



Noisy neighbor solutions

When you have problems with noisy, inconsiderate neighbors it can be very frustrating, and there is little that can actually be done, legally. Even though there may be a pile of laws on the books, finding someone to enforce them, is, well, special...

These are a few of the solutions that I am aware of and recommend. (There are many creative and fun solutions that you can experiment with on your own that are not exactly legal, but we won't cover those here.)

1st, of course you have a nice, friendly talk with the neighbor. If that fails to remedy the issue, you have a nice, friendly talk with the management. (If this is a rental unit.) That can be followed up with a written, certified letter as a next step. That step should be repeated 3 times, (if the problems persist) to document your complaint with the management before going to the next level. The police will ALWAYS ask if you have contacted the management or spoken with the neighbor first.

Not sure about other cities or states but in Los Angeles, California you can file a complaint with the police and request that the city attorney mediate, with both parties via an informal office "trial" and attempt a resolution.

(For bad upstairs neighbors) If you have a good management company you can request they install sound deadening padding under the carpet.

You may review your lease; I believe it will state that the tenants may not violate other tenant's right to peace and quiet, if so they can be evicted. The management company is responsible for enforcing this, if they don't you could sue them in small claims. It is easy and cheap (\$25-45), best of all NO LAWYERS!!! Just show up with solid documentation, audio recordings, copies of police reports etc. Of course then they may then seek to retaliate against you, evict you, raise your rent, ignore your maintenance requests etc. That's not legal, but it is likely to happen, and you will have hell trying to prove it and have someone hold them accountable. You could also take action against the noisy neighbor in small claims. Be careful with who you are dealing with, you don't need some psycho spraying bullets in your house, throwing bricks through your window or _____ (insert horrible retaliatory act here). (I had my brakes lines cut, exhaust pipe bent in half, and was threatened several times, among other enjoyable pranks.) I won't mention what covert and overt actions I took in response.

Many people call the police; usually after the police leave the neighbor will make even more noise to be vindictive, thus aggravating the situation. If that happens, when you make the call, request that the police contact you after they have spoken with the neighbor and witness their actions. If you can get the cop to witness this, they will likely take action; they HATE to see their authority mocked and disrespected. Also make audio or video recordings, whenever the neighbor is creating their disturbance, get other neighbors to witness if possible. You'll need a pro quality recorder and mic to accurately record the sound, most noise, stomping, door slamming, thump music etc is at a very low frequency and to reproduce it you'll need a system with a sub-woofer (speaker) to accurately play it back to convey your point.

Make a detailed activity log, judges and police need solid, documented information to be able to help you.

As difficult as it may be, the best option is to make peace with the cretins, get them to be considerate on their own. (Insert hysterical laughter here, yeah I know, some situations are simply impossible.)

Upstairs neighbors don't realize that their footsteps are 5-10 times louder below than in their unit, the floor acts like a drum head and amplifies the sound. If they are reasonable you could invite them down to hear how it sounds while one of their friends/family members stomp around above. If not, and they have an upstairs neighbor, befriend that neighbor and have a dance party while you know they are sleeping, you could also dance on the roof otherwise. Some people have to be taught, to learn.

I created a device I called the "Instant karma machine", I placed mics in the ceiling, when my neighbors stomped around, slammed doors, cranked their horrible music, had mad gorilla sex or screamed at and beat their children or each other in drunken brawls it recorded that and played it back through a delay twice for each sound through speakers mounted to the bottom of their floor, hidden between my ceiling. They hated it SO much they called the police on me, when I invited the police in, showed them my system and explained its purpose, they howled with laughter. They then went back upstairs and had an entirely different conversation with my neighbors.

Soundproofing is very expensive and unless you do major construction, not very effective. Not truly a viable solution for a renter. Don't EVEN waste your time and money on foam. Low frequencies will cut through a brick wall like it was butter; foam won't even slow it down. It will only mildly hinder the high frequencies. If you own the property, have the time and money to invest it is a good option, although you will have to do double "wall within a wall" construction, using soundboard, not drywall, and leave an empty space of 6 inches between the two walls as a sound trap.

I went through a living hell for years with my horrible upstairs neighbors, I tried EVERYTHING, I exhausted all legal possibilities and many other options of which I couldn't advise... or admit to.... I even spent nights sleeping in my car, camping in the woods, staying with friends and even hotels. To me, upstairs neighbors are the worst, their footsteps sounded like Godzilla raging across Tokyo, in my home.

This is why I was inspired to create what I call SoniScape, my noise-masking track. I used several layers of natural sounds, manipulated the frequencies to cover everything in the human audible range and yet sound like a mountain waterfall. It took years to create, test and develop to get it just right. It was the only way that I got what little sleep that I had. I designed it to mask-out their noise and allow me to sleep/live through it. It's not the perfect solution, but if you can't make it stop, make them move, or move yourself, it's a livable one. Besides that, it sounds really nice just to keep on in the background at home, noise issues or not. I have moved on from that North Hollywood hellhole, Now I am in a great spot in the mountains, but surprisingly still use it every night, helps me relax and cover up the noise those damn raccoons make lunging across the roof at 4 am on their way to tip my trash cans.

Here's a link if you want more info about it. <http://bretthouston.com/soniscape.html> there's a sample there that you can download/listen to for free. To work well you should play it with a system with strong bass, preferably a sub-woofer. Many inexpensive computer speakers (with sub-woofers) or surround-sound home theater systems work fine for that.

Best of luck in your situation, I certainly understand what a nightmare that you are living. I always like to hear about new solutions and problems, so email if you have something fresh.

Cheers

Brett