

Tech In The News

Assignment: Cell Phones in Camp

Headphones Needed: **YES** **NO**

Step One:

[Watch THIS VIDEO](#)

Step Two:

Read the Two Articles at the bottom of this document- including the comments.

Step Three:

With your partner, create two-page Word document, give the 5 W's of the situation.

Then from the viewpoint of a camper, list the Pros and Cons of having a BAN on Camper Cell Phones.

Then from the viewpoint of a parent, list the Pros and Cons of having a BAN on Camper Cell Phones.

Step Four:

Add some colorful and wacky photos of campers in camp---
no bears eating campers

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Assignment :

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Are Helicopter Parents Ruining Summer Camp?

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July 24, 2017 · 6:00 AM ET

Heard on All Things Considered



ANYA KAMENETZ



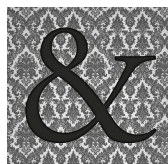
Suharu Ogawa for NPR

"It beeped in the envelope. That's how we knew."

Leslie Conrad is the director of Clemson Outdoor Lab in Pendleton, S.C., which runs several different camps during the summer. Clemson bans cellphones and other electronic devices for campers.

That makes sense. We traditionally think of summer camp as a place to swim in the lake and weave friendship bracelets, not text and play video games.

But sometimes, Conrad says, parents will give their children a decoy to turn in and a second phone to keep hidden. And, a few years ago, an 11-year-old camper was sent a cellphone in a care package. "We just held on to it and sent it back home at the end of the session," Conrad says.



NPR ED

How Schools Are Handling An 'Overparenting' Crisis

Millions of children will attend nearly 8,400 different sleepaway camps around the U.S. this summer, according to the American Camp Association, the industry's main accrediting agency. Most limit access to technology: "Only 17 percent of ACA-accredited camps allow access to the Internet on a scheduled basis, and only 10 percent allow access to cellphones," says Tom Rosenberg, the ACA's director.

Researchers say that campers develop invaluable social and emotional skills from navigating friendships, facing risks and getting through bouts of homesickness — all on their own.

And as young people's lives grow increasingly wired, camp provides a correspondingly rare break from that.

"It's kind of like letting go of everything and coming to a different world," says Alexa Sherman, 11, who is currently spending her fifth summer at Camp Echo in Bloomingburg, N.Y. This year, the camp's unplugged policy got tougher; one camper was sent home for a three-day suspension after being caught with a phone. And that was just in the first week.

Many of the campers here say they miss YouTube and Snapchat, but they quickly come to appreciate the hands-on activities and in-person friendships. "It's hard to have as much fun if you're just looking down at a screen the whole time," Alexa says.

The people who have the hardest time letting go, say camp directors, aren't necessarily the campers themselves. It's the parents of campers, the young staff members, and sometimes even the counselors' parents as well.



NPR ED

Kids And Screen Time: Cutting Through The Static

Barry Garst studies youth development at Clemson University, with a focus on out-of-school learning. He said that whether you call them "helicopter," "snowmobile" or "lawnmower" parents, overinvolved parenting is on the verge of ruining camp.

"We started to hear from camp directors a number of years ago that parents were the most problematic areas of a camp experience," says Garst. Not weather, not water safety, not grizzly bears. Nope, it's parents who call daily demanding reports on their kids, who expect to hear from the camp director about every skinned knee.

Meg Barthel, the lead girls' counselor at Camp Echo, carries a device with Wi-Fi around camp. "I have to respond to the mothers who are used to this constant communication with their daughters," she says. How many messages a day? "Up to 100."

Garst says thanks to mobile devices, parents today are conditioned to hour-by-hour check-ins. "The No. 1 concern is the separation that parents feel, and the difficulty in accepting a different type of communication with their child when their child is at camp."

Hence, the phones buried in luggage, mailed to campers, or even, he says, stitched into a stuffed animal.

Some camps address parents' thirst for updates by posting pictures and video online.

But, sometimes that backfires, too, says Garst.

"They'll get that phone call: 'Hello, camp director, I was on your website and I don't see them. Are they OK? Were they sent to the hospital?'"

