Blair Technology Frequently Asked Questions

Do students have to bring a computer?

Our recommendation is that parents make every effort to provide their child with a laptop during their time at Blair. We encourage teachers to design their curriculum in such a way that students may use their laptops for schoolwork in class and when doing homework, rather than be limited to school computers in desktop labs. While school computers continue to be available for those students who need them, having access to a personal laptop is an increasingly important part of being able to do school work at Blair. Your child is likely to be asked by several of his or her teachers to be able to regularly bring a laptop to class for classwork. Furthermore, students routinely use their laptops in their dorm rooms, library, and campus center.

Should students bring a Mac or a PC?

Students may do their school work with either type of computer. Our goal is to have a computing environment in which students can use either a Mac or a PC. Many Blair classes use Google Workspace for Education, and other cloud-based software, which have the advantage of working on any type of computer with Internet access.

What about tablets, smartphones, and Chromebooks?

Although a large amount of school material can be accessed through the web browsers of such devices, laptops continue to be a better choice for the full range of computing tasks students need to perform. If your child is committed to using a tablet instead of a laptop, we recommend pairing it with an external keyboard to facilitate classroom writing exercises. Chromebooks and iPads are not able to run all of the software used in all of the classes at Blair, especially those related to coding, robotics, and graphic design. A smartphone by itself is not an adequate replacement for a laptop. Smartphones are, however, an excellent way for students to get school email outside of the class day.

If I'm buying a new computer, what do you recommend?

A lightweight laptop with a built-in wireless adapter, which can be comfortably carried around campus. A web cam and, optionally, a headset with a microphone for video conferencing may be important for video calls, to home or elsewhere. We don't provide minimum specifications, other than to note that students are usually happier with newer, faster laptops with plenty of memory. A carrying case roomy enough for the laptop, the charging cable, and whatever odds and ends the student is likely to carry around with them will be helpful, particularly for day students. Affixing a label with the student's name on the laptop and the carrying case may help avoid confusion during situations in which large numbers of laptops or laptop cases are left outside the school auditorium or dining room.

Can you repair computers on campus?

Blair provides support for students in connecting to the Internet and the preliminary troubleshooting of computer problems, but the best strategy is to get a full warranty when you purchase the laptop. With a warranty, the laptop can be shipped directly to the manufacturer during the school year if repairs are needed. Blair's tech office does not repair computers, nor is there a local facility that does so.

Is the Internet on all night?

Freshman and sophomore Internet access is disabled from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Junior Internet access is disabled from 12 a.m. to 6 a.m. At the Head of School's discretion, seniors are afforded 24-hour Internet access as they prepare to transition to a college environment.

Are cell phones allowed?

Students are encouraged to have cell phones. In particular, the school uses campus-wide text messages as part of its response to emergency situations and drills. However, the school sets limits on when and where students are allowed to be talking on a cell phone, limits which are described to them at the beginning of the year. Blair encourages students to focus on interacting with other members of the community instead of looking at the screen of their smartphone.

Are there printers available on campus?

We provide support for students to connect to several school printers on campus. These are located in the Timken Library and the Chiang Elghanayan Center, and various other academic spaces. Students may opt to have their own printers in the dorm rooms, but we note that space in the dorm rooms is limited, and many students would prefer to use school printers when possible. When students do bring their own printers, we recommend connecting the student printer directly to the laptop with a cable, rather than by Wi-Fi. All campus Wi-Fi connections must be configured manually by the Technology Office, which sometimes create support challenges.

Do you block any websites?

We filter pornographic and gambling websites. We are not able to effectively monitor the use of each student or set special policies which limit access for individual students. Occasionally, when concerns arise about a student spending too much time on the Internet, we will turn off Internet access for that student for a brief period of time. In these instances, the student's advisor and housemaster are both involved in working with the student to establish healthy patterns of behavior.

What if I have more questions?

Please email all questions to tech@blair.edu.