



J. Arthur's Cookbook

WRITTEN BY : *the accumulated wisdom of Randomites*

For the Class of 2014

J. Arthur's Cookbook

The Nice and Accurate Advices of J. Arthur Random, Dorm

1 Prelude

Welcome to MIT! Welcome to Random Hall! And all that other stuff. Anyway, there are a lot of useful things to know when living at MIT, and while we considered letting you all figure it out for yourself, a bunch of helpful upperclassmen decided to be nice and give you all a heads up on surviving the 'tvte (hah, don't worry: it'll still eat you alive—we're just trying to make it as painless as possible). Anyway, enjoy! And if you have any questions that aren't answered in this booklet, don't hesitate to ask an upperclassman. Even the ones that bite like to be helpful.

2 Health

MIT MEDICAL

If you get sick, you should go to MIT Medical. If you imbibe too much of certain substances, and are getting sick from it, you should go to MIT Medical (don't worry; MIT Medical has a policy of not asking any tricky questions if these situations happen to arise and you don't need to worry about getting in trouble with authorities). If it's an emergency, you can dial 100 (from on campus) or dial 617-253-1212 from any non-campus phone. (You may even want to save that number on your cellphone.) This will bring the MIT ambulance, which is free and can take you to MIT Medical (which has a nurse on duty and a doctor on call all night, and which for many things is free for students). Do not call a non-MIT ambulance, as they are very expensive and have to take you to Mass General, which has a multi-hour wait for the emergency room and is also expensive.

If you call the MIT ambulance, but a different ambulance shows up, they will take you to a hospital instead of MIT Medical. They will also send you a huge bill. However, if you called the MIT ambulance and they *could* have transported you, but didn't, then you can get MIT to pay for the ambulance bill. Also, if you need to get to Medical or a hospital, can't quite get there on your own, but don't need urgent medical attention, calling a taxi or asking a GRT/housemaster to drive you is fine.

mcgreedy, zev

MEDLINKS

There are people known as Medlinks in every dorm. If you have something mild, like a cut or a stomach ache, they are trained so that they know what to do for it. (In fact, YOU can get trained to be a Medlink, too!) They are

awesome and helpful people, and you should find out who your local Medlinks are and go to them when necessary.

mcreedy

MENTAL HEALTH

Just like with physical health, if you let your mental health get run down, it will have a major adverse effect on your classes. So if you start feeling stressed out, or having trouble sleeping, or having any other problem that is getting in the way of studying (or doing the things that keep you from cracking from all the studying), then get in touch with the MIT mental health center. Or even just talk with the people you live with, if you think that will help. People here are really understanding about it—we pretty much all go through it at some point—so go ahead and deal with any problems that come up instead of trying to pretend/ignore them away. Ignoring them or pretending they're not there often just make them worse, so better to deal with them right away.

To get in touch with the mental health center, call 617-253-2916 (or 32916 from any campus phone), and you can call this number at any time. Their offices are in E23, the entire second floor. In particular, you can contact Zan Barry at 617-253-3546 (or 33546 on campus phones) or at bars@med.mit.edu, and her office is E23-205.

mcreedy

MISC.

Find a multivitamin you like and take it daily. It's amazing how much of a difference that can make on your health when you're stressed and otherwise not caring for yourself properly. This goes double for vitamin C, which protects your immune system. Vitamin C can help kill a sickness when it comes on. Be careful, though: some people just chug 20+ tablets when they get sick and then they throw up neon-colored vomit. Oh, and they are still sick. So, take one daily; prevent the pain. Also keep in mind that a healthful diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables can go a long way for keeping you healthy.

mcreedy, ekate, alcor

3 Academics

CONFlict EXAMS

If you have multiple exams scheduled for the same time, you can move one of them. You can look up what you need to do here:

<http://web.mit.edu/registrar/www/schedules/conf.html>

Another useful thing that many people don't know is that some professors will count three exams in a row to be a conflict. They aren't required to do so, but if you have three exams in a row and are feeling stressed out, talk to your professors and you are likely to be able to get one of them moved!