"They dissect every picture," agrees Jeff Grabow, the director of Camp Echo. "It can throw a first-year parent into a spiral. Very often we'll have children playing a game and in the background they might see their child looking up at the sky, and we'll hear, 'My son or daughter looks sad.' "

The research on overparenting, says Garst, shows that when parents behave this way, children's developing independence can be stunted. The parents are telegraphing that they don't think kids can get through tough moments on their own, and kids pick up on that attitude. "Children are not really learning how to problem-solve."

Conrad, the Clemson Outdoor Lab director, says camp provides the perfect place to practice independence, and a digital detox is one important step. "I don't want to say it's an easier place to disconnect, because it's not easy at all for this generation, but it makes a little more bearable because they're in a group of their peers who are doing the same thing."



NPR ED

Real Parents, Real Talk About Kids And Screens

What's harder, she says, is getting the college-age staff to disconnect. Like many other camps, Clemson Outdoor Lab has a rule that counselors can't use phones around the campers, and that can be tough for the 18- to 24-year-olds she employs.

"We just went over this yesterday," she said. "This week, during staff training, we're challenging them to start leaving your phone in your cabin. Start off with an hour, build up to three hours."

While that may not sound too tough if you were born in the 1970s or earlier, consider that over 90 percent of young adults today own smartphones and are used to checking them all day long. Data going back to 2015 showed 92 percent of college students using their phones in class, and checking phones an average of 11 times a day *during class*.

"I've seen a huge, huge difference in the last few years with these college-aged folks," Conrad says. "I believe that [tech dependence] is real."

Dan Mathews agrees. He is the head of Camp Twin Lakes in Rutledge, Ga. "The camper piece has been fairly easy for us. What we're struggling with is the college kids," he says. "They're the ones we really have to stay on."

Conrad and Mathews both say their young adult staff members have helicopter parents as well, who also expect to be in constant contact. Last year, Mathews says, he got four or five phone calls from parents of staff members: "I can't reach my child, they haven't texted yet to say that they're safe, they don't like their cabin assignment, another staff member isn't pulling their weight ..." One parent complained about the poor cellphone reception in the Georgia woods.

Summer vacation is a time of growth and change. Understanding the relationship between tech overdependence and parent-child interdependence may be key to untangling it, so kids can fly free.

But Mathews is the first to admit that he shouldn't throw stones. He has a 13-year-old daughter heading all the way to Nebraska for a weeklong theater program this summer. The program does not ban phones.

"My plan is not to call her," he says. "My wife, on the other hand, will call her every day."

And what about his daughter's own phone policy?

"I told her, just be aware of when you're using it. Are you using it because you're bored, or you're feeling shy? Put the phone down and talk to people."

Will she listen?

"Ahh hell. She's 13. Probably not."



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Camp is Coming: What (Not) to Pack for your Son

Why Summer Camp Cell Phone Bans Make Sense

by ED on JUNE 11, 2012 · LEAVE A COMMENT

This article, copied below, is from a Canadian news website. The original article can be found [here](#).

Where do you stand on the cell phone ban issue? Join our discussion about it on Facebook: [facebook.com/bunk1camps](https://www.facebook.com/bunk1camps)

Why summer camp cellphone bans make sense

Angela Mulholland | CTVNews.ca Staff

Going off to camp for the first time can be a scary time for a youngster. But parents who tuck cellphones into their children's backpacks aren't doing them any favours, says a clinical child psychologist.

While parents might think a phone can act as a virtual lifeline for a homesick child, it's defeating the whole purpose of camp, says Dr. Chris Thurber, a psychologist with over 30 years experience as both a camper and camp director in New Hampshire.

The main reason we send kids to camp is to introduce them to another world away from the city, says Thurber. A camper with "a digital umbilical cord" as he likes to say, might be geographically separated, but can never fully unplug.

"Camps are a powerful counter-cultural force. They always have been. They are expressly designed to be different from what they experience the rest of the year," Thurber told CTV's Canada AM from Boston.

What makes summer camp such a powerful developmental experience is that it forces kids out of their comfort zones to do things they wouldn't normally do.

"If we as parents send kids to camp with cellphones, we're undermining one of the key factors: community living away from home," he says.

Many summer camps already recognize that cellphones act as a virtual tether that prevents kids from fully experiencing camp life. That's why many of them now have full cellphone bans.

