

# Guidance to MIT DLCs and PIs related to Common Space Usage

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This document includes guidance to DLCs and PIs relating to the use of shared common and research spaces, with the safety and security of our staff being the most important guiding principle. Returning to campus during the research ramp-up phases will be different, and it will be a learning experience. As such, it requires everyone's cooperation to ensure our community's health and well-being.

DLCs may introduce more restrictive measures than the ones outlined below to address the specific needs of their spaces. If DLCs elect to do so, those more restrictive measures should be communicated in writing to [building-access@mit.edu](mailto:building-access@mit.edu) and communicated clearly in signage that can be accessed from MIT's Department of Facilities. Clear signage is important because some members of the MIT community or authorized service vendors access multiple buildings each day and must be well aware of any differences beyond the campus-wide guidance and expectations. Concerns regarding compliance with these guidelines may be reported confidentially at [hotline.mit.edu](https://hotline.mit.edu).

Guidance related to:

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## A. OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

### Principles for Setting Policy and Guidelines

- **The new normal is different:** For the time being, campus access and the on-campus experience will be significantly different than before the pandemic.
- **Community health and well-being:** The safety of MIT students, faculty, and staff is our top priority.
- **Expert guidance:** We are informed by science, the medical experts, and the public health experts, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state and local guidelines.
- **MIT studies and models:** We evaluate the recommendations using the air circulation models that are guiding MIT policies for student living.
- **Personal accountability for clean-up and hygiene:** The safety of the community depends on each individual's personal hygiene and adoption of the rules and principles described here. Each individual will be held responsible for this. The new on-campus dynamic does not eliminate the basic premise that community well-being is dependent on mutual respect and common sense.
- **Clear communications:** We strive to convey all the critical information about our recommendations clearly and frequently.
- **Preserving flexibility:** We are faced with uncertain developments in a rapidly changing environment, and as a result we must formulate action plans that allow us to change course if necessary.
- **Diversity, equity, inclusion:** In formulating plans, we consider the needs of all members of our community and strive to support those needs with compassion, empathy, and respect. If you have any concerns, please refer to <https://riskandcompliance.mit.edu/compliance/how-report-compliance-concerns> for guidance. You may also confidentially share concerns via [hotline.mit.edu](https://hotline.mit.edu).

### Approach

- **Limiting on-campus social interactions:** During the research ramp-up, we recommend limited, focused, and efficient access to campus facilities. MIT will collect the data on how effective our approach is in stemming the spread of the virus, which will inform our decisions going forward.
- **Transition points:** If the data show that the virus is not spreading, that will activate a transition point, allowing us to introduce some amount of normalization to on-campus social interactions. In contrast, if data indicate that the virus is spreading, that will inform us to further scale back further the on-campus social interactions.
- **Transition point metrics:** Collected data will inform us if our course of action is stemming the spread of the virus.

## General Policies and Guidelines

- Face masks/coverings must be worn at all times while on campus. Please review the [PPE policy statement](#) for guidelines and best practices.
- MIT IDs should be visible while on campus. IDs can be worn on a lanyard, for example; lanyards are available free of charge from the MIT [COVID-19 Store](#).
- Handwashing or the use of hand sanitizer is required upon arrival at MIT and recommended frequently thereafter.
- Use wipes (or disinfectant spray and paper towels) to disinfect each space used (e.g., the table top, machine, workspace, and chair arms) upon arrival (“wipe in”) and upon departure (“wipe out”).
- Groups should consider staggering shift times to minimize person-to-person contact.
- If a space booking system is available for a DLC, it should be used for all access to shared spaces.

