SaveTFP Presents....

Guide to MIT
a collection of tips and insights from a diverse group of students

Love your beaver
-SaveTFP

Disclaimer: The tips and advice from this book does not apply to everyone, nor does everyone share the same views.
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Check out savetfp.edu for our semester events!
introduction

IHTFP.

The duality of this omnipresent phrase can be felt across campus through various forms. Intense Quidditch games in front of Kresge lawn while tourists furiously take photos of this seemingly bizarre sport. Long, fun, but serious ballroom dance team practices on the 5th floor of Building 36. The agony associated with hearing the answering machine for the umpteenth time but the immense joy and awe after having a great conversation with alumni through tech calling. The late nights that take a toll the next day (if you decide to go to class) because of philosophical discussions on life, romance, and the pursuit of happiness.

I hate this fucking place or I have truly found paradise?

The answer is up to you but you will most likely feel a mixture of both. As a community, we try to push for the latter but that is difficult sometimes with the papers, psets, readings, and the busyness that a college student typically experiences. You will more than likely (and should) join a club or two. Emotionally invest yourself or perhaps just be involved but not dedicated. Notice that both are perfectly fine. Do what works for you. Being at MIT, there is no one experience but rather an amalgamation of experiences that you share with others. You will have many great moments but also some rough ones and that is okay. MIT was never meant to be easy and for many of us, it is not. We each come from different backgrounds, have unique upbringings, and have our individual stories to tell. You just have to be willing to open up. Because of our uniqueness, we can learn unfathomable things from each other.

In the moments of despair or confusion (like during freshman year), it is nice to have a slight nudge in the right direction (or any direction, really, as long as it's not too detrimental). Learning through failure is lauded, and expected to some extent. But there is a difference between failure and being utterly pummeled without any sense of recovery or hope. Not being able to see the light at the end of the tunnel is not a pleasant experience.

This is why SaveTFP decided to create this guidebook. We are a group of athletes, frat brothers, mathematicians, artists, bakers, and certified Netflix binge-watchers. With the input of members from students across all classes (2018s through 2015s), we have compiled their pieces of wisdom and wanted to express them through this tipbook.

This information is by no means exhaustive or all-inclusive and certainly does not apply to everyone. Nothing beats talking to MIT students and asking them about their life story (just ask! more likely than not they are willing to share). This guidebook is not meant to be a substitute for conversation but simply meant to serve as a reference, as a starting point for concerns or questions that you may have wondered. You may think that some points are irrelevant to you specifically and/or disagree with some, but we do hope that you may find at least one sentence useful and appropriate for you.

Laugh.
Cry.
Punt.
Tool.
Hack.
Love your Beaver.

Welcome to MIT.
GIRs (general institute requirements)

In a nutshell, these are the classes that you are expected to have credit for. There are three main ways to get credit for them:
1) Getting credit outside MIT (AP, IB, or transfer credit)
2) Passing the ASE (Advanced Standing Exam) for that subject during orientation
3) Taking the class and getting a passing grade (C or better) during the semester

The GIRs cover Biology (Course 7), Physics (Course 8), Math (Course 18), Chemistry (Course 5), humanities courses (such as 14, 21, and 24 but other classes in other courses or programs can count towards this credit), and physical education electives (required but don’t count towards the credit limits set for freshman).

In list form, the classes are:

7.01x - credit for general biology course
   o 7.012 and 7.016 (offered in Fall) and 7.013 and 7.014 (offered in Spring)
   o These variations cover the same core material but have a more specific central focus

8.01x - credit for Mechanics
   o 8.01 uses TEAL (Technology-Enabled Active Learning), which essentially means two 2-hour lectures a week where you sit in groups and solve problems together throughout the lecture, perform experiments, and have problem solving sessions
   o 8.01L: covers the same material as 8.01 but goes into January during IAP (independent activities period)
   o 8.012: 8.01 on steroids

8.02x - for Electricity and Magnetism
   o 8.02 uses TEAL (see above)
   o 8.022 is to 8.02 as 8.012 is to 8.01

18.01x for Calculus I:
   o 18.01: traditional class
   o 18.014: Calculus I With Theory (read: rigorous proofs)
   o 18.01A (combined with 18.02A): faster paced Calculus I and Calculus II. Both can be completed before second semester begins but goes through IAP

18.02x for Calculus II (same descriptions as 18.01x)
   o 18.02
   o 18.024
   o 18.02A

5.11x or 3.091 for Chemistry
   o 5.111: Traditional Chemistry Class
   o 5.112: Similar comparison to 8.012 vs 8.01
   o 3.091: Intro to Solid State Chemistry (assumes the least amount of chemistry background of the 3)

8 Humanities Classes
   o At least one from each category (Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences)
   o Must have a HASS concentration (usually requires 3-4 classes)
   § Can be from Economics, History, Literature, etc.
   o Take any to fulfill the 8 class requirement
   o You must take two classes that are designated as Communication Intensive (CI)

Remember to talk to your advisor, RA, AA, and upperclassman for more information!
GIRs continued...
academic tips from students

Remember to take all these with 1 or 2 grains of salt!

“If you’re coming into MIT undecided it might be in your best interest to take all your GIRs first semester (pushing off your HASS-H until second semester). This allows for you to take a lighter course load second semester (which many find more stressful) as well as allowing you to take the time and take multiple intro classes if you want too.”

“Don't freak out about what you're majoring in - you have lots of time to change it, and don't be afraid to. With that said, maybe it's not a terrible idea to start thinking about what you want to do after college. We've only got 4 years here!”

