

East Campus reopened in August as a Tier 1 dorm following two years of renovations

Joshua Oki '27: "We've quickly transformed the place into a place that feels like home."

By Kate Pearce and Vivian Hir
NEWS WRITERS

MIT's East Campus (EC) dormitory reopened in August 2025 following two years of renovations. EC initially opened in Fall 1924 as MIT's second undergraduate dormitory, housing 373 undergraduate students in two five-story buildings called the parallels. During the past century, EC has garnered a reputation for its creative, alternative, and eccentric culture.

Due to the renovations, MIT has upgraded EC from a Tier 3 to a Tier 1 dorm, featuring new amenities such as elevators, upgraded kitchens and hall lounges, and air conditioning.

Rooming costs are now \$7,498 per semester for a single. For comparison, a single in the Tier 3 dorm Random Hall costs \$6,125 per semester for the 2025-2026 academic year. New windows on the ends of the corridors allow for more natural lighting in the building. Furthermore, the hallways have large, removable mural boards for student artwork, which have already been filled with paintings of cats, hall logos, and more. These changes reflect the role of murals in EC culture since at least the 1970s.

"Living in EC feels like a fever dream," EC Executive Committee member Joshua Oki '27 said. "It's fancier than what [we] were expecting, but we've quickly transformed

the place into a place that feels like home."

From renovation to reopening

Although the renovations were announced in 2021, work did not begin until Summer 2023. According to Housing & Residential Services (HRS) Communications Director Ashley Kennedy, HRS worked together with the East Campus student government and house team, along with the Division of Student Life (DSL), to ensure a smooth transition for the reopening of EC. "Over the course of four years, student leaders and DSL staff held more than 100 meetings to work through all as-



VIVIAN HIR —THE TECH

A wooden fort constructed by East Campus residents in the East Campus courtyard on Tuesday Sept. 2, 2025.

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Flooding in Next House temporarily relocates 28

Titus Tsai '26: "Water damage, both external and internal, has plagued Next House for multiple years"



VIVIAN HIR —THE TECH

The front of Next House on Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2025.

By Sabine Chu

ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

On Aug. 20 at around 2:15 pm, a pipe in the eastern wing of Next House's fourth floor (4E) burst, causing significant water damage. This incident occurred following a routine building-wide water shutdown by Housing and Residential Services (HRS).

According to Ashley Kennedy, HRS Director of Communications and Marketing, the flooding did not result in any injuries. However, the flood caused 28 students from 25 rooms on the second, third, and fourth floors—less than ten percent of Next House's

over 350 residents—to relocate to other rooms in the dorm while also impacting three bathrooms. All affected rooms were on Next House's east side.

Affected students in 4E who had checked in prior to the flooding were offered temporary rooms in Next House that day, while those who had not yet checked in were alerted on Aug. 21. Impacted residents of the second- and third-floor eastern wings (2E and 3E) were notified of room changes on Aug. 22.

Titus Tsai '26, a 4E resident, told *The Tech* that he received an email regarding the incident at 4:00 pm on Aug. 20. Although Tsai did not witness the flooding, he was told that

the water was ankle-deep. His room, including several cardboard boxes, was "heavily water damaged," which included a charging strip "beyond any hope of repair." Between spoiled food and laundry costs, the second of which MIT covered, Tsai estimated from \$70 to \$90 of damage from flooding. As of Aug. 28, Tsai believed that he had spent 10 to 15 hours moving items to his new room.

Despite the accommodations, Tsai found some aspects of HRS' response insufficient. In particular, Tsai noted that although he was given a temporary room, which he used as a

Flooding, Page 2

77 out of 113 first-year students receive FYRE offers, a significant increase from 30 out of 108 in 2024

Next House and East Campus had the highest number of move-outs with 17, followed by MacGregor with 12

By Vivian Hir

NEWS EDITOR

This year, 113 first-year students participated in the First-Year Resident Exchange (FYRE), a program that allows first-year students to

move to another dorm during orientation week.

The FYRE application was open during the annual Residence Exploration (REX), a multi-day experience in which first-year students could explore MIT's dorms through a total of

360 events held by dorm residents. The FYRE application was open from Aug. 23 to Aug. 27, and results were released on Aug. 27. A total of 77 first-year students were granted successful moves, a significant increase from the 30 successful students in 2024. The success rate more than doubled within a year, jumping from 27.8% in 2024 to 68.1% in 2025.

In a statement to *The Tech*, HRS Director of Communications and Marketing Ashley Kennedy stated that the reopening of East Campus did not affect the number of successful matches, and the considerable increase in move-in success rates could be attributed to bed openings from cancellations and one-to-one matches, among other factors. "Student moves during FYRE happen for a number of reasons, from personal to practical, so it's difficult to draw conclusions about motives based on switch numbers," Kennedy wrote.

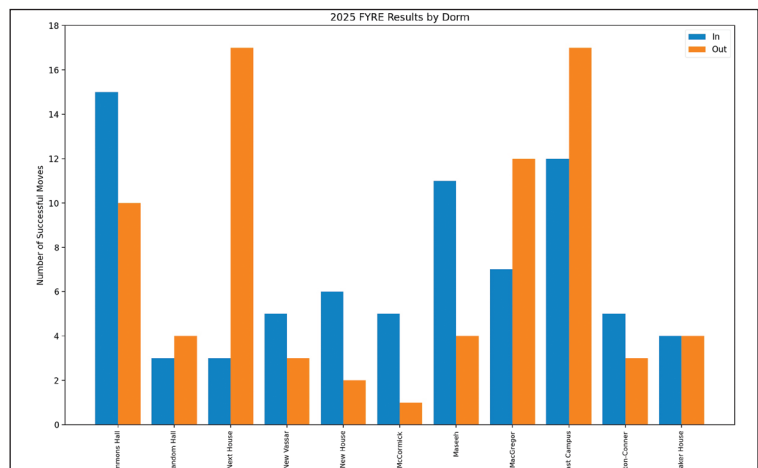
In regards to changes to FYRE, Kennedy stated that HRS has not observed a major trend in the number

of FYRE applicants "over the last few years." She added that the process "fluctuates from year to year" based on the number of direct matches for a building switch.

Housing and Residential Services (HRS) provided *The Tech* with annual FYRE results data starting from 2017. According to the data, the highest numbers of moves and requests were 89 and 139, respectively, in 2018; the highest move-in success rate was 70.8% in 2021.

The residence halls with the highest number of move-ins were Simmons Hall (15), followed by East Campus (12) and Maseeh (11). In terms of move-outs, Next House and East Campus had the highest number (17), followed by MacGregor (12). On the other hand, McCormick and New House had the lowest number of move-outs, which were 1 and 2, respectively.

