

We understand it is important for you to stay in contact with your student while he/she is abroad. There are many ways to facilitate communication overseas without breaking the bank, but we encourage you to choose the method that works best for you and your student. Many of the best and free options for international communication require access to WiFi or the use of data.

Video and Voice Calls

Many families choose video and voice calls to stay in touch with their student while he/she is abroad. Using a cell phone abroad without an international plan or use of a local cell phone can be expensive. However, there are free options for communicating. Skype is available on computers and as an app that can be used on smartphones. When connected to WiFi, Skype can facilitate both video and voice calls between users for free.

Skype can also be used to call a Skype user from a regular cell phone or landline if WiFi cannot be accessed. This service is not free but is cheaper than purchasing international phone plans. Learn more about Skype and download it on your device by following this link to its website.

FaceTime is free and accessible for iPhone and MacBook users when connected to WiFi. Learn more about how to use FaceTime on your device by following this link.

Viber can be downloaded on your smartphone or desktop and facilitates voice calls between Viber users when connected to WiFi or through data. Learn more about Viber and download it on your device by following this link to its website.

Google offers two services that can be used for voice and video chat. GoogleVoice allows users to make voice calls from a computer. Google Hangout facilitates video calls between users.

There are also traditional methods of communication such as international calling cards. While not as popular, are still an option for those who prefer it.

Text Messaging

Text messaging is the most common method of instant communication, but requires a cell phone and can be expensive when international. Just like video and voice calling, students can purchase international plans or chose one of the following options that are free of charge. iMessage is used between iPhone users and offers free international communication when connected to WiFi. To make sure your iMessage is activated on your iPhone, go to Settings, select Messages, make sure iMessage is turned on, and wait for it to activate. iMessage is activated when your text bubbles are blue.

WhatsApp is a smartphone app that allows users to text each other using data or WiFi and is free of charge. Learn more about WhatsApp and download it to your device by following this link.

WeChat is similar to WhatsApp and is popular in Asia. Learn more about WeChat and download it to your device by following this link.

Email

Email is a popular method of communication these days and is free between international users. Some email servers provide free additional services that can also be used for communication, such as GoogleVoice and GoogleHangout with a Gmail account.

Social Networks

Many people are already active on social networks and are great for keeping track of your student's activity. Networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, or Blogs are free and easy to use.

AlertTraveler

AlertTraveler is a mobile application for iOS and Android devices that utilizes GPS and your travel itinerary. AlertTraveler provides you with country and city intelligence to help you make informed decisions while traveling, safety and security alerts to let you know of any events that could potentially impact your travel or safety, and an instant check-in option allowing you to report your status back to administrators and travel advisors at your institution in case of an incident. To learn more, check out the AlertTraveler tab on TerraDotta homepage.

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