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But still, many parents try to get around these rules, Thurber says. He's heard of parents who have tried to skirt the bans by sewing a phone into a teddy bear. He's even heard of parents who send their kids to camp with two cellphones: one to turn in as a ruse when they get searched; and one to keep.

But teaching a child how to jerry-rig the system does them no favours, says Thurber.

"That sends a terrible message that rules are not important, or the mission of the camp is trivial," he says.

Many camps have emergency action plans and are not as cut off from civilization as one might think anyways, Thurber says.

But being cut off from home is actually a good thing for kids, he believes, because it gives them a chance to explore who they are without their family, and to have an experience that they can fully call their own.

The other problem with phone calls from home is that rather than helping a camper who's feeling homesick, the voice of their parent can actually worsen and prolong the homesickness.

And at the same time, all those calls and texts from home prevent kids from making new friendships.

That's not to say that Thurber is against all communication with home. Writing letters is a great way to connect. And for campers who are away from home for the whole summer, or for weeks at a time, Thurber thinks a phone call or two is fine.

"But as an antidote to homesickness or as a routine way of connecting with home, it's absolutely antithetical to the key mission of camp, which is to give kids some ownership over this experience and let them develop some self-reliance," he says.

Where do you stand on the cell phone ban issue? Join our discussion about it on Facebook: [facebook.com/bunk1camps](https://www.facebook.com/bunk1camps)

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Should Cell Phones Go to Camp?

Regan McMahon • May 30, 2012 • Categories: [Family media management](#) [Mobile and communicating](#)

Senior Editor, Books | Mom of two

When your kid's summer camp tells you to just pack the essentials -- swim suit, sunscreen, sleeping bag -- a cell phone is usually not on the list. In fact, it's generally on the "What Not to Bring" list. But for parents, [staying in touch with our kids feels essential](#), and some find it's not so easy to break the habit.

A couple of summers ago, we sent our daughter to a two-week sleep-away surf camp in San Diego with a group of girls from her school. A few weeks before departure, the girls' parents got together and someone brought up the camp's no-cell-phone policy. One mom told how the previous year she snuck one into her daughter's duffel bag anyway and the girl got busted and had her phone confiscated. But the woman bragged that she was going to do it again this year.



Apart from sending a dubious message that it's OK to break the rules, the mom didn't seem to understand the reasoning behind the rule.

As explained on the camp website, experience has shown that phone calls from home intensify homesickness: "One of the valued outcomes of camp is learning independence. Calls home would detract from that important goal. In rare circumstances, due to behavior or severe homesickness, our staff will contact you." The statement adds that "cell phones cannot be with campers for security and privacy reasons."

The camp also forbids bringing other electronics, such as MP3 players and electronic games, explaining, "Camp provides children a chance to live without electronic devices."

But if the kids can unplug, why can't we? Since we can all admit the [cell phone is more for us](#) than for them (kids aren't the only ones with camp jitters), here are some tried and tested tips from recovering camp moms. You *will* get through it.

- **Remind yourself why your kid is going to camp.** You've sent your son or daughter off for a new experience, and for a reason. Having your kids spend time with their fellow campers rather than texting friends back home will ensure a more valuable camp experience.
- **Dear Mom, connect the old fashioned way.** You may miss hearing your kid's voice, but nothing beats a letter from your sleep-away camper telling you about new friends and new experiences at camp. And for your kid, nothing beats a letter from home with news of familiar places and people, filled with expressions of love and "We miss you." For parents of day campers, you can hear all about your kid's exciting day when you're together again -- on the ride home or at the family dinner.
- **Seeing is believing.** If you mainly want assurance that your kid's having a good time, you may be able to see for yourself if your camp posts camper photos daily online. Our camp did, through a service called Bunk1.com. Ask if your camp offers a similar service, or suggest that they do.
- **If you're on the fence, check the rule book.** You'll usually find cell phones on the "What Not to Bring" list. Abide by the rules, and if your kid has a problem and needs to get in touch, the camp will facilitate a phone call. You can always call the camp office or ask to speak to your kid's counselor to ease your mind.

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About Regan McMahon



Regan has been reviewing children's books for more than a decade. A journalist and former book editor for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, she cites as one of her toughest assignments having to...

