

Visiting Student Guide

During the onboarding process, we understand that there is quite a large amount of information to take in, which is why we have created this guide. This resource can be a valuable reference and includes various links to help you easily locate important information before and during your time at MIT.

We have organized the information, prioritizing what you need before your arrival at MIT, followed by additional details once you're on campus.

Something is missing? Please contact us! We're thankful for your edits in the Google doc [here](#).

Once you set your communications (or even before the departure!) please subscribe to **VISTA's mailing list** to get updates about our most recent events. You can subscribe through your personal student profile at engage.mit.edu. You are also highly encouraged to download and join our **Telegram** group chat (+500 current and former students are in it!) via the [link](#) on the [homepage](#).

The information on this page and the links may not be current or up-to-date. It is essential to verify each piece of information before making any decisions. Your discretion is advised.

Visa

Navigating the Visa application process as a visiting student at MIT is crucial for your academic journey. The process starts by being invited to MIT as a visiting student, so obtaining an invitation letter and a mentoring plan from your MIT department. To access all the necessary information and receive assistance with this procedure, you can contact:

- Email: ISO-HELP@mit.edu
- Phone: +1 (617) 253-3795
- Website: <https://iso.mit.edu/getting-started/visiting-students-faq/#Applying-to-MIT>

Accommodation

MIT is located in the south of Cambridge, separated from Boston only by the Charles River. Please be aware that accommodations in certain areas of Boston can be quite expensive. When searching for accommodation, you have two primary options:

On-Campus: You can rent a room within one of the MIT buildings on the campus. MIT offers a variety of housing options — single rooms, efficiencies, one-bedroom, and multi-bedroom units — at different price points to provide MIT graduate students and their families with more choices. To book a room, please follow the instructions provided at [MIT Housing](#) and check for the open booking dates for visitors. Specifically, if you see the phrase “Available on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM ET,” this indicates that you should connect during that time window to reserve a room. Booking is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Off-Campus: If you prefer to live outside of the MIT campus, you can explore off-campus housing solutions through resources like [MIT Off-Campus Housing](#), Harvard website open without Harvard ID (<https://www.harvardhousingoffcampus.com/>) or Harvard-MIT Facebook groups ([GSD Housing](#), [MIT Housing](#)). Please exercise caution when using Facebook groups or external websites, as there may be instances of rental scams.

Please note that if you come across the term “**sublet**” it signifies that a room is available for temporary rental, and this practice is legally permitted within MIT’s on-campus rooms. Typically, this is done by students who will be away for a short period and wish to sublease their room.

Please note that the term “**roommate**” can refer to someone with whom you share a bedroom or, in many cases, it can also refer to someone with whom you share a house/apartment, each having their own private bedroom. Please verify the specific meaning in your context

Medical Insurance

As a visiting student, you will be responsible for paying a monthly tuition fee. This fee can typically be covered by your MIT department and includes MIT’s medical insurance coverage.

The MIT Student Health Insurance Plan (MIT SHIP: <https://medical.mit.edu/health-plans/ship>) offers a range of essential services, including primary care, urgent care, mental health and counseling services. Additionally, it covers tests conducted at MIT Medical's onsite radiology and laboratory facilities, as well as appointments with most MIT Medical specialists. For certain services, the coverage may be partial, and it's advisable to verify the details on the website. The dental assistance is not included, so you should consider to have MIT Graduate Student Dental Plan or any other external insurance. For detailed information on the covered costs, please visit the [Gallagher website](#). You can find a PDF containing all the information and a summary table under the "Plan details" section.

As Private Insurance Plans (not endorsed by ISO or MIT):

- HTH Worldwide
- VISIT Travel & Medical Insurance Program
- Compass Student Insurance

Social Security Number (SSN)

A Social Security number (SSN) is a taxpayer and benefit identification number issued by the Social Security Administration. It does not grant permission to work, nor is it proof of US citizenship or permanent residence. Once you obtain a SSN, it is your number forever and may be used on subsequent visits to the U.S.

To access all the necessary information if you are eligible and receive assistance with the procedure, you can contact:

- Email: ISO-HELP@mit.edu
- Phone: +1 (617) 253-3795
- Website: <https://iso.mit.edu/employment/social-security-number-ssn/>

MIT ID Card

An MIT ID is a digital or physical credential enabling community members to authenticate themselves to card readers on and off campus.

