MIT Women’s Volleyball Club FAQ

What’s Women’s Volleyball Club all about?
The club exists primarily to fill a void that exists for many players at MIT. The average player has no options for competitive volleyball here at MIT. At one end of the spectrum is varsity volleyball, which is a fantastic program but restricted to undergrafs, highly selective and very time-intensive. At the other end of the spectrum are PE classes, intramurals and other volleyball playing organizations (usually student groups like Euroclub or Korean Students Association), which are open to more members of the MIT community but geared towards recreation and not competition.

WVC provides an option for players who are interested in learning how to play volleyball at competitive levels. We have four goals: teach people the basic individual skills they need to compete; teach players how to play in an organized team setting; provide players an opportunity to play competitively; provide advanced players an opportunity to challenge themselves at high levels of competitive play.

Who is eligible to play?
In order to join the club team, practice regularly and go to tournaments, you need to be an MIT affiliate and have a valid athletic card for the MIT facilities. The Club Sports Council defines an MIT affiliate as an “MIT undergraduate or graduate student, alumni, faculty or staff, cross-registered student, or visiting student employed at MIT”. The spouse and any college-age children of any of the specified affiliates also counts as affiliates. Information about obtaining athletic cards can be obtained at http://mitrecsports.com/ or at the main desk at the Zesiger Sports Center.

Is there a skill level requirement? An experience requirement? A height requirement? A speed requirement?
No, no, no and no. All you really need is a desire to play and a willingness to learn.

Are there tryouts?
Not really. Part of the mission of club is to provide volleyball opportunities to people who really want them, so we do not cut anyone from the team. We DO split players up based on their level of play, both for practices and tournaments. Otherwise, we have found it is too difficult for beginners to get comfortable and learn at a steady rate and too frustrating for experienced players who need to scrimmage a lot.

Who can I contact with more questions?
The officers can be reached at wvc-officers@mit.edu.
The club website is http://web.mit.edu/chickvb/
The club mailing list is wvc1112@mit.edu. Please remember this list should only be used for volleyball club business. We use other mailing lists as needed throughout the year.

When are practices?
Practices are Sundays 3pm-5pm, Sundays 6pm-8pm, and Wednesdays 7:30pm to 10:30pm. The schedule is posted at http://web.mit.edu/chickvb/

Where are practices held?
Usually in Rockwell Cage, but sometimes in the DuPont gymnasium or the Multi-Activities Court (MAC) in the Zesiger Center. The schedule is posted at http://web.mit.edu/chickvb/
Can I go to any practice?
The short answer is “Unfortunately, no”. Some portion of the weekly practice times are “open door”, so the club can always welcome new players. But we do split up practices based on playing level and more advanced practices are invitation-based. Please email wvc-officers@mit.edu if you are interested in the club, and we can provide you with information about which practice would be appropriate for you.

What practice should I go to at the beginning?
At the beginning of the year, we have an open practice and three “tryout” practices (to gauge your level and place you appropriately, not to cut players):

After that, we will split up practices by level and we’ll try to find a good fit for you. We’ll split court time up into distinct practices, depending on how many groups we have, how many people are in each group and what level those groups play. Some people will be invited to multiple practices. Some will be invited to one practice. The first Sunday of the month at 6pm is open to everyone so that new players can get started with the club. So if you’re joining later in the year, the best thing to do is email wvc-officers@mit.edu to find out which practice would be best for you.
A fairly typical arrangement for practices during the year is beginning players from 6pm-8pm on Sunday; intermediate players from 3pm-5pm on Sunday and advanced players from 7:30 to 10:30 on Wednesday. We review our need every year based on player pool, so this is open to change.

What happens at a practice?
Practices are focused on building individual skills and learning to play team volleyball. Typically, practice is split into four parts. During the warm-up period, the team runs, stretches, peppers and then starts with some simple games. The next section focuses on individual skill work: setting, passing, hitting, etc. Depending on the level, we spend more or less time at this stage. The third section focuses on introducing team concepts like where to play your defense or how to coordinate multiple attackers and comprises both instruction and drills to work on those concepts. The last section is scrimmaging.

Do I need any special equipment?
Not really. Wear athletic gear that you would feel comfortable running and jumping in. A good pair of court shoes are useful. More advanced players often have kneepads or ankle braces.

Where does the club compete?
One of the main goals for club is to provide an organized, competitive outlet for players. To this end, we participate in Yankee volleyball, which is part of the New England Regional Volleyball Association, which is itself part of USA Volleyball, the governing organization for volleyball in the US. Yankee is not a formal league (like you might have had in high school where schools play each other). Instead, Yankee organizes a series of day-long tournaments (held on the weekends) at different playing levels throughout the year (indoors in fall, winter and spring, outdoors in the summer).

In the spring, we typically send a team or two to the USA Volleyball Adult Open Championships. This is a 4 – 6 day trip for a multi-day tournament that pits team from around the country against each other.

Where are the tournaments?
Tournaments are played throughout Massachusetts and New England. Typically, the furthest we travel is we normally go to are in Rhode Island.
How often do we play?
The club plays anywhere from 9 – 14 tournaments a semester. It depends mostly on how many people want to play, what kinds of teams we can put together and the Yankee tournament schedule. Since the tournaments are at varying levels, an individual player is unlikely to play in all of the tournaments a semester. For each individual, the average number is probably around three tournaments per semester.

How much does it cost?
There are a few basic costs for each tournament. If you choose to play in any tournaments, there is a one-time-per-year dues fee of $25. This goes towards defraying the cost of Yankee membership. For each tournament you play, there is a small additional fee ($5 for students, $10 for non-students). This goes towards the entry fee for that tournament ($120 - $160).

How are teams chosen?
At the beginning of the semester, we send out an email to sign up for tournaments using an online form. Then, there is an open meeting where players sit down with the list of available people for each tournament during the semester. We try to see if we can form teams for given tournaments, balancing factors like positional need, making sure people get to play in tournaments, the strength of the team going, etc.

The difficulty of coordinating people’s schedules makes it tough to play a series of tournaments with the same group of people throughout the year, but more and more, we are looking to form actual “teams” during the semester.

Should I play tournaments?
A lot of it is up to you. If you’re just beginning, a tournament is probably going to be overwhelming and potentially not fun, so you should definitely ask if we think you’re ready. Once you’re ready for a tournament, how many tournaments you play is largely up to you. If we need players in a certain position, we do try to persuade people to go. If we can’t get a team together, we might have to drop out. If we have too many players for a given tournament, we might ask some players to step out. But overall, you have a lot of choice.

How do I sign up?
At the beginning of every semester, we send out an email to sign up for tournaments using an online system.