“Take 6.01, 8.01, and a math class first semester if you have any interest in being course six. 6.01 is an annoying class that is a whole lot less stressful if you don't need to worry about grades, while 8.01 and the math class are super important progression wise. Bio and chem can wait.”

“In 10 years that F on your 8.01 exam will not matter :)

“Keep taking PE classes. Take them on Saturdays if they don't fit your schedule. Physical exercise is such a real de-stressor. Find new ones. Not just something you're already good at, but something that you want to be good at (sometimes your pride takes a beating but you come out with a dope new skill).”

“You probably don't need the textbook.”

“Getting up early for ASEs sucks, but it's a whole lot easier than taking an unnecessary class. Don't be lazy (like I was).”

“Take bio on Pass/No Record. That is all.”
17 ways to blow off steam

i) Watch a movie or read a book; you can leave this world and get wrapped up in another
ii) Take a nap!
iii) Long hot showers: that will be all
iv) Cook/bake something for your floor. I mean, who doesn't love chocolate chip cookies?
v) Talk a walk along the Charles River and the Boston Esplanade. We all get tired of the urban environment once in a while
vi) Late-night run to iHOP, Beantown, etc.

vii) Listen to a song and/or sing your heart out. Impromptu dancing highly recommended
viii) Stay in touch with friends from back home. Share the best and worst of TFP
ix) Rearrange your room and clean it. Some people think that the state of their room reflects the state of their life (well, at least I do)

x) Exercise! Run along the river, play some Frisbee or soccer, Zumba, yoga, blogilaties

xi) GO OFF CAMPUS

xii) Go people watching. Best sites include Harvard Square and Boston Common

xiii) Have a cup of tea
xiv) Collect bubble wrap. Stomp. Squeeze. Repeat

xv) Take your work elsewhere. Sometimes moving into a lounge or classroom can help change the mood and make the project go easier

xvi) Color in a coloring book. They are all the rage nowadays

xvii) Look to the future. That can keep your hopes up when the term is dragging. Daydreaming can be a virtue

xviii) Check something off the to-do list or bucket list or even better – check something off the 101 Things To Do Before your Graduate!

xix) Talk to someone new today. It could help put things into perspective

*We can count. I swear.
study areas

There are numerous places to study both on and off campus. Maybe you're tired of sitting at your desk with your roommate's music blaring and having constant interruptions from your neighbors. Maybe you like the constant distractions in your room. Whatever the case, here are some options if you'd like to get your study on.

**On Campus**
Really any library on campus has spots where it is very silent, and other spots where there is some ambient noise. Test them out!

**The libraries**
- **Hayden** (especially the Humanities section)
- **Barker** - has reading rooms (upper floors), group areas, and the deadly silence of under the dome (beware of echoes resulting from dropping erasers and books, zipping up backpacks, turning pages, and closing doors)
- **Rotch**
- **Dewey** (a bit far, but it's a nice walk!)

**Stata Center steps** - when the weather is nice and you like working outside
**5th floor Student center** - reading rooms, group tables, athena cluster

**Empty Classrooms** - especially at night
Out of the war **Athena clusters** -- the basement of Bldg 66 and the back room of the student center cluster

**Steam Cafe** (4th floor Bldg 7) - pretty nice at night
**Building 14** outdoor square - when the weather is nice

**Off Campus**
**Boston Public Library** is super pretty and nice
- There are art/architecture tours and it's got nice study areas. You can get a library card (free) and check out books and movies as well!

Random **coffee shops** along Mass Ave (including Starbucks, Mariposa bakery, etc.)
**The Marriott** in Kendall Square
off campus fun

So it’s a Friday (or Sat, Sun, or maybe even a Wed) and you’re bored out of your mind. What should you do? (Other than going to SaveTFP’s crazy awesome events on Friday nights).

Here are some places to visit:

**Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum** - it’s pretty close and it’s small enough that you will be able to get through it in an afternoon. Even if you don’t like art, you’ll like this place. The art comes from all over the world and different time periods. It used to be Isabella Stewart Gardner’s house.

**Boston Common** and **Boston Public Garden** - The common and the garden are right next to each other. Go fly a kite, people watch, ride in a duck boat, ice skate on Frog Pond in the winter, or have a picnic.

**Kendall Rooftop garden** - find it, it’ll be an adventure!

Go walk around **Harvard Square** and count how many preppily dressed people there are.

**Christian Science Plaza** - there is a gorgeous pond, fountain, Mappaporium, and more, and it’s right by the Prudential.

**Musuems** - There are a plethora of cool musuems around Boston, and many are free with your MIT ID.

**Boston Harbor** - Take a walk by the harbor after getting your cannolis in the North End.

**BSO** (Boston Symphony Orchestra) - Buy a student card at CopyTech for only $5!

Support **Boston sport teams** at their games (Red Sox, Celtics, Bruins).

Just explore Boston and see what you discover!
Commonly heard around campus in different variations is ‘School, sleep, social life, pick 2’ because people often overcommit to 1 or more of those categories. Sometimes, it helps to identify what constitutes as over committing.

**Over-committing to school** (taking too many classes, UROP, school activities, project classes, general stress)
- It’s OK to drop classes or scale back/drop UROPs; professors are understanding, and it’s all about what you’re comfortable with and your limits

**Over-committing to social life** (parties, student groups, frats/sororities)
- You can say ‘No’ if someone invites you to an event or you can tell the student group that you’re quitting, no one will hate you/judge you for it, and if they do, they’re not cool

**Over-committing to sleep** (uncommon way to put it, but try not to sleep through too many classes -> starts a slippery slope to catch up in material that you slept through)
- More common is people under-committing to sleep. Sleep is important. Take power naps when you can! Find spaces close to your classes where you can rest and re energize without having to go back to your dorm especially if it’s a trek

An important part of avoiding overcommitment is being able to recognize when you’ve got too much on your plate. Signs include not sleeping much, being extremely stressed, headaches, having no time to relax/do personal activities, exhaustion. Solutions include prioritizing, and dropping things or lowering your sky high standards.