Students who want to switch dormitories during the academic year can enter the spring building switch lottery, which opens on Oct. 8 and closes on Oct. 22.



VIVIAN HIR —THE TECH

2025 FYRE results for each residence hall. Data was provided by MIT Housing and Residential Services (HRS).

9/4 IN SHORT

The registration deadline is Friday, Sep. 5.

The degree application deadline for February SB degrees is Friday, Sep. 5.

First quarter PE & Wellness classes begin on Monday, Sep. 8.

The MIT Community Ice Cream Social at Kresge Oval will be held on Monday, Sept. 8.

The last day to add half-term subjects in the first half of term is Friday, Sep. 12.

Interested in joining *The Tech*? Email tt-join@mit.edu.

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XKCD BY RANDALL
MONROE

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ANOTHER INSTALLMENT OF
MEET THE MINDS

Professor Danna Freedman is the new director of Quantum@MIT. SCIENCE, p. 5



NICKI MINAJ CHALLENGE

To do or not to do? ARTS, p. 4

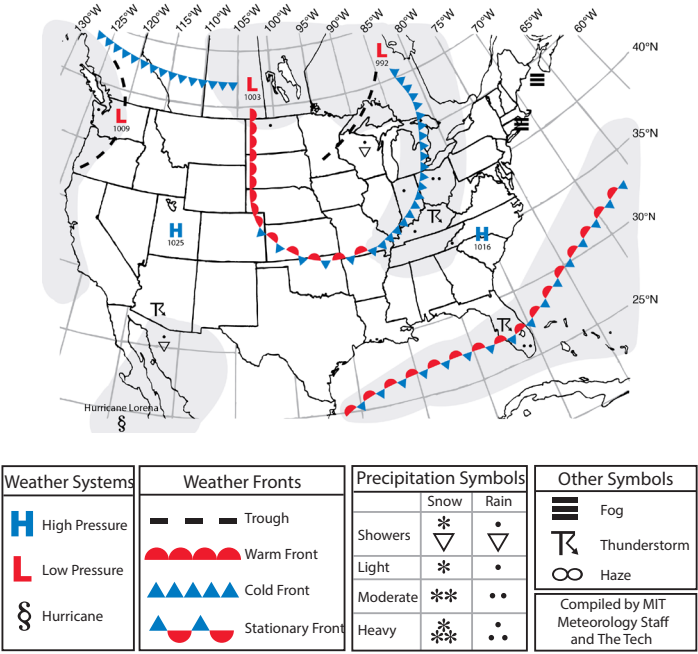
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WEATHER FORECAST



Warmer weekend to round out the summer

By Conrad Straden
METEOROLOGIST

Lots of stellar days this past week. Today is no exception with a high in the upper 70s and a gentle breeze. Overnight a slight disturbance moves through possibly bringing some light rain showers early tomorrow morning. It then warms up into the low 80s on Friday and Saturday, with a decent chance for some thunderstorms Saturday evening. Expect elevated southerly winds with strong gusts coming from the Boston side of the river. A cold front moves through behind the thunderstorms so temperatures on Sunday morning will feel fresh. Next week remains cool, with highs in the low 70s and lots of sunshine! Lastly, the tropics remain relatively quiet, with only a disturbance off the coast of Africa that may develop over the next 7 days.

SEPTEMBER 4 SITUATION FOR NOON (ET)

Extended Forecast
Today: Sunny. High around 78°F (26°C). South winds 5-10 mph.
Tonight: Chance of light rain. Low around 65°F (18°C). South winds 5-10 mph, gusting to 30 mph.
Friday: Partly cloudy. High 83°F (28°C) and overnight low 68°F (20°C). South winds 13-18 mph.
Saturday: Partly cloudy. Chance for thunderstorms late. High 82°F (28°C) and overnight low 60°F (16°C). South winds 10-15 mph.
Sunday: Much cooler. Partly cloudy. High 70°F (21°C) and overnight low 52°F (11°C). Northwest winds 5-10 mph.

Three major committees oversaw EC’s reopening

East Campus, from Page 1

pects of the project, from designing floor layouts to determining policies before reopening,” Kennedy wrote.

The East Campus Reopening Committee (ECRC), one of the three major committees, oversaw the development of EC-specific policies, including guidelines for murals and East Campus Approved Cats (ECACs). In addition, the committee was responsible for selecting items and furnishings for spaces such as the makerspace, fitness room, and music room, collaborating with architectural firm William Rawn Associates. Students contributed by choosing wall colors and advocating for amenities, including enlarged floor lounges, enhanced kitchen appliances to support students cooking for themselves, and a pinball machine in Talbot Lounge.

Residents, however, have reported conflict with HRS regarding muraling policies and flag placement. While murals were once painted directly on the walls of hallways, rooms, and doors, the new policy restricts painting to removable panels. According to the EC renovation FAQ page, there are no official plans for ceiling or in-room murals.

During renovations, EC residents were relocated to other on-campus dorms. According to EC Head of House Sandy Alexandre, the EC community used a dedicated lounge space in the Student Center basement to preserve “a sense of community despite being dispersed.” Furthermore, the EC house team hired a Community Liaison each year (Regina Lee and Katherine Pan), a graduate student who took on an “expanded role” of a GRA, who worked with Area Director Kat Howell to support students in the EC community. “All of these efforts combined allowed students to continue affiliating with their original halls, even while living across different dorms,” Alexandre wrote.

Alexandre also stated that guaranteeing a smooth transition from EC’s renovation phase to its reopening can be difficult, given that each resident approaches “shared living in their own way.” As a result, Alexandre and Associate Head of House Joaquin Terrones ’99 hosted a listening tour right before the reopening of the dorm to learn more about residents’ thoughts, concerns, and goals for their living space. Alexandre found the listening tour “valuable” as it provided a “pulse on the community” and an idea of the dorm’s “shared norms.” Despite

the challenges that come with reopening, she is excited to return to EC after renovations. “It feels great to be home,” Alexandre wrote.

For House Operations Manager Nicholas Perron, a new member of the EC house team, it has been enjoyable meeting the residents and learning about each of the ten halls’ unique floor cultures. What stood out to Perron was how the renovations “balanced the preservation of historic architectural details with the modernization of building systems and infrastructure.”

EC President Hanu Snyder ’26 and Vice President River Adkins ’26 did not respond to *The Tech’s* request for comment by the time of publication.

Continuing traditions and culture

Despite the renovations, EC residents were proactive in transmitting their dorm culture to the next generation of MIT undergraduates. Many EC traditions are location-dependent; for example, FredFest and Build use the EC courtyard. As a result, the Executive Committee put tremendous effort into publicizing events and enforcing attendance at House Committee meetings.