mcreeedy

SWITCHING CLASSES

If you're interested in adding or dropping a class, the forms are outside the Student Services Center, near the main stairway in building 7. They're only available during normal hours, however. The same form covers adding, dropping, and changing classes (but not changing recitations, that you have to do through the class). If you want to ADD a class, the sheet must be signed by the professor of the class and your advisor, unless it is the first week of the class, in which case you only need your advisor's signature. If you want to DROP a class, the sheet must be signed by your advisor. It is highly recommended that you inform both your advisor and the professor of the class of what you plan to do, regardless of which is the one that signs your sheet.

mcreeedy, kchen

PASS/NO RECORD (AKA THE.BEST.THING.EVER)

For your first semester, you are on pass/no record. That means that if you pass, your letter grade doesn't matter, and if you don't, no one ever knows! (Except med schools, but if you're not a pre-med then you don't need to worry about it.) So this means you can party all night and never study! ...Actually, NO. What this /is/ good for is that you can build good study habits, get enough sleep, and try out a ton of activities (to pick out which ones you will stick with) but you won't have to worry if you do a little too much. Don't wait until the last minute to study, though, even if you'll still pass with a C. Because then next semester, when you have actual grades, you'll have bad study skills and you won't even know the material that's the basis for your classes.

As a corollary to this—Try out tons of activities. Some that sound cool take tons of time, and others that may sound only so-so turn out to be tons of fun with low time commitment. So your first semester is a good time to try out anything you think you'll like, so that later you know which ones you actually want to participate in.

mcreeedy

BOOK EXCHANGES

There are several good places to get discounted books. APO runs an exchange every year in the student center, with the books also listed online at <http://apo.mit.edu/bookex/>. You can also check bookX.mit.edu and www.mit412.com. The following link in the Tech from a year ago lists multiple different places that offer book selling and exchanging:
<http://www-tech.mit.edu/V127/N35/booktable.html>

mcreeedy

IAP (OFFICIALLY KNOWN AS INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES PERIOD; ALTERNATIVELY: INFINITELY AWESOME PERIOD)

The Independent Activities Period (also known to some as the Infinite Activities Period since it is infinitely long and you can do *all those things that*

you've been meaning to do over term!) is a small mini-semester that we receive in the month of January. You can take up to 12 credits worth of classes, but this time is also great for enjoying all the aspects of MIT that you're too busy for during term. There are also PE classes available during IAP, to help get your four PE classes done. When you start getting more classes per term, it'll be harder to fit them in, so take advantage of the fact that you can take multiple PE classes during IAP. Also, many fun events and talks take place during January; for example, MIT's Mystery Hunt (one of the biggest puzzle hunts in the world) runs every January during MLK weekend. If you look around—and you don't have to look hard—there is a whole slew of activities going on during this month, such as the Assassins Guild Ten Day (a 10 day long live action role playing game). IAP is also a great time to work on a UROP or even just to relax and work on private projects for a whole month.

mcready, catherio

PE CLASSES

You have to take four PE classes as part of the GIRs. This sounds easy (and fun!) but becomes significantly more challenging in later years, when schedules get very full. PE classes use a first-come-first-serve registration process, so you should find what PE classes you want to take before registration begins. This year, registration begins September 14.

If you forget to register, or want to switch PEs, show up early for the class you want to switch into. If the instructor has room, he/she will probably let you join, and then you can just attend the first class as normal. Make sure you don't skip a PE, though, because many classes require attendance the first day for safety training.

Also, if you have trouble or think you may have trouble fitting in your PEs, you can take as many PE classes as you want over IAP. This is generally a great idea to get a few out of the way, since you'll have more time anyway.