### 5 stages of overcommitment:

**Denial:** Oh, I’m just a little tired… no big deal… I totally have time to do everything I want to do…

**Anger:** I must be doing something wrong! Where did all my time go?! If she/he can juggle X classes, Y clubs and Z parties, why can’t I?!

**Bargaining:** Oh I’ll just trade a couple hours of sleep to party/pset/etc. If I quit club A, I can keep doing activity B.

**Depression:** I can’t believe I gave up club A, what’s the point in doing anything else? I’m just going to sit here and wallow in misery and psets.

**Acceptance:** Yay, you made it to acceptance! Now you’ve recognized that you’re overburdened and can figure out how to balance your time to suit your personal needs.
how to be an organized/successful student
how to spend money smartly

Determine your priorities. Make a list.

Make a log of your spendings, after a month or so, look it over and see where you can cut back. You may be surprised that you just spent $200 online shopping when your closet is already full.

For food, compare prices. Is Trader Joes or Shaws cheaper for what you usually buy? Farmer’s markets are sometimes even cheaper than those and you get fresh food. Or maybe it’s worth the extra money and time saved to either Instacart or Just Baguette your groceries.

Don’t buy textbooks if there is an existing online version. Search around and ask upperclassman, you may be pleasantly surprised.

Take into account deals and discounts, always. Go to the basement of the Kendall COOP for clearance items.

Being a student comes with its perks. Ask, and use them.

On the meal plan? When there’s a group meeting over lunch or dinner in the stud, bring a green box. Don’t waste your meal swipes! Likewise, suggest the dining hall for a place to grab food if you have some extra guest swipes to spare.

Visit MITAC for discount tickets for the movies, food tours, and more.

Suggest group/bonding activities that are free (such as visiting a museum, playing frisbee on Killian, walking the freedom trail, etc.)

Walk places that are walkable. Exercise is good for you, we swear.
how to be an organized/successful student
how to plan ahead to avoid all nighters

Keep on top of deadlines!

Make a schedule and stick to it. Google Calendar may become your new best friend. It’s a smart move to put all midterms and project deadlines into your calendar once you get the syllabus. Afterwards, get into a groove with your p-sets. Do you have 1 pset due on Thursday and 3 psets due on Friday? Don’t start on Wednesday! At least look the problems over during the weekend so you are able to pick up on some of the key problems in lectures during the week.

Try a 3 (or whatever) day out rule. Do just one problem (or attempt) 3 days before a certain pset is due. Sometimes, you get into a rhythm and are able to bang out half the pset before you even realize it.

Of course we all get bogged down and overwhelmed and no matter how much we try, we still find ourselves drowning in work due the next day. But chances are, at least 1 other person is in the same boat as you. If you know you are going to be pulling an all nighter, it is so much better to do it with friends, even if they aren’t in the same class as you. So gather your allies, stake out a nice study area and get cracking. Take breaks when you need them, trust us, it helps.

Take advantage of a 24/7 open Verdes and make the trek to buy some brain (aka junk or actual healthy) food and stretch your legs. You’ll be amazed at the difference taking a walk can do to your energy level. And if you know the night before that the next night will be an all nighter, go to bed early!

One last tip, MIT students are friendly. Don’t understand a problem? Just can’t wrap your head around a concept? Ask a random person who is up and seems like they aren’t doing anything and ask if they can help.

Personal Experience: In fact, this is how I finished my first 18.01 Pset, by asking a random student and his friends if they could help us with the pset. It was 2:30am and the prospect of sleep was very bleak. But what do you know, the kid we asked happened to be a math wiz and explained the concept and problem to us in a way even our sleep deprived brains understood. P-set completed, new friend made. I’d say it’s a pretty good deal.
rushing advice/choosing a dorm

What you want in a dorm is often a mystery in the beginning or at least varies significantly from person to person, so this section simply lists some things to consider so that you have at least some ideas and so that you don’t forget to look into options.

Some things to possibly consider:

1. Whether or not you want to be a part of the culture. There are definitely distinct subcultures in dorms and most times on specific floors as well. Consider at least whether or not you could see yourself comfortable there. But that said, don’t just solely go off of what 1 person says about all the dorms, actually talk to people who live in the different dorms.

2. It also makes sense to consider location and whether you want a single or a double, etc., despite the great emphasis on culture.

3. View the grand scope: it’s not easy to focus on this during CPW/REX sometimes, but it’s worth looking around and talking to some upperclassmen about as many of the living groups (ILGs, fraternities, sororities, dorm subsections, etc.). Consider where you want to work, play, and make friends and whether or not you want to do these things with those living in the same place as you. Definitely try to use REX to explore all these; if you can’t, don’t worry! You can pretend to be a prefrosh during CPW, get to know people from different living groups to hang out there, or even go to REX events during later years.

4. Don’t forget off-campus or non-dorm options. It might not appeal to you now or might seem irrelevant since you have to live on campus for the first year, but it’s good to look into ILGs, apartments, and fraternities/sororities, just to see what’s out there. There are more than you might anticipate, and some quick web searches will reveal lots of information about them.

