

## Resources for Current Host Families: Exchange Students and Technology

Your exchange student will most likely arrive at your home with a variety of electronic devices or may want to purchase some in the United States. These devices may include, but are not limited to: laptop computers, tablet computers, smartphones, e-book readers, and portable music and video players. Digital technology can be a great tool for students to record their study abroad experience and share it with friends and family in their home country. But for many students, it can also easily become a distraction that gets in the way of having a successful study abroad experience. Exchange students, especially when they are feeling homesick, may tend to spend excessive time alone in their bedroom using their electronic devices to communicate with friends and family in their home country. This can isolate them from their host family and make them feel even more homesick.

In order to avoid these problems, the Support Team suggests setting some clear limits on technology use in your home:

- We recommend telling students that they may not take their electronic devices into their bedrooms. This way, if they want to browse the Internet or play a computer game, they will be in a public space where they can still interact with their host family.
- If disallowing electronic devices in bedrooms seems too strict or is incompatible with your family's existing policies, we suggest making a rule that says that students should remove all of their electronic devices from their bedroom before their bedtime and put them in a designated location, like the dining room table. This helps eliminate distractions at night so that students can get enough sleep and have enough energy to actively participate in school and engage with their host family.
- Browsing the Internet and playing games can be a good way for students to relax after a busy day at school. However, this should not take the place of participating in an after-school activity or interacting with their host family. Set limits on how long and how often students can use their electronic devices for entertainment. We recommend a maximum of one hour each day.
- Electronic devices are a convenient way for students to keep in touch with their friends and family in their home countries. Too much communication with friends and family back home can make them more homesick, impede their language learning, and take time away from other fun activities. Remind students that CIEE recommends that they communicate with friends and family from their home country only once every two weeks.
- Ask students to use their electronic devices to show you photos and videos of their home country, friends, and family.
- Encourage students to take photos of their experience in the U.S. and to share them online with a blog.
- Contact your Local Coordinator or Support Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns regarding your student and electronic devices.