According to ECRC member Evan Barkho ’27, many parts of EC culture have “stayed con-

tinuous,” particularly through initiatives like the East Campus website and the sustained rushing of first-year students. EC affiliates continued to host “hall rush” events over the past two years to recruit members of the classes of 2027 and 2028 onto their halls; many of these recruits have become permanent members of these halls. Resident Ace Chun ’28 said that the EC community “has been trying really hard to bring back the sense of home and freedom of expression that defined and welcomed students prior to renovations.”

East Campus continued their tradition of “Build” for Residential Exploration (REX) 2025, which has taken place on the EC courtyard since before 2002; in 2023 and 2024, EC affiliates constructed a three-story-tall wooden fort on Briggs Field. This year, with the reopening of the EC courtyard, residents constructed the fort on their own grounds, along with a twenty-seven-foot tall wooden roller coaster. The construction was sponsored by Thrive Capital.

“It’s kind of awesome to wake up every morning and see a bunch of people working on the coaster at 10:00 AM,” EC Executive Committee member James Randall ’28 said. “There’s so much stuff we can do. Everybody’s so creative. Everybody’s brilliant. It’s peak.”

Repair to be done by 9/21

Flooding, from Page 1

space to dry and store items, he was given less than 48 hours over a weekend to move all materials out of his room. Some items were also removed from his original room without Tsai’s consent, and the electricity was also turned off without his knowledge. In addition, Tsai noted that Next House had also experienced water issues from plumbing and the weather in 2023 and 2024. He said that HRS was “essentially negligent in the upkeep of the dorm” and did not provide “proactive” flood protection.

Another 4E resident, Filbert Ephraim Wu ’28, received an email regarding his room before checking in. When moving in on Aug. 23,

Wu found a note on his door instructing him to transfer to another room in a different wing. Wu, who previously installed a thermometer that measures temperature and humidity in his original room, shared that “water began entering [his] room at around 2:08 pm on August 20.” Wu thanked the Next House executive team, the graduate resident advisors, and HRS for their quick response.

Next House student leadership did not respond to a request for comment by the time of publication. HRS stated that contractors will dry and repair rooms until Sept. 17. Following a staggered move-in schedule, all residents are expected to return to their assigned rooms by Sept. 21.

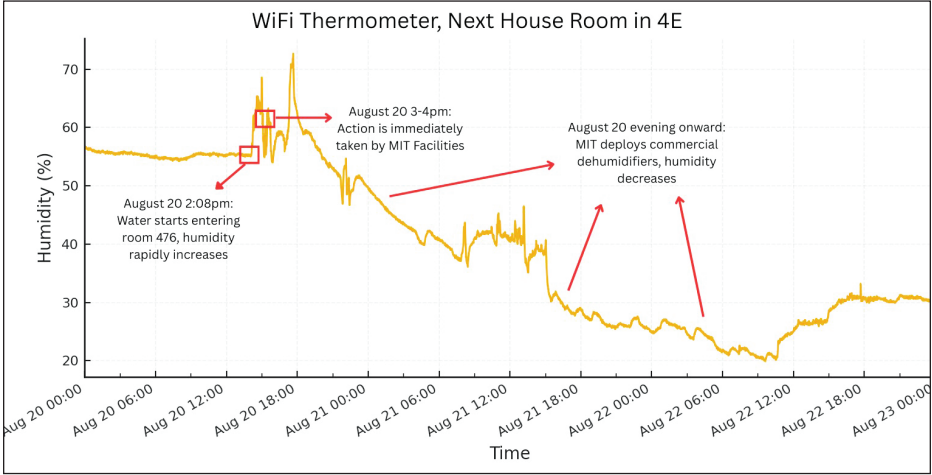


FIGURE PROVIDED BY FILBERT EPHRAIM WU ’28.

A graph illustrating changes in humidity in a 4E room in Next House due to the flood from Aug. 20 to Aug. 23.



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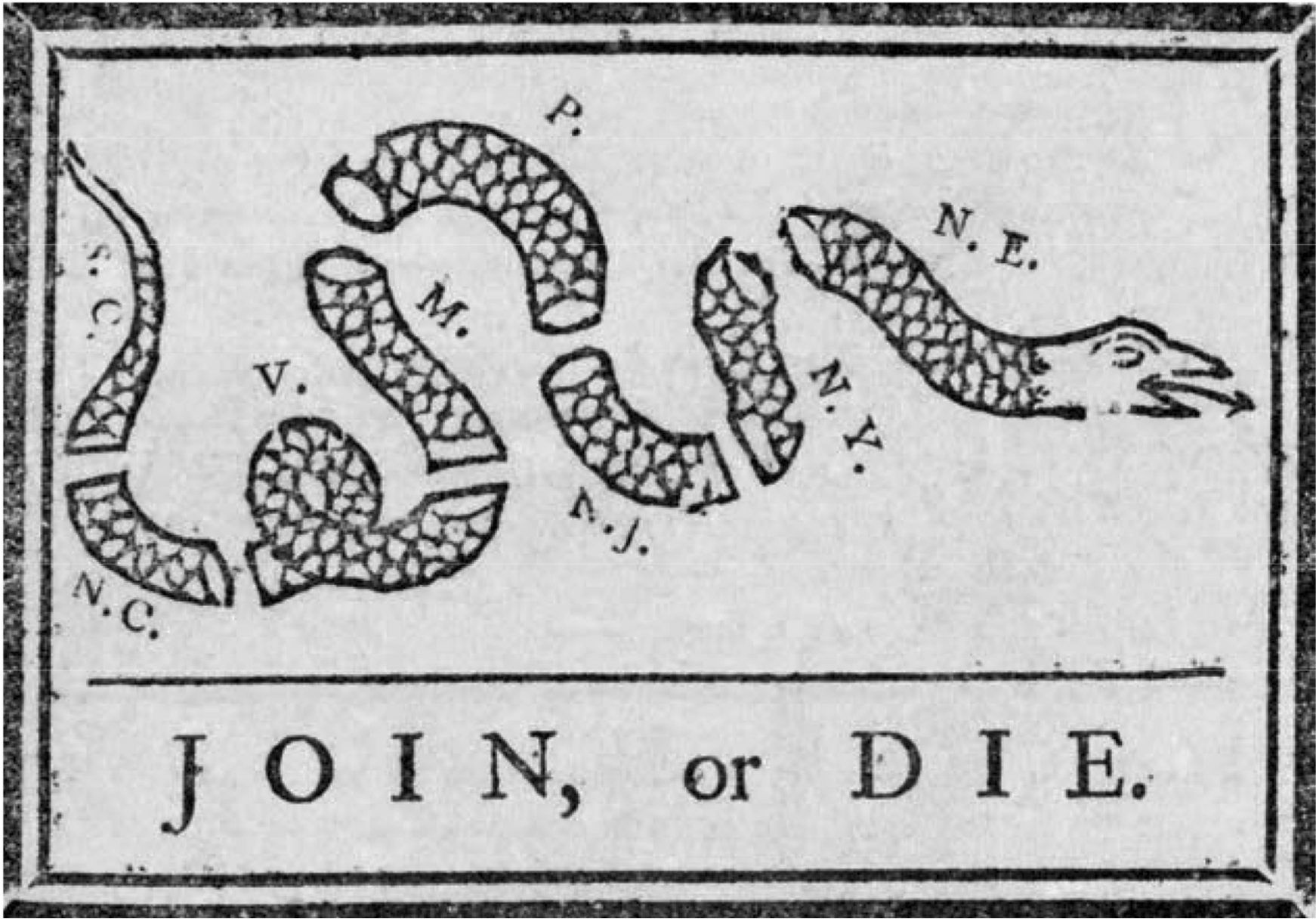
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POP CULTURE

Is it safe to do the Nicki Minaj challenge?