mcready

EARLY SOPHOMORE STANDING

To be eligible for sophomore standing, you need to have completed 25% of the undergraduate requirements. That pretty much equates to having taken 4 of the GIRs, and at least 1 CI HASS and having at least 96 units by the end of your first semester. If you have satisfied all of the requirements, you will get a letter some time before second semester telling you that you've qualified, and you will have to decide whether you want to accept. If you accept, the Institute now thinks you're a sophomore and you are one semester ahead of your peers (don't worry, this doesn't mean you have to leave a semester early, too). This means that you are no longer on the credit limit, your second semester is the full-fledged ABCDF grading rather than the typical ABC/no record that second semester freshmen get, and you will get to declare your major a semester early (which also means you get your major advisor in place of your freshman advisor). Before taking this opportunity up right away, though, give it some thought: why do you

want to be a sophomore a semester early? If you want to take more classes over the credit limit, consider how busy you felt the previous semester. Remember: MIT is hard. And it is really easy to overload yourself if you are not careful and take too big of a workload. The average number of classes taken per term is four, so you are not behind if you adhere to the freshman credit limit. Don't hesitate to talk to upperclassmen and your advisors before making this decision.

shawest, catherio, mats_a

CAN HASS CLASSES?

Every HASS class will now be in one of 3 groups—humanities, arts, and social sciences. I believe which group any class is part of has been added to the course catalog. All students must take at least 1 class in each of those 3 groups. Like with HASS-Ds before this system, one of those classes may also count towards a student's concentration. 8 total HASS classes and a concentration are still required.

If you see a HASS class labeled HASS-D, you have to enter a lottery to take it. HASS-D is part of the old HASS distribution system that no longer applies to the incoming classes, but since the sizes of these classes are limited, everyone who wants to take one must still enter a lottery.

Information about the HASS requirements can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/hassreq>

codetaku, starg

CHOOSING CLASSES

A useful utility when trying to arrange your schedule for next term is the websis application you find on the course catalogue. Look up a class from this site: <http://web.mit.edu/catalog/subjects.html> and find a class you want to take. If you click the icon next to the class (a leaf if it is Fall term, a flower if it is Spring, a snowflake if it is IAP, and a sun if it is Summer) and it will list the class under the “my selections” link and map the class out on a schedule so you can see how it fits with all of your other classes—it saves your selections so you can view several at once. Alternatively, you can use the MIT Course Picker at <http://picker.mit.edu/> to map out your schedule. Picker is often more useful because it includes lab and recitation sections, whereas Websis doesn't. However, Picker occasionally misses classes that are on the MIT course catalogue.

catherio, mats_a, shawest

COURSE EVALUATIONS

When choosing courses, it might be useful to have a look at the course evaluations to see what reputations classes have. Course evaluations can be found at <https://web.mit.edu/acadinfo/sse/courses/course#.html>—where # is the number of the major you are looking for (e.g. if you want evaluations for 8.044, # would be 8). Additionally, course 6 classes are also evaluated in $\eta\kappa\nu$'s Underground Guide to Course 6, which can be found at <https://sixweb.mit.edu>.

While course evaluations are a useful gauge to get a feel for a class, remember not to take them as dogma; poor reviews one semester might mean the professor was just having a poor term and good reviews another semester might just mean the professor released nitrous oxide into the air during lecture.

catherio, shawest

SWITCHING RECITATION SECTIONS

If you don't like your recitation instructor, visit other recitations until you find someone you like better and ask if you can switch, since you often can (but not always). It is also often okay to go to a different TA's recitation section, although you might want to talk to both TAs before doing so.

Switching recitation section is something you should not underestimate. TAs vary, and while most of them try to do a good job, some people are naturally better at teaching than others or having teaching styles that suit you better. In some classes, most of the explanations occur in recitation. If you find yourself in such a situation where much of the material is taught in recitation and your TA just isn't getting it through to you, switch recitations ASAP.

catherio, mcreedy, danyuan

OFFICE HOURS

You can go to office hours even if you're not falling behind or having trouble. You can go to office hours to work even if you don't have specific questions for your prof. You can go to any TA's office hours, not just yours, which is useful if you can't make your TA's office hours.

catherio

4 Food & Money

TECHCASH

This may not be wonderful for everyone, but it's a useful tool. You can add money to your MIT ID card, and then use it like a debit card for many locations on campus. Currently, the main way to do this is via deducting the money from your Bursar's Account (the same one you pay off tuition through). You can do this online, but there is a fee. You can do it for free at the Card Offices in the basement of the Student Center (W20). As long as you pay off the amount on the Bursar's Account by the next pay date after it shows up, you don't get charged interest.

