

Staying Connected with Your Student from Afar



Out of sight, out of mind? Not necessarily. If you've ever felt that way, you are not alone. Students who are away at college often get so wrapped up in their life at school, that it is easy to say, "I'll call home tomorrow." The next thing she knows, days have passed and you're left wondering if she'll ever call.

When's a Good Time?

Talk with your student to find out about her class schedule. Knowing her schedule is good, because then you can ask about her classes and understand what she is learning. It is also helpful so you know when to try to reach her. Maybe it's better to call on Sundays after dinner. Perhaps after her Tuesday night class is best. Either way, you'll know when it's best to try to reach her, which leads to the next question.



Cell Phones and Landlines

Is it best to reach her in her room or on her cell phone? You never know where she'll be when you call her cell phone, but you know you'll reach her, or you will at least be able to leave a voicemail message just for her. If she uses her room phone regularly, make sure she and her roommate work out a system for leaving messages for one another.

Email Contact

Students are so electronically connected today, maybe email is a good way to keep in touch regularly. While some personal email accounts can be accessed while away at college, your student will automatically be issued a college email address, which you can use. Then, she can reply to you at her earliest convenience.

Convenient Care Packages

Graphic idea: birthday cake with streamers, or a present that has the word 'surprise' on it

Programs run by food service or hall government often offer care packages. These might be available for birthdays, holidays or finals week. Watch the mail for order forms or contact the Residence Life Office to ask about programs like this.

Keep in Touch

Other inexpensive ways to keep in touch with your student include:

- A page-a-day calendar. Open it up and write little notes on a few days as a surprise.
- Free e-cards. Check out www.hallmark.com, www.123greetings.com or www.bluemountain.com.
- Send clippings from the local newspaper to help keep him connected with home. Send news about wedding announcements, successful sports teams or local groups he participated in. It's nice to know what's happening with friends at home, too.
- Use a photo as a postcard. Glue heavy cardstock, cut to the same size as the photo, and drop it in the mail. What a surprise to see her dog smiling at her from her campus mailbox!

Instant Messenger

Or how about Instant Messenger (IM)? This is a real-time chat. If you are a good typist and have access, this is an easy way to ask a quick question or to say hello. Have her set it up on your home computer when she comes home to visit the first time.

Nothing Like Real Mail!

Regular mail is always appreciated. Residential students are typically issued an on-campus mailbox when they sign up for housing. This allows you to send cards and packages to a secure location on campus. Your student will always walk away from the mailroom with a smile on her face when she has received mail from home.