5. Don’t stress out too much: remember that it’s likely you’ll find someplace you enjoy (or at least tolerate) since there are so many great living groups at MIT. Many people switch out of their dorms into other living groups, it’s not permanent!
This one’s undeniable, we all need it to survive. Some may choose the path of Soylent, but others may love the taste of a freshly made eggs benedict with a side of homestyle potatoes. Here’s a guide to some food problems you may run into (sometimes literally).

**Quick Meals**
Sometimes you’ll be in a rush to go somewhere or to resume studying, and you’ll consider skipping a meal. But do make an effort to try not to skip meals. Instead, be efficient about them. On the meal plan? Consider to-go boxes and packed meals. Not on the meal plan? Here are some quick meal/snack ideas to consider.

Note that many require forethought of some kind, so consider doing some of these BEFORE you’re in need of a quick meal:

~Mass production is key: make things in large batches beforehand and keep things that stay good for a while on stock (rice, pasta, you can even mass cook veggies ahead of time)
~Get tupperware and/or ziplock baggies and/or a lunch box
~Don’t microwave metal (...you’d be surprised)
~Crockpots are great if you have some time in the morning or the day before but know you won’t have time to prepare dinner later
~Keep a constant supply of snacks in your bookbag (chewy bars, crackers, cliff bars, chocolate)
~George Foreman grills are good for quick, great grilled meat/fish/veggies/whatever
~Get plenty of protein, not pure carbohydrates. Protein-containing ideas:
  - Nuts, such as bags of trail mix or other such snack bags
  - Hardboiled eggs
  - Scrambled eggs (you can scramble eggs using the microwave in a microwave-safe bowl)
  - Smoked fish
  - Jerky
  - Small yogurts (esp. Greek yogurt), steal plastic spoons from restaurants, La Verde’s, Trader Joe’s Cheese (on crackers, with fruit, etc.)
  - Peanut butter (on celery, crackers, apples, bananas, etc.)
  - Pre-made sushi (e.g. Trader Joe’s packaged sushi)
~Miscellaneous other food ideas:
  - Ramen/other pasta (try to limit this though)
  - Berries and fresh fruits
  - Dried fruits
  - Berry/vegetable smoothies
  - Bagels (with cream cheese perhaps)
  - Salads (keep leafy greens on hand with some crumbly cheese, nuts, beans, or dried berries)
  - Canned foods (e.g. beans or ravioli) can be eaten raw and are tolerated by some. I recommend buying the ones with a pull tab so you don’t need a can-opener

Various lunch meats and other meats are good: beware deli fresh meat, however, since it goes bad pretty quickly

Sandwiches
  - Peanut butter (and jelly)
  - Egg salad
  - Grilled cheese (you can add more than just cheese)
Alright so you want to cook for yourself. Where do you buy your groceries?

**Haymarket** (walk or take the T to Haymarket Station) - Boston's great outdoor market, where you can buy everything from fruits and veggies to sugar cane and fish just off the boat. However, be warned, the veggies and fruits aren't always super fresh, you have to pick through some stuff to get stuff that isn't super ripe or rotting. But it's super cheap and loud and in your face. Open Friday and Saturdays.

**Farmer's Market in Copley** - Walk or take the 1 Bus and walk to Copley. Fruits and veggies as they are in season, flowers, baked goods. Open Tuesdays and Fridays, from mid May to November.

**Shaws** - right down Mass Ave

**Trader Joes** - one on Boylestone, one down past the Hyatt (there's a shuttle)

**Whole Foods** - nearby Trader Joes on the Cambridge side (there's a shuttle)

**H-mart** - Right down Mass Ave

**On Campus Food**
Not on the meal plan? No worries, there are plenty of options for you to grab a quick bite in between classes if you don't feel like cooking in your dorm:

**Cafe 4** - right off the infinite
**Steam Cafe**
**Stata Center Cafe**
**Koch Center Cafe**
**Food Trucks outside medical**
**Food Truck outside building 5**

**Off Campus Foodlers**
**Flour Bakery** - believe it or not there are 5 locations. This is a typical lunch spot for MIT students, however, it isn’t super cheap. But the sticky buns are delicious!

**Clover** (the one on Mass Ave is open 24/7!)

**L.A. Burdick** - 52 Brattle Street, Harvard Square, take the 1 bus or walk. Burdick's hot chocolate is probably the richest, most delicious hot chocolate you’ll ever have. Basically melted chocolate in a cup.

**Cafe Luna** - super cute but small brunch spot a couple of stores down from Toscis. It’s always super popular so make reservations!

**The Friendly Toast** - Kendall Square

**Border Cafe** - Harvard Square

**Thelonius Monkfish** - Central

**Boston Burger Company** - yes it is true, there is one in Harvard Sq now

**Pour House** (½ priced burgers on Saturday nights!) - Boylestone

**Yamato’s** - All you can eat sushi!

**North End** - A bit far, and a bit pricey, but on a random day, just take a trip
drugs and alcohol advice

On Drugs:
Safest option is to simply abstain from drugs/alcohol all together, due to serious health consequences of most drugs (including alcohol), illegality, and the fact that it’s more likely for a person to be vulnerable when under the influence of drugs/alcohol.