## Central Support Services

- Signage reinforcing physical distancing, handwashing, and other best practices have been created by MIT’s Department of Facilities and will be displayed in all common spaces. Posting of signs in PI-controlled spaces will be the responsibility of the DLC/ PI. Templates are available for download from the MIT Department of Facilities [website](#).
- MIT is providing hand sanitizer and hand sanitizer dispensers throughout MIT buildings in common areas (building entrances and other key locations); dispensers will be refilled as necessary by MIT’s Custodial Services staff.
- MIT is providing hand soap, disinfecting wipes, disinfecting solution, and spray bottles to DLCs via the MIT [COVID-19 Store](#). Additionally, disinfecting wipe stations have been installed by MIT’s Department of Facilities inside restrooms, outside of elevators and inside classrooms being used for in-person classes. These materials will be distributed to DLCs for disinfecting common spaces such as lunch rooms. In turn, DLCs will be responsible for distributing these materials to PIs and/or lab managers for use in PI-controlled spaces. Hand soap will also be provided by MIT for distribution to PI laboratories that include sinks. MIT will work with DLCs to develop a system for replenishing these supplies as they run out.
- MIT’s Custodial Services staff have received enhanced training in cleaning and disinfecting high-touch points (including handrails, elevator buttons, door handles, etc.) and have switched to a new disinfecting cleaning solution which meets the EPA’s criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2. Cleaning frequency in centrally located common areas (i.e., main corridors, main lobbies, elevators, restrooms) has been increased, and MIT’s Custodial Services will be keeping a cleaning log on record.
- If needed, additional cleaning services can be requested via Atlas Service Request. See <https://web.mit.edu/facilities/services/cleaning.html> for additional information.
- Please note that special decontamination procedures are only required for spaces that have been occupied by individuals who have a confirmed positive test for SARS-CoV-2. In the absence of a confirmed COVID-19 case, routine disinfection procedures in

combination with the current protocols to wipe in / wipe out and wear face coverings are sufficient. MIT Medical coordinates with MIT's Department of Facilities to arrange cleaning of any spaces where a positive case has been identified.

## **B. COMMON SPACES**

### **Definition**

MIT has a wide range of common use spaces, including the following categories: corridor, mechanical room, office service, stairway, reception, lobby, storage facility, research space, conference room, mailroom, athletic facility, machine shop, electrical closet, classroom, restroom, elevator, lounge, food service, animal quarters, locker room, bridge/tunnel, library, merchandise room, media service/production, print shop, kitchen, terrace, and outdoor patio.

### **Elevators Guidelines**

- If possible, avoid using elevators and use the stairs instead.
- Signs with the maximum number of people allowed in an elevator have been posted by the MIT Department of Facilities.
- Hand sanitizer dispensers or wipes should be available outside elevators on each floor.
- Use of a personal metal button-pusher is encouraged to avoid contacting elevator buttons with one's bare fingers; personal button-pushers are available from the [COVID-19 Store](#).
- If possible, elevators will be programmed to keep the elevator doors open when the elevator is not moving between floors. This will increase the exchange of air within the elevator.

### **Bathrooms Guidelines**

- Access to bathrooms must be one person at a time for small 1-2 stall bathrooms. Larger bathrooms should be re-configured by blocking stalls, following physical distancing criteria (125 square feet/ person and at least 6 feet distancing between individuals). Depending on the size of the stalls, a possible configuration could have every other stall blocked.
- All bathrooms must have a system to mark occupied/not occupied (e.g., call out and wait, post-it notes, or an easy to manipulate occupied/unoccupied marker).
- Wash hands upon entry and wash hands upon exit.
- Sanitizing wipes dispensers have been installed inside bathrooms by MIT's Department of Facilities to be used according to the "wipe in/wipe out" protocol.
- Waste bins should be placed near bathroom door exits so that those using a paper towel to turn a door handle upon exit can drop that used paper towel into the waste bin on the way out.
- Flushing introduces aerosolized particulates into the atmosphere. For toilets fitted with solid lids, close the toilet lid prior to flushing. As a common courtesy to your colleagues and to MIT Custodial Service staff who maintain the sanitation for all of us, take care to ensure that the toilet has flushed completely before you leave the stall.

- Large bathrooms should be cleaned multiple times per day.

### **Corridors and Staircases Guidelines**

- The MIT Department of Facilities and the Office of Campus Planning will analyze and post directional signage in MIT's main corridors and stairwells.
- For corridors/staircases with two-way traffic, please be cognizant of those in front of you, or those passing by, and keep a distance of at least 6 feet.
- In case of a fire alarm or another alarm, safety procedures that were established before the COVID-19 pandemic should be followed, superseding any of the above guidelines.

### **Lunch/Eating Rooms Guidelines**

Eating requires people to take off their face covering or mask. Eating together with co-workers should be avoided or, if necessary, done with especially great care.