Netizens are trying increasingly difficult iterations of this position but run a risk of injury



CONTENT FROM TIKTOK @LIVINONATRIL, @JONESJUNCTIONDOTCOM, @THEDNACUPLE
Participants in the Nicki Minaj Challenge on TikTok have balanced on a number of precarious platforms, including a horseback (@livinonatrail), a car tire (@jonesjunction-dotcom), and a Jenga tower block (@thednacouple).

By Damian Gold
ARTS WRITER

Acrobatics have become trendy on TikTok with a new quad-activating exercise: balancing in a squatted position on one foot, crossing the legs, in high heels.

Known as the Nicki Minaj Challenge, the trend recalls the music video for the hit song “High School” by Nicki Minaj, one of the most recognized rappers of the twenty-first century. Just thirty-four seconds into the music video, Minaj strikes this gravity-defying pose by a swimming pool. Some of the top YouTube comments under the video were posted in the last week, with some users writing that Minaj’s songs are timeless, and others, mentioning the resurgence of this song in conjunction with the Nicki Minaj Challenge, subtly nodding to the long-lived reign of the “Queen of Rap.”

Over 125,000 posts have been made under the hashtag #nickiminajchallenge on TikTok, with the top videos presenting elaborate escalations in the difficulty of the Nicki Minaj pose: in one video, Alexandra Noyes, a stay-at-home-mom content creator, struck the pose while holding her children; in another, Dan and Ary, wedded content creators, posted a video where Ary strikes the Nicki Minaj pose on a tower of Jenga blocks.

Other social media users have attempted the Nicki Minaj on dumbbells, textbooks in the operating room, and water bottles.

Some businesses with social media presence have caught onto the Nicki Minaj challenge to expand their audience reach and, in some instances, to show off their alignment with their youthful, energetic target audience. Jones Junction, a Maryland-based car dealership, posted a video where a man balances the pose on a car tire. Essence Cosmetics flashed their jelly grip hydrating primer, which only offers a couple inches in diameter of support, as the foundation on which a woman strikes the pose in another video.

So, the big question: is it safe to do the Nicki Minaj challenge? While the Nicki Minaj challenge has been shown successfully in a number of outlandish setups, one mom influencer, Mariana Vasiuc, shared a video of her falling from a kitchen counter-top while attempting the Nicki Minaj pose just two months after giving birth, causing serious spinal injury. If you would prefer to strike the pose without risking injury, some users have even offered tutorials on faking the Nicki Minaj pose, with other users posting their fake versions of the poses, including those generated with the help of artificial intelligence.

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2025–2026 MIND AND HAND BOOK

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LATYR NIANG—THE TECH
Back to school 2025: MIT’s beaver finds itself out the door, as the real question becomes not if but when robots and large language models will take over education.

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MEET THE MINDS

Meet Professor Danna Freedman, the new Director of Quantum@MIT

Freedman: “We are the leaders in every area of quantum, and we are very well poised to integrate our efforts with end users to connect with applications

By **Veronika Moroz**
SCIENCE EDITOR

As a PhD student studying single-molecule magnets in the early 2000s, Danna Freedman was procrastinating on writing her first paper when she stumbled upon a fundamental disconnect in her field.

“In that area, a lot of papers had an introduction that said that single-molecule magnets were useful for quantum computing,” Freedman recalled. “And I realized that to actually meet the goals of the introduction required an almost orthogonal set of design principles.”

Inspired by the idea of “design[ing] molecules and control[ing] their coherence properties,” Freedman began thinking about how to regulate the fundamental quantum properties of molecules instead of their macroscopic magnetic moments.

20 years later, Freedman, who is now the Frederick George Keyes Professor of Chemistry, is still at it, but her lab’s focus has shifted from molecule-based quantum computing to controlling the physical properties of a molecule by “tell[ing] atoms where to go,” particularly in fields like emergent materials, high-pressure materials discovery, and quantum information science. Her work has won accolades such as a MacArthur Fellowship and the American Chemical Society Award in Pure Chemistry. This August, it earned her the position of director of Quantum@MIT, a new Institute-wide initiative to accelerate quantum research.

A second quantum revolution
“One could make a case that MIT started the second quantum revolution,” Freedman said, referring to events ranging from physicist Richard Feynman’s 1981 MIT talk that envisioned a quantum computer to the development of the Quantum Adiabatic Algorithm and MIT Professor Peter Shor’s algorithm—

an algorithm that uses quantum computers to prime factorize large numbers with unprecedented efficiency.

While a normal computer stores information in units called “bits,” which are either zeros or ones, a quantum computer works by storing information in quantum bits (“qubits”), where each unit contains a combination of zero and one known as a superposition.

“The most intuitive thing to a chemist,” Freedman explained, is to represent the qubits as nuclei. For example, a hydrogen atom’s nucleus can spin in a way that either aligns with or against the magnetic field of its environment. Quantum mechanics states that it’s only possible to estimate the probability that the nucleus is spinning a certain way, but forbids knowledge of the spin direction at a specific time. So scientists represent the nucleus’s spin direction as a superposition of the two possible spin directions. This is the principle behind nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy, which chemists use to ascertain the structure of a molecule.

In the 20th century, the guiding principle of the first quantum revolution was the realization that atoms are quantum particles and that the world is fundamentally quantum. Now, in the second quantum revolution, the goal is to harness these quantum properties to create better technology, according to the National Institute for Science and Technology.

While the “idealized form” of quantum computing is a “multi-decade problem,” Freedman believes that humanity will eventually have “fully functional quantum computers” that “impact the way that we think about computing fundamentally and change how we address challenges across a range of disciplines.”

In the meantime, Freedman predicts that many breakthroughs will come from research in quantum sensing, which detects changes in motion, electric fields, and magnetic fields



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE JOHN D. AND CATHERINE T. MACARTHUR FOUNDATION.