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Comments

#1

Kid, 12 years old

Feb 16, 2013

In my opinion, mobiles at camp are not really ideal, I don't see the point, there may be activities (such as swimming) that mobiles are just not suitable for. If there was ever an emergency at camp, parents would be contacted. Camp is just too fun to bring a mobile.

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#2

[CSM Screen name...](#)

Jun 4, 2012

There is no matter if things are used well. mobile phones should be taken to camps just to convey urgent in-formations..the kids should be allowed to interact among themselves..they should actually spend time with nature n frnds..and not through mobile games and chats..!!! summer camps are always a great relaxation for kids..and according to me if they wish to do something lets allow them to do wotevr they want...its the role of our parents and gaurdians to hav an eye on our kids..to guide them and to lead them..!!!)

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#3

[SockyChibi<3](#)

Jun 3, 2012

I think they should if they keep it in a safe place. Like a tight pocket, or somewhere where no one can take it.

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#4

[PiperLady3](#)

Jun 4, 2012

Again, posting as a former Girl Scout Camping Leader: Such a scenario (phones would be safe if kept in a tight pant's pocket) is impossible to maintain at a camp-- mud, rain, and dirty hands make even tight pockets useless for protecting phones. And, unless the pocket is zipped or something, camp activities can allow for phones to fall out of the tightest pockets. Overnight camping requires clothing changes, and swimming at camp requires no pockets or phones with the kid at the moment-- so the phone is left around somewhere. Nope.... Sorry... Camp is NEVER a safe place for keeping a cellphone, based on practical experience.

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#5

[RobAlister](#)

Jun 3, 2012

Cell phones should not go along with a child to camp because that ruins the whole experience. They're supposed to be making friends and learning how to do things on their own. If they get to talk to their friends and family the whole time they might as well had just camped at grandma's house instead.

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#6

[Lumiere](#)

Jun 1, 2012

Definitely no cell phones at camp. Bringing a cell phone flies in the face of what camp is about in the first place. Also, no computers (unless it's a 'computer camp'). Camp is (or at least was) about actual people interacting with actual people, not people interacting through electronic devices. Strange how safe we all were at camp before the invention of the cell phone. Anecdote: We anchored our boat in a pristine cove. The evening was heartstoppingly still. A loon's cry was the only sound. Then another boater came in and anchored. His TV was the loudest noise around for hours. I mean, honestly, what's the point? He could do the same thing at home. The idea of camp is a "different" experience, not just toting all the baggage from your life into some other location. Sheeesh...

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#7

[kleinds](#)

Jun 1, 2012

PHONES STAY HOME. My camp experience is with Boy Scouts. So that means my first year at camp kids are 11 years old. As a many year counselor at camp, I've seen kids who bring a phone find that they must call home to get through the night. They are not growing and stretching through their fear. They don't have the same sense of accomplishment when they way up in the morning and learn that they can get through he night and be OK. Many kids when having anxiety in the evening will want to call home. As soon as they hear mom's voice, the tears turn on and they beg to be picked up. When mom hears a crying child, she tends to want to come get him. If you were to ask that same kid the next morning about leaving, he'd say "Heck no, I'm having a great time!" I once read of a study that shows where kids who unplugged from family and went off to camp for a week had a much higher success rate than those who didn't purring their first year at college away from home. That's no surprise really. They've already learned that they can be independent. Ultimately I'm responsible for the safety and well-being of that boy and helping coach them through the choices they have at camp. When the boy has his phone, he's going to call home for direction and that cuts me out as the responsible leader. I'll hear after that mom "told me to take this class since that one was full." Or in other cases mom has shown up to pick up her "sick" child when I was never told anything was wrong in the first place. Remember the last questions of the article. Why are we sending our kids away to camp in the first place? What is the experience you want them to have. Let them have the experience. If you're having stress, you're the adult, that's OK, but perhaps you need some stretching and a new experience too :-)

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#8

[nateandrubysmom](#)

Jun 1, 2012

I am appalled that people sneak cell phones into their children's camp stuff. Not because of the rule-breaking (although what kind of message does that send your child?) but because it is so, so important that children spend at least a tiny amount of time in this wired world unwired, interacting with nature and with the people directly around them. The skills of communication and how to have fun without technology that learned are irreplaceable (even if they seem to disappear the minute the kids get home). And the skills parents can learn by letting go are also irreplaceable. My daughter went to an absolutely tech-free camp (no online photos, no email, no nothing--you could call or they would call you for any real problem) for 4 years (until she aged out of it--wish she could still go) and she adored it. I treasure her hand-written letters from there and wouldn't trade them for a million phonecalls or texts. I also treasured the time to focus on myself and my husband. Sure I missed her--but I learned from that too. If anything goes seriously wrong, your children are being closely supervised at a good camp and you will be informed right away.Learning how to manage feelings without reaching out to parents is a crucial part of growing up. And often phone calls only exacerbate homesickness. No cell phones at camp. Ever!

