Frosh Guide to Understanding MITspeak

By Bill Jackson

To incoming students: Congratulations. You have been rewarded for your hard work with one of the greatest gifts possible, an MIT undergraduate education.

Not that you will always be thankful for this opportunity. Everyone, even the brightest among us, feels at some point that high school was a waste of time. However, there is a positive side to everything, however, and MIT is no exception. The Institute has its fair share of racism and sexism, unequal policies, housing, bad food, and a lot of problems, but MIT is too difficult, that the best work is simply not worth it.

And there will undoubtedly be some people for whom these feelings will become so strong that they will leave the Institute, either temporarily or permanently.

But for the rest of you, the majority that will march through Killian Court four years from now, get ready for the most exciting, and perhaps the most exhilarating, time of your life.

You have undoubtedly heard about many of the good things MIT offers its students: Unparalleled research opportunities, more laboratory equipment than almost any other university, and the chance to explore and learn alongside some of the greatest minds on the planet.

There is a downside to everything, however, and MIT is no exception: The Institute has its fair share of racism and sexism, unequal policies, housing, bad food, and — for you — you will probably learn most of your lessons in the next few days — very difficult problems and problem sets.

When you run into these problems, remember that you are probably not the first in your situation, and that someone can probably help you. The most important lesson you can learn is how to understand this, your first year at MIT, is that you need other people to survive here. Soon after you think you will be the knowable and learnable veteran helping out the new students unflinchingly.

So welcome to MIT, the best and the worst of all possible worlds. With your help, it can only get better.