Account balances are carried over from semester to semester and year to year. MIT reserves the right to cancel any account not used for a 120-day period. If an account is not used for 4 months, it will be cancelled. If it has less than \$10 then MIT will take it without warning and refuse to return it; otherwise excess funds will be mailed as checks to your home address.

mcreedy, mats_a, kchen

FINDING FOOD & RESTAURANTS AND THE WHATNOT

Finding food can be a little confusing when you first get to MIT. If you are living in a dorm with a cafeteria, find out the hours so you know when it's open. People in dorms with cafeterias have already paid approximately half of the cost of buying every dinner in the cafeteria, so go ahead and use it. The Student Center has multiple restaurants in it, and LaVerdes tends to be open late. MacGregor also has a convenience store that's open until 2am, and you can get in without passing into the locked part of the dorm. Star Market, up by Random, is a full grocery store. Kendall Square also has restaurants for people living at EC and Senior Haus, and Stata has a pretty good cafeteria. Additionally, the How To Get Around MIT book that you got when you first arrived has a listing of restaurants in the area, if you're interested in going on an adventure to eat out.

mcreeedy

GETTING GROCERIES

Other places to get good food include Trader Joes (there is one across the bridge and one up Memorial Drive). It is often cheaper than Star and has better quality food, but is a bit of a walk. Haymarket, on the orange line, is a place to get cheap vegetables and fruit in warm weather, but it is really far away. Closer to home, there is the Produce Stand at EC which operates on Tuesdays. It is a fairly new initiative—and much better than most MIT dining ideas. Check it out. There is also a Whole Foods down Mass Ave (off River Street, near Central). It's a decent walk farther than Star, but it has quark cheese. A closer option than Whole Foods (but still a bit farther than Star) is Harvest in Central Square.

Another option is the farmer's market that is open April–October Monday afternoons in the backside of the Harvest Coop. Additionally, Red Fire Farm (redfirefarm.com) has an excellent CSA program where you can buy a season-long share in February or March and then get a lot of fresh, organic veggies every week for the summer and fall months.

ekate, sweettea, alcorth

5 Email and Computing

EMAIL CLIENTS

Instead of using webmail to check your MIT email all the time, you have several options which will probably be more convenient for you. You can download and set up a traditional email client such as Outlook, Thunderbird, or Evolution; you can use a command line email client such as Pine; you can set up a Gmail account to access your MIT email account; or you can set up “split forwarding,” having your MIT IMAP inbox retain a copy of each received email while forwarding a copy of the email to whatever other account you want—you can set this up

with the command “chpobox -S foo@bar.com” (for more details, you can find instructions at <http://kb.mit.edu/confluence/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=3907262> under section 2b).

mats.a, catherio, ekate, austein, shawest

MAILING LISTS

If you are on a mailing list and would like to remove yourself, at an Athena computer, in the prompt line (where it says %athena), type “blanche -d yourusername listname” (listname = the name of the list you want off of, yourusername = your user name >_>). If you want to be added to a public mailing list, instead type “blanche -a yourusername listname”. You can also use the site <https://webmoira.mit.edu/> to look up info about Moira lists and add or remove yourself; doing so requires certificates, however. Some lists are moderated, and you can only get on by contacting the moderator(s). In this case, look up the list moderators online, and then e-mail ONLY THE MODERATORS in order to get added. You can find who the administrators are by going to the moira website (mentioned above), clicking the button to “display list characteristics”, entering the name of the list in the “enter a list name” box, and pressing “Go.”

mcreedy

SPAM & FLAME WARS (HINT: THE TWO ARE CAUSALLY RELATED)

Students at MIT tend to not be very tolerant of spamming, and it is generally considered a huge social *faux pas* to do so. In the past, students (mostly frosh) spamming all of the dorm mailing lists has blown up into some really large—and somewhat ugly—flame wars (many of which end up reaching several hundred emails). Just ask any upperclassmen about the infamous Pledge Pin Flame War of '07. Do not spam any set of lists that includes most of campus, for that matter. Keep e-mails to lists relevant to the list; you can send info about chocolate events/news articles/shops to the Chocolatiers list (if they're interesting), but not to the LSC list. And if you want off of a mailing list, don't spam that list. Most people on it can't help you; see MAILING LISTS for how to get yourself on and off mailing lists. Yes, even if you lost something important; see LOSING THINGS for where to look for stuff you lost. Also, train yourself so that by default you use “reply,” not “reply-all.”