Once arrived, community members with an active MIT Kerberos account (that is is your online identity at MIT <https://ist.mit.edu/accounts>) can use the MIT Atlas mobile application (app: <https://apps.mit.edu/>) for iOS or Android to get their MIT ID or to print on campus. See instructions [here](#).

The Atlas Service Center can provide new or replacement MIT ID cards to members of the MIT community in person or by mail. Please note that there may be a fee associated with replacing the MIT ID card.

The Center is located on the first floor of E17. General hours are 8am–5pm, Monday through Friday. You can also contact them at atlascenter@mit.edu or 617-253-3000.

Get Harvard ID

Visiting MIT students can get Harvard ID to access Harvard museums and more for free. Fill the [form](#), pick an appointment, and collect your Harvard ID. Please visit the [website](#) for more information.

Banking

If you are interested in opening a bank account in the US, choosing a bank is up to you really. You might want to open an account in a bank close to your accommodation or campus, a list of the most popular banks in Boston is found below. To open a bank account, you need a valid, government-issued photo ID such as a driver's license, state ID or passport. It is not necessary the Social Security Number. Note that that some banks offer up to \$200 welcome gifts for opening a new account.

- Bank of America (student account no fees under 25yo or classic account 12\$/month fees that can be avoided by having at least 1500\$ on the account). Nearest MIT Bank of America Financial centre to open the account: 92 Ames St, Cambridge, MA 02142.
- Citizens

- M&T Bank
- MIT Credit Union (<https://www.mitfcu.org/>)
- Santander

Otherwise, you can opt for online banking, which is convenient for international student and short-term visits to the US

- Wise (<https://wise.com>)
- Revolut (<https://www.revolut.com/en-US/>)
- PayPal
- VenMo

Communication

If you want to buy an American phone number, we recommend you to get a sim card from US Mobile or Mint, which is a very convenient telecommunications company. Both offer eSIM and have easy-to-use websites. *Free Mint physical SIMs are available at the ISO office in building E18.* You can just put it in your phone and follow the instruction to immediately activate your new phone number.

In case you have any questions related to other topics, you can always email the international student's office at help-iso@mit.edu

Transport

Boston and Cambridge are extremely bike-friendly areas, especially in the warmer seasons (though winters can be challenging!). If you're thinking about purchasing your own bike, keep in mind that both new and used bikes can be quite expensive, ranging from \$100 to \$500 or even more. It's highly advisable to invest in a U-lock for security. Additionally, you might find bikes available on the MIT VISTA Telegram group, where fellow students often sell their bikes.

Alternatively, there are other convenient options like using Bluebikes (<https://www.bluebikes.com/>), a bike-sharing service. MIT students can access this

service for just \$50 per year. If you prefer not to bike, you can also make use of the T-Line with your charged MIT ID. Please note that you can charge the MIT ID at the T-stations.

You can use your MIT card as “Charlie card” to load credits into your account and pay for fares at half their typical price. For the buses, only cash is accepted.

Useful links:

- [BlueBikes](#): bike service in the city
- [Free safe ride shuttles daytime](#) + On-demand mode after 11 PM
- [Budget car](#) rental MIT discount
- [Zipcar](#): to rent a car (info:
<https://web.mit.edu/facilities/transportation/ridesharing.html#zipcar>)

Food and Drinking

You will soon realise that Boston is an expensive city to live in. Don't worry, we compiled a list of the best restaurants and groceries stores for students.

- Trader Joe's (shuttle from MIT on sundays),
- Star market
- Whole Foods
- 7-11
- Market Basket
- Dollar Tree (food and house stuff, EVERYTHING at 1,25\$)

For the most environmentally aware ones, **Too Good To Go** (<https://www.toogoodtogo.com/en-us>) is a service with a mobile application that connects customers to restaurants and stores that have surplus unsold food.

Need Food or Support?

MIT provides [information about food resources](#) to ensure no student goes hungry due to lack of money, resources, or time, and that students feel comfortable [asking for help](#) when they need it. For any questions, you can contact foodstuff@mit.edu.

