



Computer and Gadget Use Policy

For Host Families

Students of any age will want to communicate with friends and family via email, skype, facetime etc. We expect all of our host families to have internet access available for students. WiFi Access is the best option as this means students can use their own laptops, tablets etc. We recognise that it is very difficult for host families to monitor internet usage by our students due to the fact that they will use their own laptops, probably in their rooms rather than in family areas. However, we would expect you to try to be as vigilant as possible as you would with your own children.

Time being spent on laptops and on the internet

How much time do you allow students to use their laptops and be on the internet? This totally depends on what you feel comfortable with. One thing to bear in mind, students are here to learn English and experience British life, equally they study hard at school all term and holidays are a time for them to relax as well as studying. If a student spends most of their time alone in front of a computer they are not fulfilling the goals mentioned above. If this is the case, especially if you are hosting a younger student, please suggest to the student they get more involved in person to person contact in their home environment. Some host families turn off their internet connection at night to ensure that students are not on their laptops during the night – again this is your decision.

The threat of unwanted viruses and unwanted information

Please discuss your expectations regarding responsible use of the internet early on when your student first arrives, including

appropriate websites, and communications with people they know. If a student uses your computer please make sure the student knows and understands what kind of functions they are allowed to perform on your computer. You may not want to allow them the privilege of installing any kind of software or programs on your computer, unless they have discussed it with you, and you have agreed.

Please be very clear on what information you allow on your computer. This should include a discussion about inappropriate internet sites. Most internet service providers provide some kind of parental controls to block access to inappropriate websites. Unfortunately these are only as effective as the person setting and updating them.

Most students will come and already have email accounts at hotmail or other free internet mail providers. These accounts will not interfere with your own mail set up.

One useful thing you can do if a student is using your computer is to install up to date anti virus protection and firewall software. The key is to have software that is updated regularly as new viruses crop up and that is able to scan your entire system for corrupted files every now and then.

The vast majority of our students own their own internet devices including phones, tablets and lap tops and will not ask to use your computer.

Digital Cameras and webcam

Students who bring digital cameras will use their own computers to download and manage their own pictures. Students will bring their own memory sticks to store their information – maybe school work. If you are concerned by who a student is talking to on the internet, please talk to the student and call us if you are in any way concerned.

For Students

We expect all students to be responsible for their own behaviour on the internet. It is appropriate for you to be given a good deal of freedom when using the internet for further study, but with freedom comes responsibility.

When you are staying with a host family there will be internet sites that are available to you that maybe blocked when you are at school. The host family and Guardians UK put a lot of trust in you to not be accessing websites that are not appropriate for your age. Our host families are aware that they need to be vigilant with regard to internet use by our students and if they have any concerns will contact us immediately.

A guide to staying safe in the digital age

Cyberbullying

If you feel that you are a victim of cyberbullying then report it to your host family, a member of Guardians UK or your houseparents if you are at school. You have the right to be able to go about your daily business without somebody insulting you on Facebook or via email or text. Keep any evidence, whether it is a text, email or Facebook posting. Your school's policies don't just protect you at school; they cover any bullying at all times. You can block or delete the bully from a social networking site so that you cannot be contacted by them anymore. Report any bullying to the relevant website. Websites such as Facebook or Youtube have reporting facilities and can remove offensive material.

As well as looking after yourself with regard to cyberbullying, you must not bully someone else in the ways mentioned above. Any incident like this will be treated very seriously by school and appropriate sanctions would be taken against you.

Grooming

Sadly, there are some adults in the world who have a sexual interest in young people. Grooming is illegal and is the process used by such people to attempt to engage young people in sexual acts over the internet or in person. Some of these people attempt to make contact with young people over the internet; this may be

through social networking sites, chatrooms or games. They could be pretending to be someone else and often pretend to be children themselves. . They may pretend to be your friend, have the same interests or offer to buy you presents. As a general rule, don't be "friends" with someone online unless you have met them in person and have some knowledge of them. Never arrange to meet with someone you don't know.

Don't post too much personal information online, especially your address or phone number.

Find out how to set privacy settings on social networking sites so that only people you accept as "friends" can view your profile. You should never do anything online, or offline, that you are uncomfortable with. If anyone asks you to do something you feel is wrong then refuse.

If you do make a mistake, don't worry about being in trouble. Tell an adult you trust such as your houseparents or host family.

Inappropriate Websites

Sometimes you may see things you wish you hadn't, or access sites that are inappropriate or even illegal. Inappropriate can mean different things to different people, from swear words to pornographic images or videos, and what is inappropriate for you will change as you get older. If you see anything that upsets you or that you feel is inappropriate then speak to an adult you trust.

Losing control over pictures

Pictures and videos can be copied, shared and spread at great speed. What may have started as being posted for a few friends can very quickly end up in the hands of the entire school and beyond. Some young people have posted or sent sexualised pictures of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend and found them shared further. Some of the main risks with this type of image being in the hands of someone else include:

- Bullying – you may be bullied by others because of the content of pictures.
- Distress – knowing that other people you do not know are looking at personal pictures can be very upsetting.
- Blackmail – if the images end up in the hands of someone with bad intentions, they may be used to attempt to manipulate you.
- Reputation – once something is online it is very difficult to remove. Images can become part of your 'digital footprint' and potentially affect you in the long-term, such as if someone

searches your name as part of a job interview. Only upload, or send, photos that you would be happy to show your parents or a future employer. You never know where it may end up.

If you receive a photo that you feel is inappropriate then do not send it on or upload it to the internet. You could be breaking the law!

Online Reputation

You might post information online which in the past might have been written in a "secret diary" which would only be read by you. The internet provides permanent records of these high and lows which, if not controlled carefully, may be accessible to future employers, universities or friends. Think about what you share, where you share it and who you share it with – what seems funny now, may not do in the future.

Overuse/Addiction

With limitless information, endless games and the ability to escape from the real world, some young people's relationship with the internet can become unhealthy. This can be a problem if your online behaviour diverts and distracts you from other activities – this might be school work, seeing friends or even sleeping and eating. The amount of time some people spend playing games can become unhealthy. If you are gaming against people around the world, they may want to be involved in activities that take place at unsociable hours and may find it difficult to stop. The fact that other players are real people can put pressure on you to take part as you don't want to let friends down. If you are worried about the amount of time you spend online then speak to an adult you trust.

Viruses/Hacking

Computers are such an important part of our everyday lives now, so it is important to keep them healthy. Installing well known and reputable anti virus software might cost some money when you purchase your computer but can save you a lot of money and hassle in the long run.