



Cell Phone & Electronics Policy

Camp Harlow is going device free! Here's why:

In our technology-driven world, the practice of unplugging and connecting with others face-to-face is a rare and valuable skill. Our hope is that by restricting access to the digital world while at camp, we will provide an environment for campers to experience a deeper connection with nature, with each other, and with God.

We have been very flexible over the past few years with our cell phone policy, adapting to the changing needs of children in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the accompanying fears and restrictions. However, as we move forward and continue to focus on creating an engaging camp environment, we feel it's now time to implement a clearer and more structured approach to cell phones and other electronic devices.

It is our goal at Camp Harlow to create a deeply immersive and spiritually enriching experience for all our campers. We want campers to develop new relationships and have their attention focused on their camp experience rather than influences and distractions that take them away from fully engaging at camp. By providing an atmosphere free from cell phones and electronics, we strongly believe it will enhance the camp experience, foster a stronger community, and provide a needed break from the devices that we all rely on so heavily each day.

Summer camp offers great opportunities to learn about and navigate real social situations. We want to provide an experience that helps campers "get away" from everyday life, routines, and the pressures of social media. This allows them to experience God's incredible creation in ways unfamiliar to most kids. It also allows them to be more carefree, to pause, reflect, and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. A growing volume of research shows that prolonged screen-time is detrimental to social, emotional, and physical well-being of children. Cell phones and other electronics can interfere with and even sabotage a child's overall camp experience, as well as those around them.

One of the biggest benefits of coming to camp is the opportunity for campers to gain confidence and to be independent. Being away from their parents and home social settings for a short period of time can help campers grow so much. Most children today are accustomed to having immediate contact with their parents. For many kids, camp is a place where they can handle issues directly with their peers and counselors. It's wonderful to see kids getting to know other campers and connecting with them. Calling or texting mom or dad from a cell phone changes the dynamics of the camp experience. We do have a land-line available 24/7 for all campers to call home if needed. For first-time campers, it's a huge boost to their confidence to realize they can be successful at camp on their own. The skill of developing independence also comes into play when campers use their money at the camp store on their own, drive a go kart or bumper boat, and swim with their cabinmates.

As a result, we are updating our policy regarding cell phones and electronics. Cell phones and all Wi-Fi enabled devices are not allowed for campers at Camp Harlow. These devices include, but are not limited to: cell phones, smartwatches, Fitbits, Garmin devices, laptops, iPads, e-readers and game devic. No screens and no access to the Internet. (Exceptions will be made for medical devices.)

We request your support regarding this policy change at Camp Harlow. Communication with your child and knowing how your child is doing are both very important. We encourage you to write lots of letters, which campers LOVE to receive during camp mail time. If you have any concerns about your child or their experience, please call us! We will also contact you if we have any concerns about your child or if your child comes to us with any issues. As a reminder, we do have a phone on camp available for campers to use to call home. If there is an emergency at home, please call us, and we will locate your camper and ensure that any urgent messages are promptly relayed. If needed, we will have your camper call you back.

You may be interested in the references below that give further information on screen time and camp.

[It's Best Part of Camp: Camper Views on Smartphone Policies](#)

[ScienceDaily: Cell Phones at Summer Camp](#)

[Too Much Screen Time? Four Ways Summer Camp Can Help](#)