

UPPER SCHOOL PHONE-FREE POLICY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



When are students not allowed to possess or use personal cell phones on campus?

Students may not possess or use personal cell phones from 8:05 am until 3:35 pm on regular school days. The use of cell phones during athletics and extracurricular activities that take place outside of the school day is at the discretion of the coach, advisor, or chaperone.

Why is the Upper School implementing a phone-free environment during the school day?

To fully meet our community and academic goals, to enhance our students' interpersonal skills, and to support student health and well-being. By restricting phone access during the school day, we believe students and educators will find it easier to engage in learning, develop deeper and broader social interactions, and reduce disruptions from managing phones during the school day.

What should students do with their personal cell phones during the school day?

Schools in Arkansas and across the country have deployed different systems in support of a phone-free environment. At Episcopal, the Upper School has elected to collect students' phones each morning in Advisory. Students will place their phones into plastic bins stored in their faculty advisor's classroom. Phones should be powered off before storage and may be retrieved upon dismissal.

What if students prefer to leave their phones at home or in their vehicles?

Students may leave their phones at home, and we also understand that many teenagers need access to a phone before or after school for reasons of transportation and logistical arrangements. Students electing to leave their phones in their vehicles will not be provided access during the school day. As always, students must notify an administrator to access their vehicles, during the school day.

What happens if a student is found possessing or using a personal cell phone during the school day?

Student possession or use of a personal cell phone during the school day will result in disciplinary intervention. The phone will be turned over to a faculty member or administrator and stored in an administrative office. Upon the first occurrence, the phone may be retrieved by the student at the end of the school day. Upon the second occurrence, the school may ask the student's parent or guardian to retrieve the phone, and the student will subsequently serve a Saturday detention and may be required to check-in with an administrator upon arrival at school daily. A third offense may result in a school suspension and a meeting between the student, the student's parents, and administrators.

What about personal technology devices other than cell phones?

Our primary focus is on cell phones. We do not permit the use of smartwatches and laptops for communication or social media in the classroom, chapel, or advisory settings. Faculty and staff may request students to discontinue any technology use that is excessive or runs counter to learning or community-building, and may confiscate a device from a student who does not comply with such a request in accordance with this policy.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS *CONTINUED*



What is the policy for field trips, extracurricular activities, and other school-related events?

The use of cell phones during athletics and extracurricular activities that take place outside of the school day, and during school-day field trips off campus and school-sponsored travel, is at the discretion of the coach, advisor, or chaperone. In such cases, expectations will be communicated in advance, and phones may be confiscated in accordance with this policy.

What about students who arrive late to school or leave early for appointments or other reasons?

Students who arrive late to school must sign in at the Main Office and will deposit their phones into phone bins at that time. Students who leave school early must retrieve their phone from their Advisor and sign out in the main office. Students who leave school early for school-sponsored athletics or extracurricular activities may also retrieve their phones upon team or group dismissal.

How should parents or caregivers contact students during the school day, if needed?

If students need to contact a parent or guardian during the school day, they can use a school phone in the main office, with permission. They can also send an email outside of class time. If necessary for unusual and occasional circumstances, students may access their phones briefly, with permission. Parents or guardians wishing to communicate with their Upper School student may call the Main Office, email a support administrator, or message their child directly via email. Student access to email may be limited during instructional class periods.

What if a student uses a medical device that requires the use of a cell phone?

Some medical conditions do require a cell phone or similar device to be used during the school day. Medical exceptions may be granted in such cases, upon consultation with the school nurse and with documentation from a medical provider. Students granted exceptions may use their phones during school hours only for express medical purposes.

What if there is an emergency at school?

During an emergency, teenage technology use poses greater risk, including distraction from safety instructions and misinformation, than benefit. Our School has developed safety protocols and regularly coordinates practice drills. Our security guards communicate with local law enforcement authorities. In the event of an emergency, we will continue to communicate with parents and guardians via our emergency communication system (text, voicemail, and email).

Are faculty and staff permitted to use personal cell phones during the school day?

In the spirit of this policy, our faculty and staff will strive to minimize school-day cell phone usage, and limit it to professional purposes. However, they must still use phones to exercise responsibility for the safe operation of the school environment.