Besides in partnership with Daily Table, the Division of Student Life is pleased to offer on-campus students a free delivery option for their groceries! Use code 0923MIT12 (valid from 9/1/23 to 12/31/23 for online orders only, it cannot be used in-store) with a \$20 minimum online purchase at Daily Table and receive free delivery to your on-campus location. For any questions, please email foodstuff@mit.edu.

Free Food at MIT

To receive notifications about free food events on campus , subscribe to the free-food@ mailing list and other clubs on campus host regular dinners. Such as

- Tech Catholic Community (TCC)

The Banana Lounge

There is little chance that you haven't heard of the **Banana Lounge at MIT**. Students are absolutely bananas over this lounge. Located in room 110, inside Building 26, this is a place where you can get as many bananas as you want EVERYDAY for FREE! There is also free hot chocolate and coffee to accompany your bananas. There are also study desks if you would like to study in the lounge.

The Muddy Charles

Located in the MIT campus, building 50, you will also get to taste the cheapest beer (\$2 a pint) in Boston at MIT's Muddy Charles! This bar, open since 1968 on 142 Memorial Drive, is exclusively open to MIT students and you will be asked for your **MIT student ID**, as well as your **Passport**. Never forget to bring those or you will be denied entry!

At VISTA we often organise afterwork events at Muddy (weekly or bi-weekly), so stay updated about upcoming events.

Dining Halls (places where you can have your lunch and/or dinner)

MIT has various Dining Halls on campus that are accessible via the meal swipes or techcash program. All Dining Halls are accessible on campus with this program, you can find information regarding pricing at <https://studentlife.mit.edu/dining/residential-dining/meal-plans> however other programs such as techcash and dining dollars are available to use for currency. One Block is equal to one meal swipe, and the menus for the dining halls are available to view at <https://mit.cafebonappetit.com> or the MIT Mobile app. A map for the dining halls can be found [here](#). Green reusable carry out containers are available at the desk upon request but at a fee.

Additionally, MIT hosts various food suppliers on campus. Typically ranging from convenience stores, cafes, or marketplaces. For example, the Forbes Café, situated in the Stata Center (Building 32), provides various dining options (<https://studentlife.mit.edu/dining/dining-locations/forbes-family-caf%C3%A9>). For more information about dining locations, visit <https://studentlife.mit.edu/dining/dining-locations>.

Sport

Playing sports will help you stay in shape, teach you how to organize your time, boost your friendships and build relationships with other students. Access to the sports centers is included in your tuition fee. Becoming a member of MIT Recreation grants you access to multiple facilities that span 26 acres throughout the MIT campus, making you a part of the largest health, wellness and recreation community in the area. Don't forget to also enjoy a **run** along the Charles River! At MIT, the different fitness centres are:

- The Zesiger Sports and Fitness Center (The Z Center) features a natatorium with an Olympic size pool, a 25 yard instructional pool, 2 fitness gym floors, six international squash courts, a private massage room, an indoor golf range, a multipurpose activity court and locker rooms.
- The Alumni Pool and Wang Fitness Center (AW Center) is our auxiliary recreational facility featuring a 25 yard lap pool, 15 yard instructional pool, a fitness floor with stationary machines and free weights, group exercise studio, spin studio and locker rooms. The alumni pool in Wang Center is currently closed.

- As the home court for MIT Basketball and Volleyball, Rockwell Cage has 3 full basketball courts, spectator seating and space for badminton and volleyball.
- The duPont Athletic Center is equipped with 2 basketball courts, a fencing room, wrestling room, multiple squash courts, and the T-Club Lounge for additional group exercise, dance and martial arts. duPont Athletic Center also includes 12 outdoor tennis courts.
- The facility features an ice rink, a six-lane indoor track with a mondo rubber running surface and four tennis courts. The track facility is also equipped with a large indoor field used for large-scale events, as well as a small weight training center.
- The J.B. Carr Indoor Tennis Bubble houses four indoor courts for MIT Varsity Tennis, students and MIT Recreation Members as well as locker rooms, lavatories, and showers.
- Dedicated on September 9, 1966 to serve as the new home for MIT rowing and still rates as one of the jewels of MIT's athletic complex. An eight-oared moving water indoor rowing tank was completely refurbished in 2004, while the facility also boasts 64 ergometers and a fleet of over 50 shells including eights, fours, pairs and singles housed in four boat bays.
- The Walter C. Wood Sailing Pavilion is the oldest university sailing pavilion in the world and the birthplace of intercollegiate sailing in the United States. The Pavilion is open to our members April 1 through November 15 for recreational sailing or learn to sail classes that can be booked via <https://sailing.mit.edu/>.
- The Johnson Ice Arena offers seasonal ice skating opportunities for the MIT Community including general skating, recreational hockey, and lessons. During the off-season, the ice arena serves a space for events like the MIT Hack-a-thon.
- Our outdoor fields include Steinbrenner Stadium, Jack Barry Field, and Briggs Field which host track and field, football, lacrosse, soccer, field hockey, baseball and softball as well as over 80 intramural and club sports.

