Communication, Cooperation & Courtesy: Being a good roommate in our ‘new normal’

A lot has changed over the past year and a half, and whether you’ve lived with a roommate before or if it’s a new experience, there are steps that you can take to help ensure a positive, healthy living experience, and to prevent and resolve roommate disputes.

We know that some students may feel uneasy about having a roommate, but please know that MIT’s support resources and COVID-19 student policies — including robust testing protocols, face-covering requirements and health attestations — exist alongside the Institute’s vaccine requirement to help protect your health and wellbeing.

As a reminder, residents who are experiencing any symptoms or signs of COVID-19 are required to attest to their symptoms through COVID Pass and MIT Medical will follow-up. If you have not yet traveled to campus and are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, please attest to your symptoms and stay home.

Take the time to get to know your roommate(s).

Living together, you’re going to be around your roommate(s) a lot—likely more than anyone else all year (including family and other friends!). Given this reality, it’s important to take the time to learn more about them in order to enhance your overall living experience. As we navigate our ‘new normal’ together, here are some recommendations to help get you started:

- Ask each other about your experiences during the pandemic and comfort levels about things such as having guests (view resident guest policy).
Tim’s Tips

- Pick an appropriate time for the conversation (for both you and your roommate(s)).
- Listen respectfully and actively, and be open to hearing other points of view.
- Maintain the privacy of your roommate(s) health information if they voluntarily choose to disclose these details with you.
- Never put your roommate in the position of disclosing information that they feel uncomfortable sharing.

- Find creative ways to support each other and to stay in compliance with all COVID Pass health monitoring protocols and other policies, including face-covering requirements.

Tim’s Tips:

- Consider posting your COVID-19 testing schedules on a shared whiteboard, synching reminders to complete health attestations, or finding time to decorate your face-coverings together.

- Be respectful of others’ personal space, and be patient and understanding of differing levels of comfort as it relates to social interactions during the ongoing pandemic.

Tim’s Tips:

- Don’t commit your roommate(s) to joining a social situation if they’re not yet comfortable. If you’re not sure, then ask first. Remember, social situations could include many different things such as campus events, or even just sitting down for a meal.
- Set some baseline expectations for living together, which could include:
  - Agreed upon quiet or active periods during weekdays and weekends.
  - How (and when) you will be cleaning your shared living space.
- Be mindful of how your actions may impact the health, wellbeing and safety of your roommate(s) and neighbors in your residential community.

Communication is an important tool when resolving conflicts.

If you have concerns with your roommate(s), see if you can resolve the issue among yourselves first. Try talking with your roommate(s) directly to identify the areas of concern and to discuss how best to move forward.

If you’re unsure how to approach this, or if speaking with your roommate(s) directly does not resolve the issue, consult with your Graduate Resident Advisor (GRA), Area Director (AD), or other member of your House Team to ask for advice. They are trained to help in situations such as this.
Vaccines, face-coverings & testing are our best defenses against COVID-19.

As described by MIT Medical Director Dr. Cecilia Stuopis in a message to the MIT community, the Institute’s multi-pronged approach to managing the pandemic offers powerful lines of defense against the virus, although it's up to each of us to do our part to help keep MIT healthy.

All students should be aware of the impact of their behaviors on others, and be mindful of others when choosing to partake in activities and gatherings. As you and your roommate(s) prepare to move to campus, please help each other plan for a smooth arrival by reviewing the following reminders:

- **All campus residents must comply with the Institute’s vaccine requirement.** Campus residents must be fully-vaccinated against COVID-19 or receive an approved medical or religious exemption prior to arriving on campus. Additional information about complying with the vaccine requirement is available on the Covid Apps website. With this requirement, MIT expects that nearly 98 percent of campus community members will be fully vaccinated this fall.

- **Face-coverings are required while indoors on campus.** This includes all indoor campus facilities such as residence halls, academic buildings and MIT Medical testing sites, as well as while aboard campus shuttles. Face-coverings are not required while you are alone in private rooms with your roommate(s), suitemates, spouses, partners, children, or family members.

- **All residents must follow arrival testing protocols and regular health monitoring requirements.** Incoming residents must test upon arrival (day 0) and receive two additional tests within their first week on campus (days 0, 4 and 7). All residents are also required to test twice-per-week after they complete their arrival testing requirements. This requirement can be fulfilled using unobserved self-tests now available from MIT Medical. Daily health attestations are also required to remain in compliance with all COVID Pass requirements.

We understand that some students may or may not know the vaccination status of their roommate. While residents’ private health information is not shared with Housing & Residential Services, please know that the Institute continues to closely monitor all students’ compliance with the vaccine requirement. Below, please find helpful information regarding community expectations for residents who arrive to campus unvaccinated:

- In addition to the arrival testing protocols described above, incoming residents who have been unable to access a WHO- or FDA-approved vaccine prior to their arrival, and who have not received an exemption to the vaccine requirement, must receive a vaccine within two days of arriving on campus. To help make this process as easy as possible, MIT is offering free on-site vaccine clinics three days per week.
Residents who arrive on campus partially vaccinated against COVID-19 are required to receive their second dose as soon as possible. Free vaccines are available through local pharmacies and vaccination clinics. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has launched a website to allow individuals to search for a local COVID-19 vaccine appointment according to vaccine type.

- A quarantine period is not required, but roommates who are not yet fully vaccinated have been advised to act with an abundance of caution by limiting indoor activities with others, practicing physical distancing from others, and by wearing face-coverings while outside their private room (even while outdoors).

As described above, MIT Medical has helped MIT create a layered approach to protection with robust testing and health monitoring protocols, including three COVID-19 tests within residents’ first week on campus, to help ensure community health—all of which have proven to help reduce transmission rates. In addition to MIT’s protocols, there are also additional layers of protection, including COVID-19 test requirements for international travelers prior to boarding aircraft bound for the United States, as well as local face-covering and public health policies.

**Good hygiene also goes a long way.**

As recommended by MIT Medical, there are simple things you can do each day to stay healthy and to avoid getting sick. This includes washing your hands frequently for 20 seconds with soap and water, covering coughs and sneezes with the inside of your elbow or upper arm, and keeping surfaces clean.

**We’re in this together.**

Together, we can continue to protect our entire community’s well-being. As noted above, open lines of communication with your roommate(s) and members of your House Team are important to avoid conflict and to help ensure a comfortable living environment. Best wishes for a wonderful academic year!