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#9

[thfc](#)

Jun 1, 2012

My son went to what we thought would be a great time for him. He looked forward to going for months. They had a no cell phone policy, which at first look makes sense. He ended up being the target of a bully and even some of the good kids who didn't want to get bullied sided with the bully. He was a mess when we picked him up. I believe a call to us and we could have contacted the counsellor would have put a stop to this and got help for the bully. I suggested a 'cell phone bank' where the kids check in their phone and are allowed half hour phone time at a set time each day. Cell phones are with us forever so I believe we need to adapt to the present, however, as parents we still have authority.

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#10

[Dan H](#)

Jun 1, 2012

As a father and Boy Scout leader, I have come to see the many wisdoms of "no electronics at camp" -- both at weekend campouts and week-long summer camp. Firstly, it avoids the issues of possible damage and/or loss. Secondly, I agree that for some kids, having access will INTENSIFY homesickness. In our Troop, younger boys dealing with a bit of homesickness are given attention and support not only from our adult leaders, but the older scouts, too. It is a learning experience for everyone: the young scout, his parents, and even the older scout. The adult leaders still have their cell phones for emergencies; that works for us.

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#11

[grinderdad](#)

May 31, 2012

My daughters go to a sleep away camp for one week each summer. The camp has a "no cellphone" policy which we adhered to the first year. The second year we allowed my oldest daughter to bring a cellphone but instructed her that it is only to be used in a dire emergency. If it was used to whine, it would be the last week she would have the phone for 3 months. The second year, the last night, a tornado ripped through the campsite and the kids were evacuated to a secure shelter and put on lock down. That's when we found out that there was no service in their camp. I think it was better that she had it though. It all depends on the child.

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#12

[Sioux1996](#)

May 31, 2012

I used to work full time for a summer camp. I worked in the central office working directly with parents and we specifically stated in our materials that cell phones could accompany the child to camp and from camp--but during camp they were turned off and locked in the camp valuables safe. Does it make kids more homesick? It can. Camper doesn't like the food, their counselor, their cabinmates, is upset that they didn't get their first activity choice--they call home, mom & dad try to reason with them and soon it's constant calls and "come get me" requests. In short--cell phones at camp are a BAD IDEA, other than for use in travel. Parents need to trust that campers are safe, secure and having fun. If a child is homesick, it normally passes in 2 nights. Parents also need to NOT "make deals" with campers saying things like, "If you don't like it I'll come get you." This sets kids up and the first thing they don't like results in that plea.

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#13

[BklynSF](#)

May 31, 2012

NO - they need a break. Their brains need a break, their eyes and ears need a break. Peace in the summer - I say!

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#14

[Jmac13ny](#)

May 31, 2012

My camp has a no cell phone rule, but the reality is that if a kid has a cell phone they are going to bring it with them. I don't think that a kid bringing a cell phone is going to make them more homesick, in fact it will probably make them feel safer. I do bring a cell phone to camp.

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#15

[PiperLady3](#)

Jun 4, 2012

I've been a Girl Scout Camping Leader. I can assure you that the sound of a parent's voice DOES cause homesickness-- EVERY time! Also, cell phones are lost, stolen, damaged, and a distraction to the kids when they are supposed to be doing camp activities and having nature-filled downtime. And at most campsites, there is nowhere to charge every kid's phone, so if it dies it's not restarting (then a parent panics that they can't get ahold of their kid, etc) If you want to make them feel safer, send along a soft cuddly toy or favorite pillow-- something they can hug at bedtime, or a favorite book to read. Phones do NOT add to the feeling of safety, no matter what a manipulative kid claims-- they MIGHT add to YOUR feeling of safety, but not the kid's.

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