Frederick George Keyes Professor of Chemistry Danna Freedman poses in Killian court.

on an atomic level. “Being able to harness quantum to understand the world around us beyond the specific features of quantum is a key area for the next five years of discovery,” she said.

Developing with the end product in mind

Just as Freedman guided her single-molecule magnet research toward quantum applications as a PhD student, her vision for Quantum@MIT is motivated by the problems quantum computing could help solve.

“We are the leaders in every area of quantum, and we are very well poised to integrate our efforts with end users to connect with applications,” Freedman said. She highlighted the broader potential applications of the second quantum revolution, such as “identifying a new quasiparticle” and “understanding a biological problem that has stymied researchers.”

“A lot of quantum is comprised of what are fundamentally tools: quantum computers, quantum sensors, quantum networks,”

Freedman explained. “These are valuable and complicated systems, but none of them exist without a challenge [to solve].”

To better identify these challenges, Freedman is focused on broadening her definition of “quantum stakeholders” to include people who will use these new algorithms, hardware, sensors, and computers. By connecting quantum researchers to future quantum users, she hopes to “define our field and move it forward.”

“I think that there is a lot of hope pinned on quantum in a lot of different areas,” Professor Freedman said. By leading Quantum@MIT, she is working to “be a good steward of this field,” enabling the MIT community to “meet the promise of quantum.”

Thank you to Michal Lipiec '28 for fact-checking the science in this article!

The Meet the Minds series focuses on creating holistic profiles of scientists at MIT. If you or someone you know is interested in being interviewed about the role your science plays in your life, please reach out to Science Editor Veronika Moroz at tt-science-editors@mit.edu.

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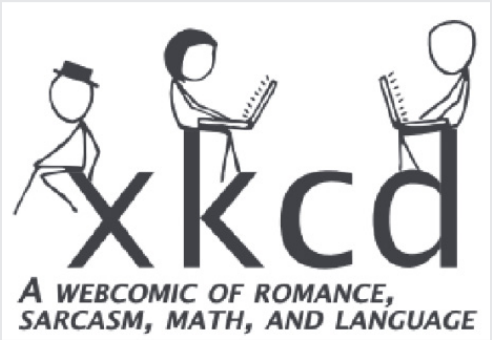
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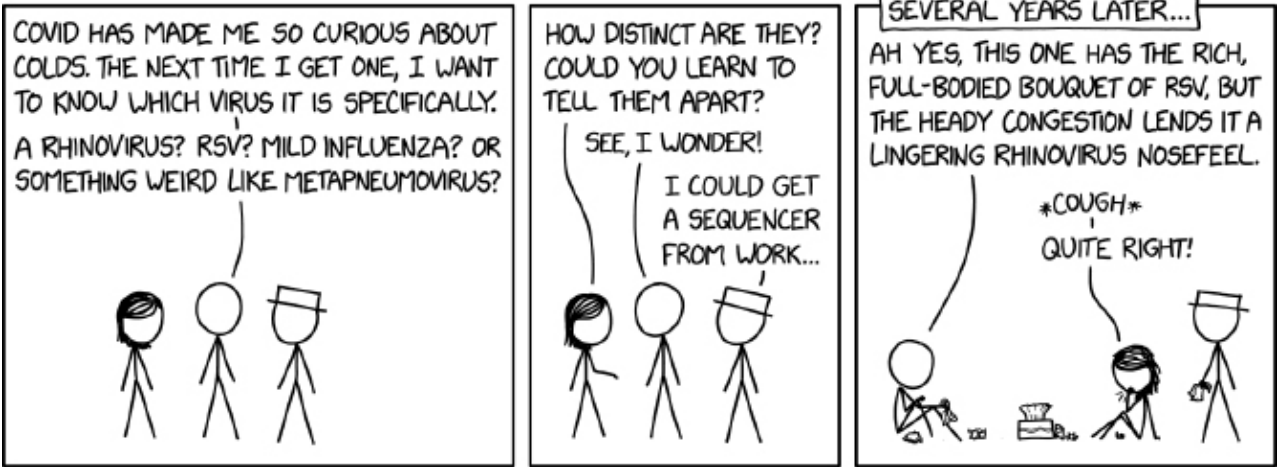
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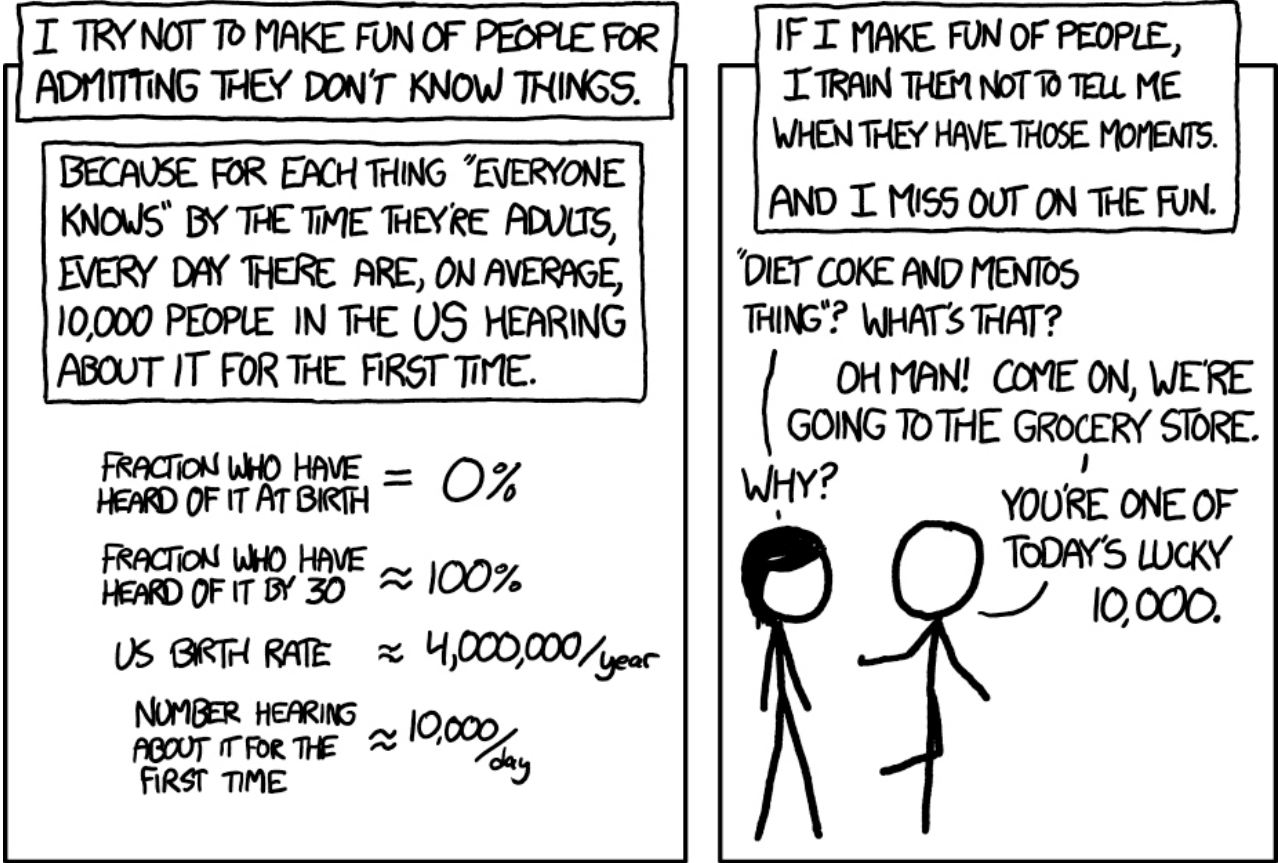
by Randall Munroe

