



GLOBAL PROJECTS PROGRAM

Communicating With Your Student Abroad

Technology today has made communication between different countries much easier than ever before, and many options may even be free of charge. Many of the best and most economical options require the users to be connected to Wi-Fi or have a data plan while abroad. It is important to keep in mind that many sites will involve a time change. Also, students will be busy during regular work hours, and it's likely that you won't hear from your student as frequently as you do when they are on campus.

Email and Social Networks:

Email is an excellent communication tool to stay in touch while your student is abroad. While it may not replace a hand-written letter or be as personal as a phone call, it ensures fast delivery and is free of charge. Social media sites, such as **Facebook**, are a great way to stay in touch as well.

Text Messaging:

Text messages are a great way to stay in touch with shorter, instant communication. While your student is required to have a local cell phone while away, international standard text messaging will be costly. In addition to obtaining a local cell phone or purchasing a local simcard, students may also purchase an international plan on their U.S. cell phone while going abroad, however this is still a costly option.

- **iMessage** allows iPhone users to text other iPhones internationally or Wi-Fi free of charge.
- **WhatsApp** is an application available to all smartphone users to text other WhatsApp users on data or Wi-Fi free of charge.
- **WeChat** is an application similar to WhatsApp that is popular in Asia.

All three of these services also allow you to send photos and short audio clips as well as text messages. Messages on WhatsApp and WeChat can be sent through data or Wi-Fi, but cannot be sent through standard text messaging, so on-site recipients may only receive messages once their phone is connected to Wi-Fi unless they have a local data plan. Messages on iMessage should be sent through data or Wi-Fi for free service, however may also be sent through standard messaging service at a higher cost if data or Wi-Fi is not available, depending on your provider.

Voice and Video Calls:

Voice calls are a great way to stay in touch while your student is away, and **video calls** allow you to see each other "face to face." While your student is required to have a local cell phone while abroad, calling their cell phone directly will be very costly. In addition to obtaining a local cell phone or purchasing a local simcard, students may also purchase an international plan on their U.S. cell phone while going abroad, however this is still a costly option.

- **Skype**, available both on your computer and as a smartphone app, allows both voice and video calls. Through Skype, you can use Wi-Fi to call another user on their Skype username for free. Skype also allows you to call from Skype to a regular cell phone or landline where the recipient will not need Wi-Fi. This service is at an additional cost, however this cost is usually less costly than regular phone carriers.
- **FaceTime** is another option for iPhone users that offers free video calls when connected to Wi-Fi.
- **Viber** is a cell phone app that offers free international voice calls to other Viber users through data or Wi-Fi.
- **GoogleVoice** is a great computer service that allows users to forward or answer calls from their computer.
- **GoogleHangout** is another service from Google for video chat and instant messaging.
- **International calling cards**, while becoming less common, are an option as well.