- Each building/DLC should develop designated areas organized according to physical distance criteria. Chairs must be spaced according to physical distance criteria. The location of the chairs should be marked with tape.
- DLCs must determine and indicate the maximum capacity for each lunch room by displaying signs at the door. The maximum capacity will be determined based on physical distancing criteria (125 square feet/person and at least 6 feet distancing between individuals). Sign templates have been created by MIT Department of Facilities and are available for each DLC to [download](#), print, and post.
- People can remove face coverings or masks when eating in designated spaces. Time spent in these spaces must be minimized. Talking (on a cell phone or otherwise) should be minimized during eating time.
- In RR3, eating in campus facilities will be allowed only for people spending more than 4 hours on campus, unless medically necessary.
- Special attention must be paid to cleaning the space before and after eating. Use wipes to disinfect the table top and chair when you arrive ("wipe in") and when you leave ("wipe out"). Also, make sure there are no food leftovers that could attract rodents.
- Keep in mind that MIT Custodial Services staff are responsible for whatever you leave behind, and please minimize items left behind for that reason. At the same time, do not clean materials left behind by others.
- Consider creating and using both inside and outside eating spaces. For the latest guidance on the use of outdoor spaces on the MIT campus, please visit the [MIT Now Policies website](#).
- Note that eating and drinking are not allowed in corridors, elevators, or stairways because face coverings must be worn at all times in these areas.
- No shared food or drinks will be allowed. (Bring your own food, utensils, coffee, and water.)
- The use of microwaves and refrigerators should be done with great care; handles and buttons should be wiped before and after use. Additionally, consider replacing reusable

kitchen items and cleaning tools with single-use options and/or encouraging staff to bring their own utensils, mugs, etc. High-touch items such as magazines or newspapers should be removed. DLC heads may add more stringent policies for using food-related appliances.

- No vending machines will be available.
- If allowed by the DLC, individuals may eat in their single occupancy offices. For PI-controlled spaces (including multi-person offices), there can only be one person at a time occupying the space to eat, and sign-up sheets can be used to schedule meals.
- Wash hands before and after eating.

### Conference Rooms Guidelines

- In RR3, conference rooms should not be used for meetings. To reduce the risk of infection and spread of COVID-19, it is recommended that any activity that can be successfully performed remotely, including one-on-one meetings and group meetings, **should continue to be conducted remotely.**
- If data indicate that we have reached a transition point for normalizing social interactions, access to conference rooms will become possible, with the following considerations:
  - Chairs and desks must be placed according to physical distancing guidelines.
  - There will be a limit on how many people can use each conference room at the same time.
- DLCs should consider using conference rooms as lunch/eating rooms, following the lunch/eating rooms guidelines described above. A space booking system/ calendar if available should be utilized in order to ensure compliance with the maximum occupancy limits in those rooms.

### Shared Office Spaces Guidelines

This category includes mailrooms, reception areas, etc.

- Scheduled access for MIT personnel
- For PI-controlled spaces (including multi-person offices), there can only be one person at a time occupying the space to eat, and sign-up sheets can be used to schedule meals.

### Outdoor Spaces Guidelines

- Access to campus outdoor spaces should follow MIT and signage guidelines.
- DLCs are encouraged to allow members to the use of their outdoor spaces (e.g., patios) in compliance with physical distancing guidelines (125 square feet/ person and at least 6 feet distancing between individuals) and consistent with MIT campus guidelines. Visit the [MIT Now Policies website](#) for the latest guidance.
- Bike storage: wipe in / wipe out.
- Lunch tables: wipe in and wipe out, maintain physical distance.
- Other spaces: maintain physical distance.