[2535] Common Cold Viruses



"It's not an influenza, but the onset has notes of the '09 H1N1 strain." "Ah yes, that was a good year for H1N1."

[1053] Ten Thousand



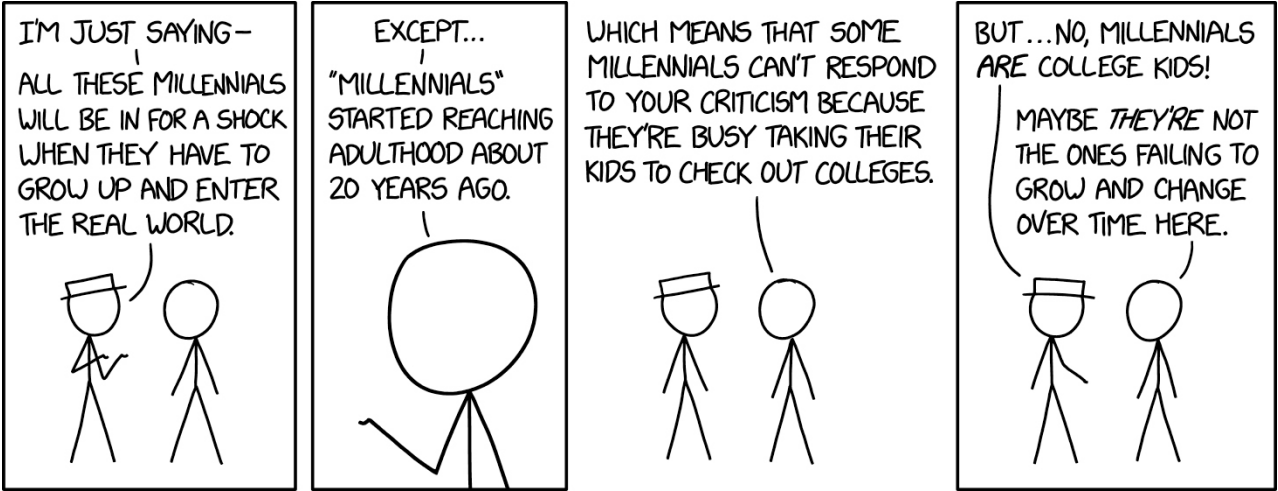
Saying 'what kind of an idiot doesn't know about the Yellowstone supervolcano' is so much more boring than telling someone about the Yellowstone supervolcano for the first time.

[1035] Cadbury Eggs



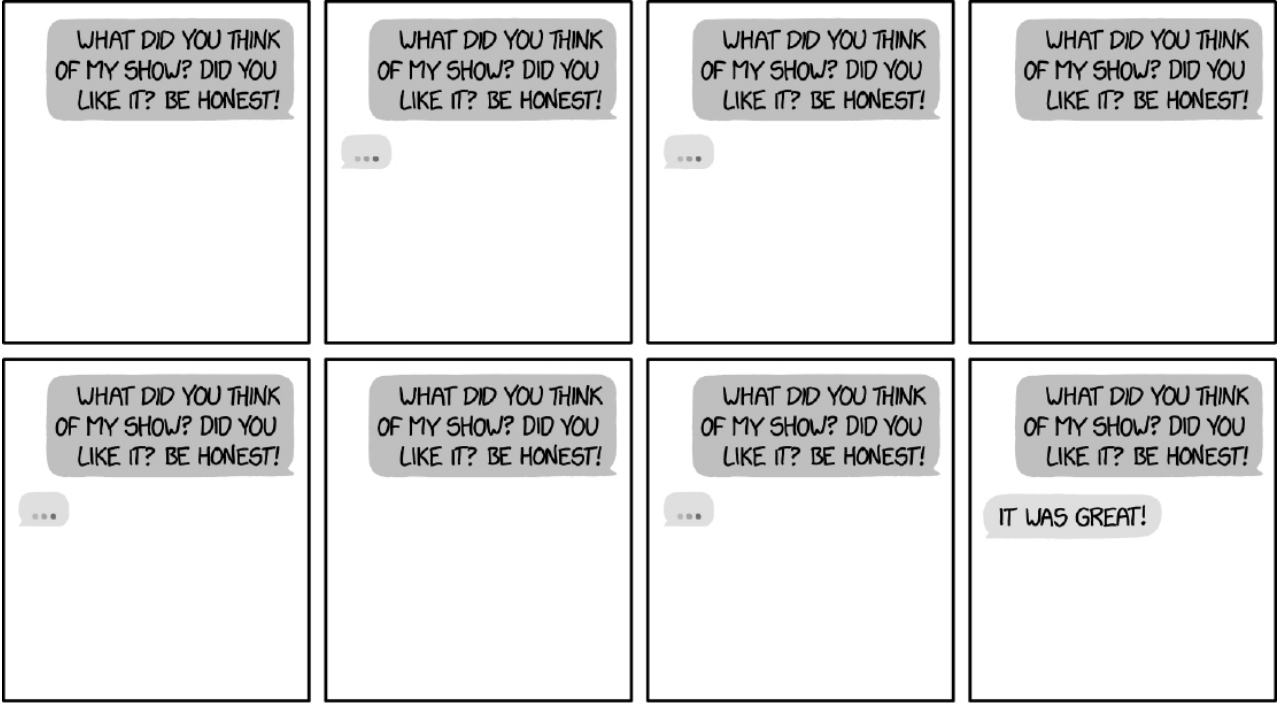
When they moved production from New Zealand to the UK and switched from the runny white centers to the thick, frosting-like filling, it got way harder to cook them scrambled.

[2165] Millennials



Ironically, I've been having these same arguments for at least a decade now. I thought we would have moved on by now, but somehow the snide complaints about millennials continue.

