

Longtime Guest, First Time Host

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WHAT I LEARNED BY HOSTING ON AIRBNB



I stayed in my first [AirBnB apartment](#) back in 2012 on a trip to Toronto. The cost of hotels had been going up and someone told me about this thing where you could rent out someone's personal apartment for cheaper. It was an interesting concept and I always liked being able to save money so I thought I'd try it. I ended up with a teeny tiny apartment on Dundas St. but the location was perfect and even though there were no [hotel robes](#), there was free wifi and a coffee maker so I was happy.

Since then, I've used AirBnB for more Toronto trips, as well as stays in **New York, Paris, and Tokyo**. My Dad always seems to think that the host is going to steal all my stuff while I'm out or kill me in my sleep or something. But as long as the host had good reviews and didn't set off any

red flags during our pre-booking messages I decided I'd take a chance on them. To date, **touch wood**, it's worked out well for me.

This spring, I had overextended myself on a few trips (Nashville was totally worth it though) and was looking at ways that I could boost my bank account so that, when I head off to Europe this fall, I won't have to squeeze my Canadian nickels so hard I give the beaver a migraine. I'd been musing off and on for awhile about hosting on AirBnB since I live in a pretty [attractive location for tourists in St. John's](#) – stumbling distance from George Street really. In late May, I pulled the trigger and listed one of my spare rooms.



BECOMING A NEWBIE AIRBNB HOST

bing! A notification popped up on my phone. *“Someone wants to stay in my house. For 5 nights. Oh God. What do I do?”* Even though this was entirely the point, it still makes me a bit anxious when I get those notifications. Are the guests going to be cool? Will we get along? Will it be awkward? Those first few days I started getting two or three bookings a day. It was pretty exciting...and nerve wracking.

About two weeks after I [listed my place](#) I welcomed my first guest. My palms got a little clammy as I paced the house, waiting for them to arrive to check-in. As a bit of an introvert, meeting new people gives me knots in my stomach and now I'm voluntarily meeting new people every few days. At first, I worried constantly. Were they comfortable? What did they think of the place? Will they think I'm weird for [watching Korean dramas](#)? Did the street cleaner wake them up? **I didn't sleep well.**

Every new noise would wake me up and I don't think I relaxed enough to get into a good deep sleep. After a few weeks though, I adjusted and I'm sleeping as well as ever now.

People have asked me if it's weird to have people I don't know in my house. Well, yes, sort of. At first. I wasn't sure how having guests would reshape my own routines at home. In the past three months I've realized that it hasn't changed much. Most people are either out on the town or up in their room with the door closed. I once went over two full days without laying eyes on one guest. So it hasn't changed my habits in the slightest.

Except that I nap on my couch less and **I've become a better housekeeper.**



DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY

I've always said that I was good at many things but I wasn't a very good housekeeper. Dirty dishes were my nemesis and the kitchen table tended to collect all manner of postal flotsam and jetsam. The carpet probably didn't get vacuumed as often as my long-haired cat required. They weren't tasks I enjoyed and I somehow developed a blind eye to it. I wasn't proud

of it, but that's how it was. It wasn't going to fly if I was an AirBnB host. **So I stepped up my Molly Maid game.**

It's weird to have a stranger critique you and your home. A single mediocre score from one person and I'm suddenly vacuuming wine racks and wiping down ceilings while wondering if I should bleach the already white towels. Another middling grade and I'm wondering if maybe I should actually be on the show Hoarders rather than hosting on AirBnB. **Ouch.**

I admit that I sulked and worried and fretted for a bit with those early two troubling reviews but then I put on my big girl pants and looked at my place more critically, trying to see how I could improve. It's an opportunity for personal growth dammit.

I ordered a new bed for the spare room and have become a bit obsessive about cleaning, though my own room still often looks as if a clothes bomb went off. Before each new guest arrives I'm wiping down every surface in the bathroom with disinfectant wipes and I'm now washing dishes while I'm making supper so that they never see a dirty dish on the counter. My reviews have shown this increased attention to detail.

CHANGING MY HABITS AS AN AIRBNB GUEST

Becoming an AirBnB host has also changed the way that I'll review future hosts. Previously, I would give out 4 stars if everything was as expected and nothing went wrong. 5 stars were reserved for exceptional experiences. Well... AirBnB deems a 4 star as a less than stellar review and

why aren't you doing better? Look, your neighbours are doing better than you. **tsk tsk** Now that I realize how much the difference between a 4 and 5 can mean to an AirBnB host, I'll be much more generous with my reviews as a guest.



THINGS YOU'VE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT

Be aware, you're going to go through more toilet paper, garbage bags, and hand soap than you think. **Buy them in bulk.** I like lightly scented kitchen liners for the room's trash bin. If it smells fresh, it feels cleaner.

You'll also be doing so much laundry you'll think you just had twins. Most of my guests have only stayed for one or two nights so there were times when the washer and dryer were going every day. If you don't have your

own machines and have to use a laundromat, factor in those costs when you're pricing your listing...or buy more sheets and towels.

Make sure that you give yourself enough time between guests to get your place back in order. For me, that means I ask for a noon check-out so that I can come home and strip the bed and clean on my lunch break and have everything ready for the new guest when I get home from work at 5pm. Be willing to be flexible with times if you're able. I had a host in Toronto allow me to stay until 8pm recently because I had a night flight and her flexibility went a long way with me. It meant that I didn't have to schlep my stuff around town all day. So much win.

AIRBNB CONVERT

I've pretty much been accepting every booking that I can accommodate this summer because I figure that the [tourism season in Newfoundland is short](#) and that the arse will go out of it once fall arrives. Time will tell how busy my listing remains but becoming an AirBnB host was definitely the right choice for me. Beyond allowing me to loosen my travel pursestrings slightly, I've met some cool people, and it's also changed some of my long ingrained bad habits when it came to my house.

SO THANK YOU, TO AIRBNB, AND THANKS EVEN TO THAT ONE BRUTAL REVIEW. I'M NOW A 5 STAR HOUSEKEEPER. ;)

TIPS FOR THE NEW AIRBNB HOST

- Invest in two sets of white sheets, bath towels, and facecloths. White just makes everything look a bit crisper and cleaner plus you can bleach them if necessary.
- If your pillows aren't still white, get new ones. They don't have to be expensive. If a guest strips a bed before they leave you don't want them grossed out by any yellow drool stains, even if they're the ones who left them.
- If you can't be there to meet your guests on check-in, pick up a portable lockbox, like realtors use, where you can leave the keys.
- Provide a set of mini soaps. If you're anything like me, you collect those little unused bottles from hotel stays. Put them out for guests to use. A box of tissues and a lint roller are also appreciated.
- Put a garbage can in the room.
- Always make sure there's a spare roll of toilet paper within sight in the bathroom.
- Keep a hairdryer handy. Not every guests who would appreciate one travels with their own.
- Make sure there's somewhere for them to hang clothes, even if it's just a hook on the back of the door with a couple of hangers.
- Ensure there are at least two plugs free in the room so they can charge devices. Get a power bar or extension cord if the outlet is nowhere near the bedside.
- Be flexible when you can. Sometime's a guest will want to check in early, drop their bags before check-in, or leave them after check-out. If you're able to, let them. It will be appreciated.

WOULD YOU CONSIDER [HOSTING ON AIRBNB?](#)