On Alcohol:
~Take breaks between drinks/shots (at least 15 mins), keeping in mind that you won’t feel all the effects immediately
~If you’re new to drinking, start slow and learn “your limits,” or more precisely, the effects that different numbers of drinks have on you and when
~Eat and drink hydrating beverages (I recommend water, but it’s probably okay as long as you stay away from tea, coffee, and carbonated things, which are supposed to be diuretics). Do this before, during, and after drinking
~Don’t drink on an empty stomach! Eat some bread or something that will help soak up the alcohol
~Sometimes people don’t “feel” it when they are sitting down. If you’ve been sitting for awhile and feel fine, beware that you might get dizzy when you stand up
~Keep good track of how much alcohol you’re consuming. Make it a priority
~Have a buddy system, especially if you’re drinking at a party with unfamiliar people. It’s good to have someone give you external advice and to help you keep accurate track of how much you consume

Note: 1 drink = 12oz beer = 1/2 oz 80proof liquor = 5oz wine (this is probably pounded into you by now from all the surveys and training you’ve had to take)
~Try to avoid drinking games. If you choose to participate, be especially vigilant of how much you consume. Don’t get drawn into it too much
~Remember that alcohol is not the only way to escape the school mindset and have a good time. For many, doing things like sleeping, hanging out, or exercising have much more positive effects overall
~Trying to keep up with someone isn’t worth it, everyone handles alcohol differently
~If you are at a good level, don’t keep drinking. Being blackout isn’t fun, seriously
Do not be afraid to call for professional medical help. If you even suspect alcohol poisoning might be a possibility, call MIT Police/EMS (617-253-1212). No one will be punished for alcohol consumption/possession. If you can’t remember the number or something, don’t be nervous about calling 911.

Look especially for signs like slurred speech, loss of consciousness, clamminess, coldness, vomiting, confusion, slow breathing, blue-tinged or pale skin.

Note that MIT’s policy states you’re obligated to seek assistance if you suspect overdose/alcohol poisoning. For alcohol and other drugs, it’s unlikely you’ll be severely punished due to drug use/possession as long as you look for medical help for the person at risk.

Remain with the person after you’ve called.

Watch over friends at parties: pay attention to how much alcohol they consume.

The sooner you can help someone out of addiction, the better. See http://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/treatment/what-to-do-if-your-adult-friend-or-loved-one-has-problem-drugs
Or simply ask for help from the people at the Community Development & Substance Abuse office.

Tips for getting people to stop drinking once they’re too drunk already:
Give them a non-alcoholic drink
Subtly try to get them to leave the party
Remove alcohol source
Other advice: http://www.healthyhorns.utexas.edu/alcoholpoisoning_whattodo.html
student discounts

Museums
Free admission to the Museum of Science, Museum of Fine Arts, and the Institute of Contemporary Art with MIT ID
MIT Museum is always free with MIT ID

Shopping
Madewell
J.Crew
Vineyard Vines
Probably a lot more, you just have to ask

Arts
Boston Symphonic Orchestra College Card - $5 for a season pass (go to as many performances as you please!)
   [http://arts.mit.edu/events-visit/boston-symphony-orchestra/]
Tickets alert mailing list - subsidized tickets and museum passes for events like ballet, music, etc
   [Sign up: http://arts.mit.edu/tickets-signup/] or
   [website: http://arts.mit.edu/events-visit/tickets/]
Special discounts at [http://web.mit.edu/mitac/about.html]
Student advantage card [http://www.studentadvantage.com/discountcard/] for discounts on many store websites, such as Target and AMC Theaters
MIT myths

Myth: “MIT is a cutthroat, competitive school, and I am going to fail all of my classes.”
The most competitive part about MIT is getting in. Once you are here, you’ll find that projects and problem sets are best completed through collaboration. Often times, the most efficient (and enjoyable) way to complete assignments is through throwing pset parties and attending office hours. Not only will you have people to endure the journey with, but you will likely find that you learn just as much from passing on your own wisdom as from being taught. MIT can often times be a big scary monster, and the only way to defeat it is through collaboration and teamwork. Make ample use of your professors, TA’s, upperclassmen, and (most importantly!) your own classmates. If you are ever struggling, it’s amazing how much office hours and study groups can help push you back up. With such an amazing web of students and professors and people, it’s hard to fall through and not have the resources to help pick you back up.

Myth: “Everyone at MIT drinks, gambles, and has random sex” and “No one at MIT parties”
These two myths are the extreme opposites of each other, but many students come into MIT believing one or the other. As it so happens, the truth lies somewhere in the middle. MIT is known for having some of the best parties in the Cambridge-Boston area, and our social events attract students from neighboring schools. There are groups of students who seek out the party scene, whether it be themed EC parties or traditional west campus parties. However, MIT students don’t need a drink to be social! On any given weekend, students can be found gathered around a lounge watching Dr. Who, salsa dancing at Fire+Ice, or hacking away at the next big start up. The average MIT student lies somewhere in the middle of the spectrum, and enjoys the variety of social interactions that MIT has to offer.

Myth: “MIT students study 24/7 and have no time for sleep or friends.”
Well, if that were true, we wouldn’t have the time to write this. Not everyone here tools all the time, although it takes some people a couple of months (or years) to figure it out. There are definitely people who choose to tool their days away, but most everyone has a life beyond academics. We’re here at MIT not to cram textbooks into our heads, but to discover our passions (academic and otherwise) and to grow as people. There will be times when we might have to choose between finishing a pset and taking some time for ourselves -- figuring out that work-life balance will be a skill essential to the rest of your life at MIT and beyond. Pro-tip: if it feels like you’re putting too much time into your work, you probably are.