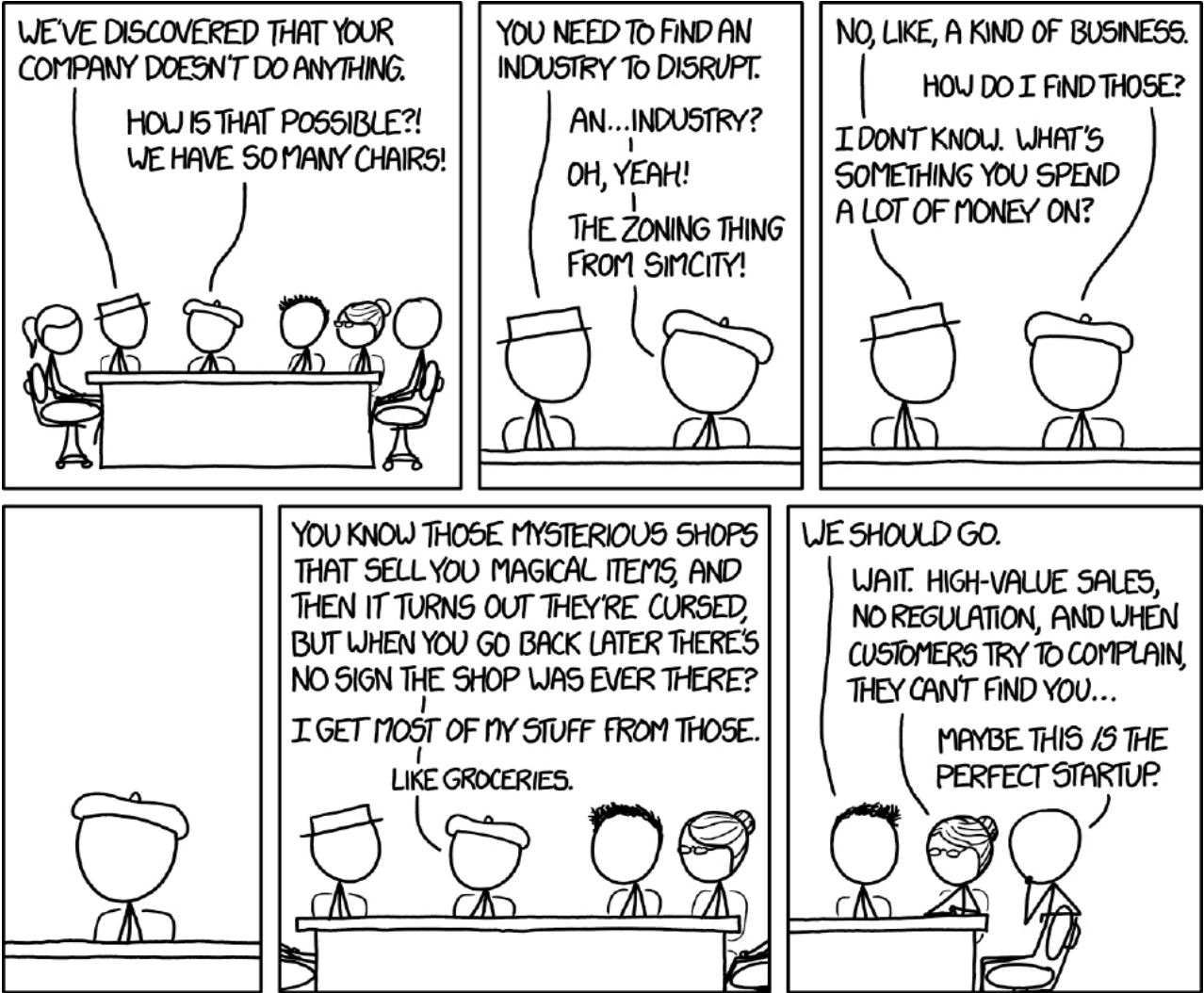
[1886] Typing Notifications



MY LEAST FAVORITE ASPECT OF TYPING NOTIFICATIONS

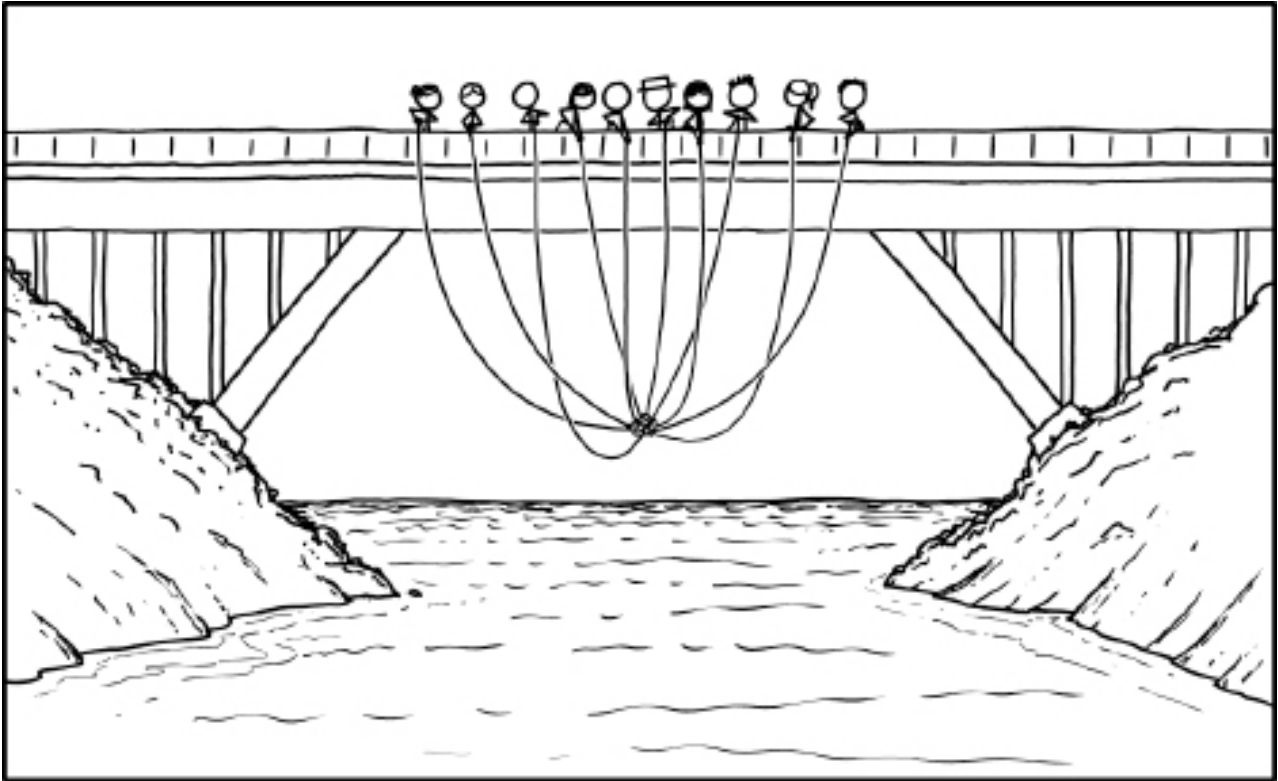
Over the years I've decided I'd rather have them on than not, but I'm glad there aren't notifications. compose a reply to you"has opened a blank note to