If for some reason you do find it necessary to email a large number of dorm lists (or any large group of lists, really) it is often a good idea to BCC the lists, rather than list them all in the To: or CC field. Every address listed under BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) receives a copy of the email but will not appear to the other recipients. This is a good way of stopping flame wars before they get started, since you can't reply-all with a flame to a large group of lists when you can't see the set of lists the original email was sent to.

mcreedy, alcorth

USEFUL MAILINGLISTS

- **Reuse:** People post to reuse whenever they have stuff that they are giving away, ranging from clothes and Christmas lights to decent computer hardware and microwaves. You can get on reuse by mailman, but be prepared to set up a filter for the incoming flood.
- **Free-food:** Similarly, you can get on Free-food, which will notify you about free food left at MIT—often large quantities left over from events and the like.

ekate

ATHENA

Helpful hint: Learn to use Athena. To do this, check out SIPB's documents. You can find them at <http://sipb.mit.edu/>

To log in remotely, type “ssh yourusername@linerva.mit.edu” into a terminal (if you run Windows, it will be useful to use an ssh client such as PuTTY). You have webspace in your ~/www folder which maps to <http://www.mit.edu/~username/>; this can only host static content. To host an actual website, look at scripts.mit.edu for ways SIPB has made it easy to host dynamic websites and prepackaged content (like wordpress). You can also use Athena to change your mailing lists. You can also run Debathena on your very own computer to access the Power of Athena from the safety and comfort of your own computer.

To transfer files between your home computer and Athena, you can use the scp command if you run Linux or Mac, or use an sftp client such as SecureFX from MIT's software download page if you run Windows.

ekate, mats_a, gdb

6 Living Groups

FSILGs

Go check out some events for Frat Rush! Even if you don't plan to pledge a fraternity (or are a girl), as long as you have a freshman guy with you (or are a cute girl) the frats are quite happy to have you come visit. Bigger events make them look more attractive to prospective pledges. And many of the frats spend between \$20,000 and \$30,000 dollars on the two weeks of rush. No, I didn't misplace a zero there. So take full advantage of it!

mcreedy

7 Transportation

MONTHLY T PASSES

You can get a monthly T-pass for half its regular price (\$29.50 instead of \$59) at: <http://web.mit.edu/facilities/transportation/tpass.html>. Note that

you should apply for “Link Pass” and that the deadline is a few weeks before the month actually starts. If you would like a pass but it’s already past the deadline, you can go into the transportation office in the basement of the student center to pick up one of the 100ish extra monthly passes. These run out quickly in the last week prior to the start of the month. Call the office for more information.

haoqili

Bus Routes

It is worth noting that the 64 and the 70 both stop at University Park (right behind Shaw’s), so you can go to Watertown and Brighton/Allston without having to walk any.

sweettea

8 Help

Student Support Services (or S³)

The Student Support Services office is in charge of being YOUR advocate should anything come up that is interfering with your work. These are the people who give sick notes, mental health notes, excuse you from class for family emergencies, and so on. If something comes up and you just can’t finish a Pset, or have to miss a test, they’re the ones who can get a makeup exam for you, or get an extension on the Pset, or get the grade removed (so you’d have one less Pset grade for the semester). Furthermore, they can do so for ANY class, even if the professor says he never gives extensions or makeup exams; if they decide you have a solid reason, the professor doesn’t get a say. You DO have to give them a reason, but they’re pretty understanding about most things that come up. Just stop by or call them to make an appointment; if it’s urgent, GRTs and housemasters can help.

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Dean on Call

For major emergencies in the middle of the night, MIT has a dean on-call at all hours. If something comes up between 5pm and 7am, then you should dial 100 from any campus phone. Ask for the dean on call, and you’ll be rerouted to one of several people who can help you.