Please visit: <https://clubsports.mit.edu/for-athletes/club-sports-list/> for an updated list of all sport related clubs at MIT.

MIT Campus and Buildings

The MIT campus is a bustling hub of innovation located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It spans 168 acres along the Charles River, featuring cutting-edge research facilities, iconic architectural landmarks, and lush green spaces.

The MIT campus comprises numerous buildings designated by alphanumeric codes. These codes don't necessarily follow a consecutive or specific order. To locate a building accurately, consult the MIT campus map at <https://whereis.mit.edu/> for precise directions and information about each building's purpose and location. Additionally, MIT buildings are connected by tunnels, which can be very useful during the winter. You can find the map here: https://web.mit.edu/facilities/maps/mit_Tunnel_map.pdf.

MIT Tuition Fees and Work

Tuition fee

As a visiting student at MIT, you are responsible for covering a monthly tuition fee (as of September 2023, it's \$600). This fee encompasses various expenses, including research-related costs, student medical insurance through MIT SEIP, and fees associated with Student Life fees, such as access to the sports center. While the tuition fee is your responsibility, it's worth noting that, with prior arrangement, it is not uncommon for your MIT lab or department to assist in covering this cost.

Work

With prior arrangement with your MIT lab or department, it is possible to get compensated for work done in your MIT research group up to 20 hours/week (per federal regulations regarding J1 visa holders). To get paid by MIT, you will need to fill an I-9 form and get a Social Security Number (SSN).

How to complete your I-9 form

To fill your I-9, follow these steps:

1. Go to the [I-9 website](#) to pre-fill your form with your personal information.

2. Go to the [HR website](#) to schedule an appointment with the Atlas Service Center (Building E-18).
3. During your appointment, your I-9 will get validated except for the SSN that you will need to send to MIT as soon as you obtain it.

How to get paid

When working as a visiting student, you get paid hourly by MIT. This means that you need to declare your working hours on your Atlas using the Time Sheet Entry menu. Once you have entered your time sheet, you will get paid on the next payday (Friday usually). If you want to receive your salary directly on your bank account (instead of a paycheck), you will need to open a US bank account (see related section) and set up ACH direct deposit in the Direct Deposit Preferences menu in Atlas.

Health

EMERGENCY Service

For emergency services dial 911. However for various reasons there will be a significantly improved response time and understanding if you instead dial **617-253-1212** to get in contact with MIT Police and EMS.

Please have this already in your Contacts

Medical Services

Health services at MIT are provided by MIT Medical. These include:

- Urgent care
- Primary care
- Violence Prevention and Response
- Mental health
- Medical specialties

- Nutrition
- Optical
- Pharmacy

To learn more about MIT Medical and get started [click here](#).

Mental Health Services

Student Mental Health and Counseling Services is available for telehealth visits* and in-person appointments. They can provide:

- Evaluations and consultations
- Brief treatment (counseling/psychotherapy and medication)
- [Off-campus counseling referrals and support](#)
- [Outreach](#), education, and prevention
- [COVID-19 resources](#)
- Urgent care
- [Group counselling](#)
- Support for [eating concerns](#)
- [Advice when you are worried about a friend, colleague, or student](#)
- Help for departments, labs, and centers that are dealing with traumatic events, sudden losses, or other troubling situations
- [Psychology Training Programs](#)

*Because some states have laws restricting the provision of telehealth services across state lines, MIT Medical's telehealth services are available only to patients who are physically located in Massachusetts at the time of the appointment.