[1772] Startup Opportunity



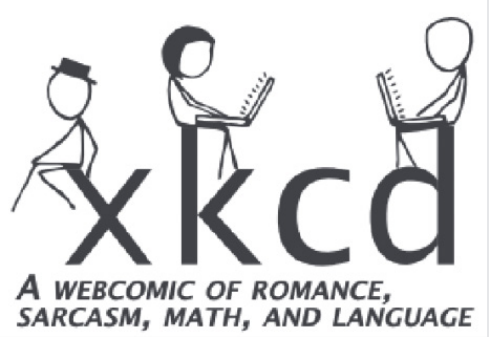
While there's no formal regulation, it turns out their industry group is NOT one you want mad at you.

[2944] Magnet Fishing



THE FIRST, AND LAST, WORLD MAGNET FISHING CHAMPIONSHIP

The ten-way tie was judged a ten-way tie, so no one won the grand prize, a rare fishing monopole.



by Randall Munroe

SPONSORED REVIEW

Life Alive brings the food alive

In September, Life Alive is partnering with Dr. Uma Naidoo for the Open Your Mind Challenge

Life Alive
Organic Cafe

Multiple locations

Reviewed at the
Kendall Square
location

“...Life Alive has the perfect menu of feel-good, taste-good, beautiful food.”

By Peter Pu
BUSINESS EDITOR

Editor-in-chief’s note: *This is a sponsored review by Life Alive Organic Cafe.*

It’s a common tradition to credit the food that “made” you. Bill Gates’ college years always have a cameo of the pizza at Pinnochio’s, and Jensen’s Huang early career stories never fail to include the pancakes at Denny’s. One of the restaurants that has been a staple in my college years—whether eating alone, with friends, or with my UROP supervisor—is Life Alive Organic Café in Kendall Square. From grain and acai bowls to salads and colorful smoothies, Life Alive has the perfect menu of feel-good, taste-good, beautiful food. And now, it’s getting better. For the month of September, Life Alive has created the Open Your Mind Challenge in partnership with Dr. Uma Naidoo, director of nutritional and lifestyle psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital and faculty at Harvard Medical School. The premise of the challenge is to introduce simple food habits to strengthen your gut microbiome, support a healthy mind and body, and give you a boost for the rush of back-to-school season. Each week, focus on incorporating a single nutrition tip to help your brain health.

Week 1: Color Week.

When it comes to gut health, variety is everything. Each color in plant foods represents a different set of nutrients and beneficial plant compounds, particularly polyphenols, which act as antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents. By eating a rainbow of fruits, vegetables, herbs, and spices, you’re not only keeping meals exciting, you’re also providing a wide array of prebiotics to feed your beneficial gut bacteria. At Life Alive, try the Rainbow Harvest, the Farmhouse Cobb, or the Green Energy Smoothie Bowl.

Week 2: Fiber Week.

Fiber is one of the most underrated superfoods. Fiber is the favorite fuel of our gut microbes. When we eat more fiber, we feed the beneficial bacteria that keep our gut lining healthy, regulate inflammation, and even produce short-chain fatty acids



IMAGE COURTESY OF LIFE ALIVE

(SCFAs) that are linked to improved mood and cognitive function. At Life Alive, try the Love Child Smoothie, the Summer Falafel, or the Avocado Toast.

Week 3: Omega-3 Week.

One of the most common dietary imbalances in the modern Western world is the ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids. When metabolized, omega-6 fatty acids have an inflammatory effect on the body while omega-3s are anti-inflammatory. Ideally, this ratio of these two fats should be

somewhere between 1:1 and 4:1. But today, thanks to an overabundance of processed seed oils (like soybean, corn, and sunflower oil) and too little omega-3-rich foods (like wild caught fatty fish, nuts and seeds), the average person’s ratio is closer to 15:1 or even 20:1. This shift has been linked to the rise in chronic inflammation. At Life Alive, try the Green Goddess Bowl, the Rainbow Nori Wrap, or the Strawberries & Cream Power Chia.

Week 4: Ferments Week.

Fermented foods are one of the most powerful ways to introduce beneficial probiotics into your diet. These foods, which include yogurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut, miso, and kombucha, naturally contain live microbes that can help replenish, diversify and strengthen your gut microbiome. Research shows that regularly consuming fermented foods not only boosts gut health but also reduces inflammation and supports better communication between the gut and brain. At

Life Alive, try the Miso Tofu Ramen, the Avocado Greens, or the Ginger Kombucha.

The challenge also debuts with a new smoothie. The Open Your Mind Smoothie features fiber & antioxidant rich blueberries, blue spirulina and pineapple, vitamin-c packed ginger and lemon, focus enhancing lion’s mane mushroom and gut-supporting coconut yogurt. The cold, refreshing blueberry goes beautifully with the citrus flavors from the lemon and pineapple.

The science of the challenge comes from Dr. Uma’s research on the gut-brain connection. Your brain and gut are intricately connected. They developed from the same cell when you were in utero and stayed connected through the vagus nerve your entire life. Think of your gut-brain axis like a sophisticated communication network between your digestive system and your mind. This two-way highway doesn’t just process food—it processes emotions, stress responses, and cognitive function. When your

gut microbiome is diverse and balanced, you get clearer thinking, stable energy, and better stress resilience. When it’s disrupted by poor diet, lack of sleep, or chronic stress, you can experience brain fog, mood swings, and that overwhelmed feeling that makes everything harder. By making small, intentional shifts to how we eat, we can support a thriving gut microbiome, and in turn, nourish our brains.

“For me, it has been fascinating to see Nutritional Psychiatry come to life through the delicious menu offerings at Life Alive,” Dr. Uma said. “They take great care in ensuring the nutrition of their food, incorporating the healthy brain food principles from my books, while never compromising on flavor. I’ve found that food claiming to be ‘healthy’ isn’t always truly good for you—Life Alive genuinely delivers on what they promise.”

For the month of September, use code “TECH” for \$3 off your Open Your Mind Smoothie on Life Alive’s app or website.

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TECH
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Open Your
Mind smoothie
through the Life
Alive website or
app.

Offer only valid in the
month of September.