk) as soon as possible. If the mould, damp or condensation is found to have been caused through your own actions, you may be asked to pay the cost of repairing the damage.

Keeping pests away



Top tips for avoiding bugs and pests

- Ventilate your room (preferably daily) to minimise humidity and condensation
- Don't dry washing in your room or en-suite
- Don't store food in your bedroom
- Keep your room and kitchen clean
- Remember to vacuum your room

**Contact the Helpdesk on
01245 686464 / facilities-
helpdesk@aru.ac.uk
if you see one of these:**



Mice and rats

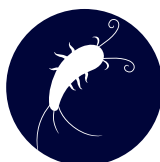
Mice won't harm you but rats can spread disease.



Cockroaches

Cockroaches are attracted to food waste and poor housekeeping.

Only call the Helpdesk if you see **a lot** of these:



Silverfish



Ladybirds



Wasps and bees



Flies



Spiders



Ants

Usually these pests aren't dangerous, but if you have a reaction to a bite or sting, you can call your GP or the NHS on 111.

If you get bitten but aren't sure where the bites are coming from, please contact the Residential Service.

You can find out more information regarding pests at bpca.org.uk

Keeping your drains clear



Blocked sinks, showers and toilets are pretty nasty and damage the environment, but they're easily avoided by following these simple tips...

Top tips

Kitchen Sink

- Never pour fats down the drain: pour cooled liquid fats into empty bottles/containers and throw them in the bin
- Scoop food waste and solid fats into the bin before you wash up in the sink to avoid it blocking the drain.
- Buy a sink strainer to catch any food residue you missed so it gets trapped instead of going down the drain

Shower

- Buy a sink strainer to catch any hair and empty it regularly

Toilets

- Only flush the 'three P's' down the toilet; pee, paper and poop.
- Put a small bin in your toilet/shower room so you're not tempted to flush anything
- Sanitary products need to go in the bin; wrap them in toilet paper or pop them in a small bag before binning them. In some shared bathrooms there are sanitary waste bins, please use them wherever they're available
- Wipes, cotton wool, floss and cotton buds should never be flushed down the toilet

Shower drain blockages

You should regularly clear shower plugs throughout your tenancy.

It's recommended you clean the Shower plug at least once a week.

To do this you should:

- Lift the plug
- Remove any hair and wash thoroughly including any soap that maybe on the sides and underneath (be careful not to let hair go down sink drain and dispose of correctly in the general waste bins)
- Lift out the small bucket inside the drain and empty contents using a glove or a cloth into the bin and rinse out
- Once it is clean place the basket back into the drain hole and put the top cover back in place.

If you can't lift your drain or your drain is blocked even after you have cleaned it email **facilities-helpdesk@aru.ac.uk**.

Why bother?

If a blockage is found to have been caused by tenants not following the advice above, you'll be charged for the repair. Keeping the water supply clear of rubbish helps the environment as a lot of carbon and water is used to clear blockages.

If your drain becomes blocked, please report it to us as soon as possible to avoid any further problems contact the Helpdesk on 01245 686464 **facilities-helpdesk@aru.ac.uk**.

Smoking areas



It's against the law to smoke inside your accommodation (or any public building in the UK).

You'll also be breaching your tenancy agreement if you or your guests smoke inside your accommodation. This includes tobacco and non tobacco products, shisha and e-cigarettes. You could incur charges if you or your guests smoke inside the building and may face disciplinary action or be asked to leave the accommodation.

The map below shows where the designated smoking areas in the Student Village are.

Please dispose of your cigarette butts in the metal bins near the smoking areas which are clearly labelled.



Reporting repairs



Please let us know as soon as possible if something is damaged or broken so we can get it fixed quickly and avoid the problem getting worse or creating further issues.

You can report any problems to the Helpdesk by calling

01245 686464

or emailing

facilities-helpdesk@aru.ac.uk

If something goes wrong overnight or at the weekend, you can call the 'out of hour's emergencies' number on the poster in your bedroom/kitchen.

We know it's frustrating when something isn't working properly or looks bad, and we'd like to fix everything straight away, but repairs will be prioritised in a certain order to make sure that the essential ones are sorted as quickly as possible.

Below are some examples of faults/repairs and the timescales we aim for. It doesn't cover everything and timings may vary depending on the situation, works required and contractor availability.

Example	Timescale
Fire alarm fault, isolating water leaks (repair to also be completed if parts available)	Up to 4 hours
Repair broken lift, blocked toilets, lighting repairs	1 working day
Faulty blind/curtain, faulty internal doors, faulty toilet seat	Up to 3 working days
Broken microwave (where other cooking facilities still available), low water pressure, radiator/heater fault	5 working days