Note that this is particularly for major emergencies. If you have a problem that you just want to talk with someone about, or ask advice, you can call Nightline. Nightline is a hotline that is staffed all night by students, specifically for people who just need someone to talk to in the middle of the night. You can reach them by calling 38800 on any campus phone, and they will be happy to talk with you no matter the reason you called.

mcreedy

GRTs, HOUSEMASTERS, ADVISORS, ET AL

Your GRTs, housemasters, and advisors are all here to help you. No really. If you have ANY problems, of ANY type, get in touch with them. They will get you whatever help you need, without asking questions; that is, in fact, their job. So if you have a problem you need help with, no matter what it is, go to one of them before it becomes a bigger problem.

mcreeedy

LOSING THINGS

If you lost your ID Card, check the Card Services office. They keep lost cards that are brought to them. If you find a lost ID card you should take it there. If you lose anything else, check with the MIT police. They keep a lost and found in their station. A list of found things can be found on their website, and you can even post things you lost so they can get in touch with you if it's found.

mcreeedy

9 Random Specifics

MAILING LISTS

You can get a list of Random Hall-related mailing lists by checking out random-hall-list-of-lists (just type “blanche random-hall-list-of-lists”). Many of these lists aren’t in common use any more, and the list is rather extensive, so here are three of the more useful ones to know:

- **random-hall:** This list is only used for official Random Hall business. You shouldn’t send mail here unless you know otherwise
- **random-hall-talk or r-h-t:** This is the dorm’s social mailing list. If you want to organize a food mob, say something to the residents of the dorm and people who hang out here, or anything of a similar nature you can send it to this list. r-h-t is an alias of random-hall-talk.
- **random-desk:** If you have a message you need to get to the desk workers, send it here

There are plenty of other mailing lists that are fun to know about, so keep your eyes peeled and don’t hesitate to ask upperclassmen about some of their favorite lists.

keach, mats_a, shawest, ekate

THE FRONT DESK

You’ve probably noticed the friendly front desk worker who lets you into the dorm if you enter on the 290 side.

Desk is open from 0800-2400 on Sundays through Thursdays 0800-2600 (2am) Fridays and Saturdays.

Desk provides useful services that you can check out, including DVDs, vacuums, the i3 camera, and trunk room, shop, and EE lab keys. If you lock yourself out of your room or misplace one of your keys, you can also check another key out from desk temporarily. Most of these services require some form of valid ID (a student ID or drivers license, or any similar thing with your name and a picture of your face on it), although some will also ask for a dollar in collateral.

pkoms, shawest

SODAFRIDGE

You may have noticed that big locked fridge in Foo (the one right behind desk, not the one in the kitchen—that belongs to the resident of Foo). That is sodafridge. It contains soda and non-soda drinks as well as non-drinks such as ice cream bars and candy bars. You should check it out some time to see what it has. You can get the key from the desk worker and when you find something you want to buy, give the desk worker the money or ask the desk worker to take the money off your tab (if you don't have a tab yet, ask the desk worker to make one for you).

keach, shawest

RECYCLING

You see those big blue plastic containers throughout the dorm? The ones labeled for recycling? Surprisingly, those are for recycling. Random now has single-stream recycling, so all recyclables can be thrown together, which simplifies things quite a bit. Also of note: things that are oily, greasy, waxy, or foody are not recyclable—even if they are made of an ordinarily recyclable material. This means no pizza boxes or popcorn bags, for example.

jhamon, shawest, alcor

VISITNG RELATIVES

Parents usually like to visit at the same time as all the other parents (beginning of the year, graduation..). This makes the hotel rooms more expensive. For some people from other parts of the country (like me), the normal rates are already expensive.

There is this awesome bed and breakfast right across from the Central Square Whole Foods called Prospect Place. It's in a *great* location, relatively cheap (rooms start at \$140/night), and super nice. Wifi, yummy breakfast, victorian furnishings, big rooms, and a nice owner. You can find more information about it at <http://www.prospectpl.com/>

Another bed and breakfast in the area is Whitman House. They exist to make money for the nonprofit Search For Cure. They are also conveniently located near Central Square. Rooms start at \$130/night. More information can be found at <http://www.whitmanhouseinn.com/>

kimfad