Useful Apps

When you are settled, make sure to install the following apps. They will be helpful throughout your journey at MIT:

- If you have not installed it yet, the ATLAS application is essential to follow-up with your legal documents (MIT IDs, I-9, personal information...) [<https://apps.mit.edu/>]
- MIT MOBILE can be handy if you need to know more about the campus. There you will find daily MIT news, shuttles, events, restaurants around and important updates [Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/mit-mobile/id353590319>; Google: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=edu.mit.mitmobile2&hl=en_US&gl=US]
- DUO is a two-factor authentication service which makes your connection to your Kerberos account with MIT more secure [Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/mit-mobile/id353590319>; Google: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=edu.mit.mitmobile2&hl=en_US&gl=US]

Events and Clubs

MIT organizes numerous events, and you can check the [calendar](#) for details. Besides, VISTA organises many kinds of events to keep the visiting student community active and engaged with us. If you have an event idea, please do not hesitate to share it with us and your idea. Events range from purely social events to sports events, on and off campus, provided that our treasurer agrees with the associated costs. Find information on our [website](#) and on our [Telegram group](#).

Clubs

MIT has several clubs on campus! To find student groups and organizations on campus visit <https://engage.mit.edu/>

- [MIT Sailing Club](#)
- [MIT Club Sports](#)
- [Houses](#) like [French House](#)

Other Event links:

- BSO (Boston Symphony Orchestra) college card \$7 for unlimited BSO performance, buy at Copytech in Bldg 11-004 (<https://arts.mit.edu/camit/discount-tickets/>) – out of storage summer 2018, might return Fall 2018
- Other discount ticket opportunity from Arts at MIT (<https://arts.mit.edu/camit/discount-tickets/>)
- MITAC discounted tickets for local arts and culture, sporting events and family activities(<https://mitac.universitytickets.com/w/SitePages/Home.aspx>)
- Free entrance & discounts for many museums → Free for Museum of science, MIT museum, MFA (<https://arts.mit.edu/camit/discount-tickets/>)
- MIT Event calendar (<http://calendar.mit.edu/>)
- Wally's café + live music during week (<http://www.wallyscafe.com/index.html>)
- Ashtown karaoke on Tuesday (<https://ashdown.mit.edu/event-calendar.php> – can't seem to find it on this calendar?)
- \$9.95/month for unlimited movies (<https://www.moviepass.com/>)
- MIT Students also receive discounted tickets to Fenway Baseball, Basketball, and Hockey Games via <https://web.mit.edu/fnl/volume/291/mitac.html>
- If you are available on campus IAP during the month of January, IAP is a terrific time to find various creative and interesting things on campus, a full list can be found

Driving

Each state in the U.S. has distinct laws regarding driving with a foreign driver's license, so please visit the RMV's [website](#) for information on the requirements the foreign licensed drivers are subject to in Massachusetts.

Liquor ID

Minimum Legal Drinking Age in the United States is 21 years. A Liquor ID is an official form of identity, signature, and age in Massachusetts and it can be used to verify your age. Alternatively, you should utilize your passport, as national IDs are typically not accepted. To apply for Liquor ID (which is not managed or released by MIT) visit the website: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-liquor-id-card>.

Various Services

- Free printing with Pharos printing around campus, free of 3000 pages/person (<https://ist.mit.edu/printers>)
- Room reservation @ MIT and more (<https://mycard.mit.edu/student/welcome.php>)
- Music related devices @ Lewis Music Library in Bld 14
- Use MIT ID+Passport to access Harvard library (<https://library.harvard.edu/access-services/visitors>)
- Borrow Costco card @ CopyTech (<http://gsc-hca.xvm.mit.edu/costco/>)
- Free gyms @ MIT → Student center and Stata
- Free Ice Skating arena (no fees to get in there), but need to pay 5\$ for skate rental cost.

What's happening around

For various free, weekly, community or adult events in the city of Cambridge and Boston we recommend parsing through these sites and subscribing to their mailing list.

- <https://www.secretboston.net/weekly-newsletter>
- <https://www.thebostoncalendar.com>
- <https://www.fairsandfestivals.net>
- <https://www.bostonusa.com/events/?view=list&sort=date>