Myth: “Everyone at MIT has their lives figured out.”
It’s true that some people come into MIT with a specific route in mind. However, a good number of students come not knowing what they want to major in, or even changing their minds 1 or 2 times during their stay here. MIT (and college in general) is a great way to discover what you are interested in. It is recommended that you commit to one or two areas before your time here is up, but talking to MIT alum will help you realize that most people have very nonlinear career paths, and what you major in does not decide your career for the rest of your life! That being said, take full advantage of the activity midway, UROPs, and the wide range of classes to help you make informed decisions and EXPLORE. MIT is nothing if not full of opportunity - don’t let it go to waste :) And use the alumni directory!

Myth: “All MIT students are scientists or engineers, and most of them are guys.”
Though many undergrads here tend to choose a science or engineering major, lots choose otherwise. Almost 12% of declared students are non-science and engineering majors. As for the gender stigma, 48% of the class of 2018 is female (http://mitadmissions.org). Check out those numbers!
general (and not so general) tips

1. The reality of MIT is that you're going to work a lot. It's not just a 9-5 job. You're going to work for multiple hours all day, after classes, on the weekends, and on holidays. Don't get lost in the deluge of work! Of course you want to do well, but sleep and friends and food are important as well!

2. If you're coming into MIT undecided it might be in your best interest to take all your GIRs first semester (pushing off your huss h till second semester). This allows for you to take a lighter course load second semester (which many find more stressful) as well as allowing you to take the time and take multiple intro classes if you want too.

3. I don't have anything too profound or original to say - good advice has mostly been covered, I think - but I'll give it the old college try moderation!! Don't rush into things, either. Experiment, but do it with some forethought.

~also, it's a pretty good idea to have a sober person you love babysitting you the first time you trip
~don't go on the meal plan if you're living in ec or sh - lots of money for shitty food in far away places
~if you're pretty drunk, don't smoke pot - you will probably throw up
~don't hook up with someone you're not interested in just because you feel bad - they won't stop following you for the rest of your life, and you will grow guilty and resentful and never stop regretting it
~painting your room is a great way to relax if you're feeling stressed
~don't fall into the habit of using pot as a crutch when you're feeling bad - it gets less and less effective, and you don't want to bury your emotional trauma in any case
~reach out to people who you like - there's no way they won't appreciate the fact that you appreciate them/the fact that you wanna hang out with them
~everybody's going through a lot of the same shit, and a lot of different shit too - make sure your friends know that you're there for them always, your friends will be there for you whenever you need it, understand that you may not be able to understand. be honest.

I mean it: be HONEST. don't be afraid to feel sad when you're sad, angry when you're angry. you should always let people know how you're feeling. have creative outlets: writing, painting, drawing, singing, dancing, instruments, acting

don't freak out about what you're majoring in - you have lots of time to change it, and don't be afraid to. with that said, maybe it's not a terrible idea to start thinking about what you want to do after college. we've only got 4 years here!

approach everything you do and everyone you meet from a place of love and trust.

4. Sleep at least 7.5 hours per night, and keep the number as consistent as possible. You will feel more rested and productive in the long run. DO NOT oversleep on the weekends. Getting an extra 2+ hours of sleep on Saturday and Sunday will ruin your sleeping pattern. It is absolutely possible to sleep an appropriate amount, and don't be afraid of going to sleep early. Your friends will respect your sleep schedule. You don't have to be a night owl at MIT.
general (and not so general) tips cont...

5. Take 6.01, 8.01, and a math class first semester if you have any interest in being course six. 6.01 is an annoying class that is a whole lot less stressful if you don't need to worry about grades, while 8.01 and the math class are super important progression wise. Bio and chem can wait.

-Always attempt to make it to the toilet when drinking. A trash can is an okay substitute, but in general the toilet makes cleanup so easy, while a trash can is still a mess the next day.

-The spins happen when you lay down to go to bed for the night after drinking a lot. If you start getting the spins, they usually do not go away, they usually get worse and worse until you puke. If you start getting the spins, stand up. If you are still getting the spins, start walking down the hallway. If you still have the spins while walking, just go to the toilet. If you still try and fall asleep with the spins, bring a trashcan next to your bed, you'll likely need it.

-Puking should never be the goal. If you're hunched over a trash can or a toilet, you should seriously reflect on the life choices that got you to this point. However, if you feel like puking, it is okay to do it. It's your body's way of telling you that you messed up. Remember the shitty feeling and don't go that hard again.

-I always recommend waiting 15 minutes before taking your next shot/drink. It's amazing how much 2 shots can sneak up on you.

6. Try everything. Some things you can only experience once.

7. Having sex with someone will not make them fall in love with you.

You're allowed (and encouraged) to have a life outside of class, just because your friends are psetting on a Friday night doesn't mean you have to.

Your health - both mental and physical - comes before your grades. If you're feeling sick, sometimes it's much better to get an extension and rest for a day than pushing yourself past your limits. Your professors (for the most part) are people too and they will understand.

In 10 years that F on your 8.01 exam will not matter :)

Take advantage of the opportunities MIT has to offer! That said, extracurricular activities should be fun and an opportunity for you to explore your interests, so don't feel like you need to join every club or have a UROP every semester if it's stressing you out. If you don't like something, don't do it. Change majors. Switch living groups. Join a sorority or quit your sorority. Quit your UROP and get a new one in a field you're interested in. That's the beauty of MIT! There are so many options that you should never be stuck doing something you don't enjoy :) Talk to upperclassmen! They love talking about themselves and are more than happy to give advice. They will not judge you if you think you have a silly idea for a club or a research project, they'll support you and help you be successful and happy. Just because your friends are drinking, smoking, etc. doesn't mean that you have to. The opposite is also true - if your friends don't drink or do drugs, that doesn't make you a bad person for wanting to try it. Just make sure you're safe! Explore Boston -- it's a beautiful city and it's right next door! It only takes 10 minutes to get downtown on the T.
general (and not so general) tips cont...