## C. RESEARCH SPACES

### Dry and Wet Laboratory Guidelines

- Face coverings or masks must be worn at all times.
- Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds right after entering the laboratory, immediately after taking off gloves, and just before exiting the laboratory, as well as frequently throughout the day. Hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol can be used as a stop-gap measure until you can wash your hands with soap and water.
- As mentioned above, MIT is providing hand soap, disinfecting solution, spray bottles, and paper towels to each DLC via the [MIT COVID-19 Store](#). Each DLC should in turn provide these materials to PIs and/or lab managers for use in research spaces.
- Work areas should be arranged and assigned according to physical distancing guidelines. Signs indicating the maximum occupancy of the space must be posted on each door; [sign templates](#) are available to each DLC, and it is the PI's responsibility to post them.
- Consider scheduling access using a space booking system if available.
- Each research group should establish protocols for disinfection of their research spaces. Some spaces (e.g., clean rooms, cold rooms) will require individualized or enhanced cleaning protocols. Research groups/core facilities must coordinate cleaning of shared research spaces, including shared equipment, as described below.
- Every researcher is responsible for cleaning and disinfecting hard surfaces of research spaces frequently, at a minimum at the beginning and end of their shift. Additionally, tools should be wiped clean before and after use. Examples include but are not limited to:
  - Door handles and light switches
  - Sink faucets
  - Phones
  - Freezer/refrigerator doors
  - Cabinet handles
  - Desks and tables
  - Shared equipment/tools
  - Shared electronics, including computer mouse, keyboard, display
  - Specific equipment and work areas
- Wear disposable gloves to clean and disinfect.
- If visibly dirty, first clean surfaces using soap and water, then use disinfectant.
- The following disinfecting solutions are appropriate for SARS-CoV-2: 70% alcohol (ethanol or isopropanol), 10% household bleach (made fresh weekly), or other EPA-registered disinfectants (for a full list visit <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>).
- Different disinfectants have different required contact times (e.g., contact times for 70% alcohol and 10% bleach are 1 min). For disinfecting wipes, it may be necessary to use more than one wipe to keep the surface wet for the recommended contact time.

- When in doubt about the compatibility of a specific piece of equipment with commonly used disinfectants, please refer to the manufacturer’s recommendations and warning label or contact the DLC EHS Coordinator.
- In dry lab environments, tissue or wipe stands with trash buckets should be available inside the space, and all refuse must be placed within these receptacles.
- As always, when wearing gloves, remember your gloves are considered “contaminated,” and do not touch your face, nose, or eyes with gloved hands. Do not wear gloves into non-laboratory areas such as break rooms, offices, elevators, etc.
- If you prefer that MIT Custodial Services staff not enter your research spaces, leave your full waste bins outside of the room door for collection and [post this sign on the door](#).
- *For dry labs only:* The DLC and the PI will decide if eating in a dry lab is allowed. If eating in the dry lab is allowed, the designated eating area will be clearly marked, and the eating guidelines and policies above should be followed. The use of microwaves and refrigerators should be done with great care; handles and buttons should be wiped before and after use. Additionally, consider replacing reusable kitchen items and cleaning tools with single-use options. High-touch items such as magazines or newspapers should be removed. DLC heads may add more stringent policies for using food-related appliances.

### **Shared Research and Equipment Rooms Guidelines**

- Schedule access. Use a space booking system if available.
- PIs must coordinate to create a maximum occupancy and access plan.
- The desk/space/machine should be designated to one user at a time.
- Impose limits on the daily activity.
- Do not leave any personal materials in shared spaces.
- Place the chairs and desks according to physical distancing guidelines.
- Using the appropriate disinfectant that is safe for contact surfaces on such shared equipment, “wipe in” and “wipe out” before and after every use.

### **D. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Wear a mask or face covering while on campus. More guidance on how to use a face mask or face covering can be found [here](#).
- Practice physical distancing and do not gather in groups.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if handwashing facilities are not available.
- Avoid touching your face especially your mouth, eyes, or nose, as those are the mucosal surfaces that COVID-19 infects.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with the inside of your elbow or upper arm.
- Stay home if you are feeling sick, and seek appropriate medical guidance. Do not go to the MIT Medical testing locations if you are feeling sick, as you might infect others. Call your health care provider to arrange a test.
- Continue working from home whenever possible.

- MIT MyLife Services has dedicated [COVID-19 support resources](#) for emotional well-being. Employees can also visit [MyStress Tools](#), which offers free access to an online suite of stress management and resilience-building resources.

## APPENDIX 1: BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Study of COVID offices in South Korea published by the [CDC](#)

The CDC [April 13th guidance](#):

“Current data suggest person-to-person transmission most commonly happens during close exposure to a person infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, primarily via respiratory droplets produced when the infected person speaks, coughs, or sneezes. Droplets can land in the mouths, noses, or eyes of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs of those within close proximity.”

Study on why face masks are effective: [meta-analysis of face masks study](#)

Analytics/simulations for social distancing in the workplace [here](#)

Belgium study on COVID spread outdoors and social distance guidelines for outdoors [here](#)

CDC guidelines for opening offices [here](#)

OSHA guidance on preparing workplaces for COVID-19 [here](#)