# Buddy Guidelines for Human Resources and Hiring Managers

### What is a Buddy?

A new employee’s onboarding is greatly enhanced by assigning an office Buddy, a fellow employee (other than the manager) who provides advice and guidance on the different aspects of working at MIT. A Buddy is also a “sounding board” who offers encouragement as the new employee acclimates to MIT’s culture and workplace.

### Selection Criteria and Process

The successful Buddy is an employee who fully understands the Institute’s culture and environment (has been at MIT for at least one year) and wants to be a Buddy.

Additional criteria include:

* Time to be accessible and available to the employee.
* Familiar with employee’s role and work unit.
* A solid performer.
* Strong communication and interpersonal skills.
* Exemplifies MIT’s values.
* Patience and empathy.
* Well regarded and trusted by others.

Individuals can volunteer to be considered as a Buddy or recommended by others. Local Human Resources and/or the hiring manager can make the final choice based on the selection criteria.

### Buddy Responsibilities

In assisting a new employee acclimating to MIT, a Buddy serves as a valuable resource by creating a trusting relationship and maintaining confidentiality.

Responsibilities include:

* Providing information on policies and procedures.
* Identifying resources in the workplace.
* Familiarizing the employee to MIT’s culture, norms, and unwritten guidelines.
* Introducing the employee to others in the unit and throughout MIT.
* Taking the employee on an expanded tour of the workplace and campus.
* Answering questions and referring the employee to the appropriate resources.

### Suggested Structure

Ideally, there is a formal, six-month relationship between the Buddy and the new employee. Toward the end of the six months, they can discuss if and how to continue their relationship outside of the structured Buddy role. On the employee’s first or second day, introduce the Buddy and employee. This introduction can be facilitated by your local HR or the hiring manager. Discuss the Buddy’s role and responsibilities as well as the employee’s needs, and answer any questions. Ensure that the Buddy and employee meet during the first week (ideally for breakfast or lunch, if possible). Suggest and then allow the Buddy and employee to decide on the frequency, length, topics, and method of interaction between the two of them. The structure will vary. What’s important is that the arrangement is clearly defined and works for both the employee and the Buddy. Here is one of many possible examples:

**Week 1:**

* Meet for an hour (over breakfast or lunch, if possible).
* Learn about each other’s background, experience, interests, etc.
* Decide on the most important and relevant things to cover.
* Respond to any immediate questions employee may have.
* Agree on frequency, length and method of communication.

**Months 1 and 2:**

* Meet weekly for a half hour (in person).
* Be available for phone conversations and email.
* Take employee on a campus tour.
* Introduce employee to other MIT colleagues.

**Months 3 and 4:**

* Meet bi-weekly for a half hour (mix of in person and by phone).
* Be available for phone conversations and email.
* Have a check-in with employee, and local HR and hiring manager.
* Invite employee to relevant MIT business or social events, and introduce him/her to others.

**Months 5 and 6:**

* Meet monthly for an hour (in person).
* Continue introducing employee to colleagues and inviting employee to relevant business or social events.
* Decide if and how to continue the Buddy relationship. Have a wrap-up with employee, HR, and hiring manager.

Note: HR and/or the hiring manager is responsible for having a mid-point check-in and a wrap-up conversation with the employee and Buddy.

## Onboarding Buddy Suggestions and Tips

As a Buddy to a new employee, you play an integral part in helping the employee successfully acclimate to MIT. Here are some suggestions to help you in this vital role.

### Before the Employee’s First Day

* Meet with your local HR or the hiring manager to clearly define your role, and schedule a date to have lunch with the employee during his/her first week.
* If appropriate, call or email the employee. (Get contact information from local HR or hiring manager.)
* Learn about the employee. Get his/her resume or background from HR or hiring manager. Google him/her. Check LinkedIn, etc.

### On the Employee’s First Day

* Stop by the employee’s office to introduce yourself. Confirm plans to meet with the employee later that week. Give him/her your business card (or contact information).

### During the First Week

* Take the employee to lunch. Share information about yourself – how long you’ve been at MIT; what it was like when you first started; your role, interests, and hobbies. Learn about the employee’s background and interests.
* Show the employee around the working area and make introductions.
* Explain how to order equipment and supplies.
* Take a walking tour across campus.

### During the Following Months

* Plan ahead by scheduling meetings for the next several months. Meet over coffee.
* Check in with the employee in between regularly scheduled meetings to see how things are going and if he/she has any questions.
* Continue introducing the employee to others.
* Invite employee to relevant business or social events.

### Helpful Tips

* Don’t worry about being perceived as the “expert” or think you need to have all the answers. Your experience at MIT is what’s most important to the employee.
* In some situations, listening is more valuable than giving advice. Ask questions like “What do you need?” or “How can I help?”
* We all have a preferred communication style. Talk about each other’s preferences, as the new employee may have a different style from yours.
* Recognize that it takes time to develop a relationship.
* Be patient, positive, and supportive. Don’t try or expect to cover everything over a short period of time.
* Stay open minded, and avoid being judgmental.
* Maintain confidentiality.