8. It is very important to take all of these tips with a pinch of salt — what works for someone else will not necessarily work for you.

9. 1. don't worry about gaining the freshman 15, just make sure you eat enough vegetables. healthy >> skinny
   2. VPR and SDS are the only departments you can go to for help that are actually helpful. S^3 is hit or miss.
   3. don't mix different liquors in the same night. don't take tequila shots unless you actually like tequila.
   4. do at least a semester of at least one performance group (theater, dance, music, something that puts you in front of an audience)

10. Create google calendars with your friends and share/link them to each other, whenever one of you finds out about something interesting going on, or some impending submission deadline (classes, drop form, PE, internship opportunity) then they put it on their calendar and it automatically shows up in your google calendar. Also get google calendar.

In the beginning of the year, try to say yes to as many opportunities to get off campus as possible, because you get too busy later on.

As much as there's a general -enjoy PNR- sentiment the first semester, it is the only chance you'll get to see exactly how far you can take your loafing/partying while still maintaining the standard of excellence that you want for the next four years. So for at least part of it, try to keep focus high; and then slowly test how much drinking/partying you can bring in before your studies suffer. And if you overshoot your capabilities, it doesn't matter because PNR!

Actually ask your advisor about research and internship opportunities, they have connections and know about random things that other students might not have known to tell you about. Go to those 'Meet the professor/faculty of the XX department' things, the professors tend to be adorable people who will then wave to you in the infinite later and potentially hook you up with cool TA/grader/research positions.

Share instacart orders with friends to save on delivery; and make sure to maximize distribution of your 'first time user' codes (make some money). Same thing with Uber/Lyft.

Keep taking PE classes. Take them on Saturdays if they don't fit your schedule. Physical exercise is such a real de-stressor. Find new ones. Not just something you're already good at, but something that you want to be good at (sometimes your pride takes a beating but you come out with a dope new skill).

11. The Cheney Room (3-310) to be very nice, but little known spot for studying. It is a nice cozy space and not many people go there, so you can grab a few pillows, choose the spot you want -- the blackboard? the window? the bar-like table with a great, strong lamp? you choose! Besides, the Cheney Room is a women-only space so you can get much more comfortable than you would otherwise. They have a kitchen, too, so you can bring food with you and warm it up when you feel like it.

The only thing is, the Cheney Room is a card-access room. You will need to have them register your MITID so the card reader recognises it. You can email them about that, but if you have the time, I advise you to go to one of their events, where you can also have some delicious food and meet new people.

Know the difference between a pot and a pan. Don't microwave metal. Don't burn your food. Don't cut yourself with a knife, vegetable peeler, or cheese grater - the latter two are actually more dangerous than knives.

Don't stick plastic in the oven. Once, some guys from Maseeh almost put a frozen pizza in the oven without removing the wrapping or putting it on a baking sheet. Please read the packaging instructions very carefully...

13. Try to get to know the people around you. Everyone is amazing in their own way and you're missing out if you let these opportunities to develop relationships with others to slip away.

Also free food is great! But don't stuff yourself or eat JUST BECAUSE IT'S FREE! It's better to save it for later if you're already full. (hehehe carry tupperware)

Sleeping is important. Balancing things--clubs, work, classes, relationships, personal responsibilities--is hard. But it's doable. Use P/NR to learn more about your limits!

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF P/NR. Do things you thought you would never do.

Sometimes, you might wonder what you're doing at MIT. At that point, try to find what really makes you tick. Think about what you care about. Think about what resources you have here, the people you're surrounded by. Then, just embrace it all.

GET ICE CREAM! Really, ice cream makes everything better.

Calendars are your friend.

It's easy to overload yourself, but your health (mental and emotional) should be your priority. Make time to take care of yourself and spend time with your friends.

Get INVOLVED. Find at least one community in which you feel at home.

14. If you've never drank before, take it easy. I remember the first time I drank (granted this was in high school) started really fun and ended not so fun. I had the equivalent of a solo cup of vodka within 1 hour and a few hours later when I was leaving, all I could do was throw up out the car window. No one wants to end the night throwing up or spend a long time with their head hanging over the toilet. Start with a few drinks (read: 1 or 2) and then walk around and talk to people. Not only does alcohol take a little while to start affecting you, its easy to not feel drinks and end up over drinking if you're stationary. About 30 minutes later when you start to feel the effects (or not) you can make the decision to drink more (or not) and that way enjoy your whole night.
For rushing, choose a hall based on the people there and the culture of that hall. Talk to current hall members, get to know them, learn about what is and is not acceptable in that community, identify what you like and don’t like about a community. Don’t choose a hall simply because it seems like a “party” or a “popular” hall, all halls have a unique culture and are best suited for different people. If you like having a quiet week and then going HAM on the weekend, don’t choose a loud, party hall; choose a quiet hall. You can always go to another location to party, but it’s much harder to avoid the noise if you live where the party is.

Don’t feel like you have to do all of the things you didn’t do in high school within the first week. You have 4 years to try new things, don’t blow your load too quickly. Realize that some people may have had a wilder high school experience and others a tamer one, that doesn’t mean you have to catch up to the people who had a wilder one. Take things at your pace. You do you, boo. It’s ok to stay home on the weekends watching Netflix instead of going out. It’s ok to take a break from school work. If you’ve been working on the same p-set for hours, take a short break to gather yourself and de-stress a little bit.

