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The reversible recruitment of intracellular protein complexes to membranes is essential for immune cell functions, including chemotaxis, phagocytosis and signalling. Such recruitment is often controlled by phosphorylated derivatives of phosphatidylinositol, known as phosphoinositides. These lipids also serve to activate enzyme systems that carry out complex reactions such as chromatin remodelling and pre-mRNA processing. This volume of Current Topics in Microbiology and Immunology provides an overview of how phosphoinositides function in protein recruitment and enzyme activation and presents physiologically important examples of protein–phosphoinositide interactions.