



British International School Riyadh

Packing for University – guide to technology

The techie stuff you need to take with you to university – and the stuff you don't. Millie Shuter offers advice



Millie Shuter loved using her noise-cancelling headphones while she was studying.
Photograph: Stockbyte/Getty Images

It's probably fair to say that technology is evolving much faster than Homo sapiens, and the younger we are, the more technology seems to be embedded in our lives. For a generation of teenagers brought up on laptops and Facebook, technology can

become an addiction: unhealthy and antisocial. There is no memory of life before the internet, nor understanding of how to find information without it. If used correctly, the wealth of websites, apps and gadgets can be a great addition to a full and exciting life, but if we binge at the technological buffet, we run the risk of becoming fat. For those flying the school nest and heading off to university, approach with caution.

Universities are, without doubt, making efforts to move with the times. There will be fantastically well-equipped computer labs, Wi-Fi and virtual learning environments, but also some academic purists recommending books, books and more books. For university newbies, these simple tips will (hopefully) help you get the best from the technology that's out there.

- **Don't live your life through Facebook.** Life is for living, Facebook is for sharing your life with your friends. Inane status updates, stalking your ex-boyfriend/girlfriend's recent photos and posting links to music videos is not living. Get out there, have fun, and then you'll have something more interesting to share.
- **Don't get addicted to Twitter.** Unless you have something interesting to tweet, don't tweet. Nobody cares if "@lucy1990 had an awesome night out".
- **Do follow your lecturers, they may tweet something fascinating.** But don't tweet about them unless you're a) being nice, or b) absolutely sure they don't have Twitter.
- **Do use your university email account.** You may be inundated with boring emails, but hidden among the library fine reminders you'll find some gems: an invitation to a little-known film festival, a guest lecture from your literary idol, internship opportunities, and (shock!) recommended reading.

- **Do get a Dropbox.** It's free to sign up and it means you can access any of your work, anywhere, anytime. It's all saved somewhere in the technological ether and can be retrieved from anywhere with an internet connection. Pretty handy.

- **Wikipedia is a university minefield. Tread carefully.** Do have a quick look on Wikipedia if you've overslept and haven't done any prep for your seminar. It will give you enough basic information to blag it when your tutor puts you on the spot. But don't ever, ever, use it for an essay or presentation. Your tutor will know, and everyone in your seminar has probably read the same thing, too.

- **If you've got an iPhone, do download GoodReader.** It will let you open any Microsoft Word document or PDF so that you can read it on your phone. Useful if you need to read academic journal articles on the move (ie on the bus on the way to your seminar).

- **Don't ever try to blame technology for missing a deadline.** Deadlines are deadlines. "My computer crashed", or "I couldn't print it", might have worked at high school, but at university that just won't fly. You'd be better to say, "My dog ate it". They may see the funny side.

- **And finally, the internet is not a replacement for books.** You may have got through your GCSEs with BBC Bitesize and through your A-levels with Wikipedia, but you will not get through university without reading a book. Yes, they are heavy and at times dull, but at least you can trust them. Anyone can put stuff on the internet, so beware of what you're reading. And if you really have left it too late to go to the library, academic online journals are a safe bet for last-minute research. GoogleBooks is quite good if you're desperate.

If you've made it to university, we can assume you're smart enough to know that technology will not do your work for you. It will not make you cleverer. It will not make you friends. In fact, it may do the opposite. Like £1 pints in freshers' week, technology is best consumed in moderation, otherwise you might get sick.

Millie's top three tech gadgets

A dictaphone

Lecturers speak fast and are not always interesting. We shouldn't encourage it, but you may fall asleep. It's always good to have a back-up.

Sony 820 2GB dictation machine: £39.99 - £59.99 (depending where you look)

Good quality, noise-cancelling headphones

If you love listening to music while you study and want to drown out the chatter in the library, these are great. And no one around you will know if you're listening to the Backstreet Boys.

Beats solo high performance on-ear headphones: £149.99

A iPad

Great for pretty much everything: internet, downloading books, music, note-taking, the list goes on. Nuff said.

£500ish