15.
- There are washers and dryers in (almost?) every dorm. They take techcash. Google "mit techcash" to put some on your ID. Don’t do what I did and spend a few weeks acquiring quarters from various Student Center establishments.
- Don’t ignore letters at the beginning of building numbers. 16 and W16 are profoundly Not The Same.
- You probably don’t need the textbook.
- Star Market is a few blocks north up Mass Ave (away from the river), left onto Landsdowne, right onto Green.
- Get Amazon Prime free with your MIT email. Uncheck automatic renewal. When it runs out, make a mailing list with only you on it and make a new account. (Google MIT Moira for stuff about mailing lists.)
- Getting up early for ASEs sucks, but it’s a whole lot easier than taking an unnecessary class. Don’t be lazy (like I was).
- Learn the tunnels, and don’t be scared off if it feels like you’re not supposed to be there. If you didn’t go through a locked door or past a sign saying "don’t go in here", you’re fine.
- If you live around MacG/New/Next, get a raincoat, your umbrella won’t make it that far.
- During rush, you’re not underqualified to live anywhere. It’s not about the stereotype you are, it’s about the stereotype you want to be. Dream big.

16. "Take bio on Pass/No Record. That is all."

17. How to Get a UROP:

I once received a question on tumblr, which was from another MIT freshman asking how to get a UROP. Although we’re told we’re "guaranteed" one, nobody initially indicated to me a formal process to go about getting one, so here’s what I put together, from experience!
Below is just the copy/paste of the tumblr question and response.
Anonymous asked:
Hi Selam! Would you happen to have any tips on how to find a UROP? I'm also a freshman at MIT and happened to stumble upon your lovely blog through Lydia's post. I don't have any prior research experience and was wondering if you would have any advice on how to get started. Thanks a ton!

Answer:

Why hello there, fellow student~

Honestly, a lot of people I know just sort of stumble upon UROPs (which is exactly what I did). In my case there was a grad student in my Chinese class who mentioned her work one day and simultaneously mentioned that she was in need of help—so I offered to UROP!

As for formally going about looking for a UROP, I would just email as many people as you can. It’s kind of like a job hunt—you send out a ton of emails and get a couple back, but don’t worry, eventually you’ll find something. Look for labs that have research you like, and don’t limit yourself to the UROP page—find any MIT labs that you can just by searching on the internet that might have work you interested. In your email, present yourself as an enthusiastic, willing to learn freshman, and list any relevant skills you might have, or a resume.

If you are having trouble, you can always ask your GRTs! I personally find them a great resource; I love my GRTs in Simmons. You can also ask upperclassmen—they’re much more experienced at this than any of the freshman are really. You could also email your advisor or associate advisor for help. For help crafting a resume, the MIT GECD office is also a great place!

If you’re still really at a loss, go to the UROP office in person and ask for help. If you don’t feel comfortable doing that, you could even just go to the student life office, people pop in and out of there all the time so it won’t be awkward.

I don’t have much experience with UROPs, but I have lots of experience asking for help! I was actually about to do exactly all of those things until my own UROP just sort of serendipitously landed on my head. But if you really want a UROP soon, I’d go ahead and try something from that list of options! There’s a lot of great places and people to get help from, but sometimes we get caught up in the moment and forget that.

Good Luck!!

—selam

P.S. Don’t worry about lack of experience! As I said, present yourself as an enthusiastic, ready-to-learn-new-things freshman. As freshman, we carry a special asset of our own: since we’re brand new, if they train us now and we stay at the lab, the lab could possibly have a dedicated staff member for a whole four years or so if we like them enough! That’s a good bonus!
resources/contact info/where to get help

Emergency:
Campus Police/EMS........................................................................................................617-253-1212 or dial 100 on campus
MIT Medical Urgent Care................................................................................................617-253-4481
When in doubt................................................................................................................911

General
Dean on Call via campus police.......................................................................................617-253-1212, nights/weekends
S^3.................................................................................................................................617-253-4861
Academic help if you're sick/stressed/not well in any way (physically or emotionally) and need excused assignments/delayed exams/more accommodations as well as roommate struggles (also consult your dorm's rooming chairs)
  Call for appointments or questions
  Hours: Monday through Friday, 9am - 5pm
  Walk-in: Monday through Friday, 9am - 10am
Community Wellness......................................................................................................https://medical.mit.edu/services/community-wellness

Mental Health:
MIT Mental Health and Counseling walk-in hours.........................................................617-253-2916 M-F, 2p - 4p
MIT Mental Health and Counseling Clinician on Call...................................................617-253-4481, nights/weekends
National Suicide Prevention Hotline..............................................................................1 (800) 273-8255 [English and Spanish]
Hopeline.........................................................................................................................1 800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

Sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking, sexual harassment
VPR for interpersonal violence prevention and survivor support.......................................617-253-2300 M-F, 9a–5p
Boston Area Rape Crisis 24-hour hotline........................................................................800-841-8371

Substances:
National Drug Information Treatment and Referral Hotline...........................................800-662-HELP (4357)
  24/7 information, support, treatment options and referrals to local rehab centers for any drug or alcohol problem
Poison Control................................................................................................................800-222-1222
Poison Control for any Kind of Substance.....................................................................800-662-9886

Transportation:
SafeRide
  6 PM to 2:30 AM Sunday through Wednesday
  6 PM to 3:30 AM Thursday through Saturday
  Saferide manager can be reached at 617-253-2997 during the above hours
Cab.................................................................................................................................617-782-5500
  For immediate dispatch, future time calls, package delivery.................................617-536-5010 or 617-262-CABS (2227)
Uber or Lyft apps can call you a cab on demand from a mobile app