

# Communicating from Abroad

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Technology has made getting in touch with friends and family back home extremely easy and affordable. Here are some options...

## Phones

- **International cell phone:** You may wish to obtain an international cell phone before leaving the US. However, it is just as easy to purchase a disposable phone upon arrival in your host country. These phones usually come with prepaid minutes, are reloadable, and make communication with classmates and friends easier. These phones are generally very affordable and useful for students abroad. They can also be very inexpensive as they are pay as you go. These phones are best for communicating within a country, not for calling friends and family back home. Make sure you ask the clerk at the store help you to switch the phone to English and ask them how to check your remaining balance
- **Using your own mobile phone:** Sometimes, using your own phone can be beneficial. Make sure to check how much you will be charged before leaving! You will usually be charged a lot more for using your phone outside of the country. You can even be charged for incoming calls that you don't answer. Make sure you get a comprehensive view of all the charges possible. You also need to make sure that your phone will actually work abroad, contact your service provider to do this. When crossing borders, you will usually get a text message explaining how to use their services and how much it costs. You can also rent a phone that works in Europe from your service provider.
- **Buying a sim card:** If you have an unlocked phone, you can buy a sim card once you are abroad. These can be used in your phone and help you avoid higher charges. Each sim card costs about 5-15 dollars. You will save money buying the card once you get there instead of buying a European card in the U.S. It is also a good idea to buy them from a mobile phone shop rather than a news stand. Make sure you ask the clerk at the store help you to switch the phone to English and ask them how to check your remaining balance.
- **Using public phones:** Public pay phones are also widely available. If you wish, you can usually get by just using these. If calling the U.S, you will need to use a phone card. Also, check to see if your hotel or the place you are staying has a phone you can use. If there is an emergency and you don't have a calling card, don't forget about collect calls. These will charge the person answering for the call.
- **Texting Apps:** Some apps, which you can get on most smart phones, iPods, etc., allow you to text from that device you are using abroad to a cell phone in the U.S. These apps can be a great resource but please make sure they are not charging you or the recipients before you use them! Text Now free is a good place to start.

## Internet

- **Skype:** This is a fabulous option for contacting the U.S. and fellow students in your host country. Skype offers free laptop to laptop calls and extremely cheap laptop to phone calls. Signing up For Skype is free of charge and easy to do on the Skype website. Skype also includes the possibility of using a webcam so you can see the people you are talking to back home as well. It also offers an instant messaging option.

- **E-mail:** You will have some kind of email access at most program sites. Check your email regularly and email your family often so they know you are doing well. Also email the Global Engagement Center periodically to update us with your status so we know how you are doing. Email can be a quick and easy communication tool.
- **Facebook:** is an amazing way to stay in contact with friends and family back home. Facebook chat gives you the opportunity to IM with friends for free as well. You can share photos of your new school, friends, and places that you have traveled. However, some countries like China restrict access to websites like this. You also need to take into account the time change. If you want to talk to friends or family, make sure you plan to be on Facebook at appropriate times.
- **Blog:** Blogs are easily accessed from the internet and allow you to write about your experience for multiple people to read. They can save you time by preventing you from repeating the same stories to several people. They are also interesting because you can accompany stories, experiences, and updates with pictures. Try blogspot.com.

### Mail

- **Mail:** Letters or postcards can easily be sent internationally, but will take longer than mail within the United States. Letters should be marked "air mail" to ensure prompt delivery. If it is not marked, mail may be sent by surface mail and can take up to three months to be delivered. Mail sent internationally must include the destination country as a final line in the address to ensure delivery. Sending packages internationally is quite expensive so take that into account before planning to mail anything to or from your host country. Letters and postcards can be a fun way to communicate because they are not widely used anymore.