



Upper School

Cell Phone Acceptable Use Policy

2025-2026

At Wellington, we are committed to fostering an environment where students can focus deeply, engage meaningfully with peers, and grow into thoughtful, well-rounded individuals. Research shows that reducing cell phone use, especially during the school day, supports academic success, social connection, and overall well-being. To uphold these values, the Upper School will be a smartwatch and phone-free environment in 2025-2026.

EVIDENCE AND RATIONALE

Research has shown an increase in engagement, ability to focus, happiness, well-being, etc. when cell phone (and social media) usage decreases. This is especially true when the reduction is adopted across a community.

Students spend an average of [1.5 hours on their phones during the school day](#). Various studies have indicated that [cellphone usage is negatively correlated with grades and academic outcomes](#). Besides missed academic time, time spent on cell phones is time students are not spending having social interactions with their peers and not developing essential communication skills. Students avoid challenging situations and rush to their phones to avoid discomfort.

Cell phone use also contributes to [sleep disruption](#). Many students keep their phones nearby overnight, which can lead to late-night screen time, interrupted sleep, and difficulty winding down. A lack of sleep has a large number of well-documented negative outcomes for students.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where will phones/smartwatches be stored?

Devices will be stored in storage pouches outside of the Upper School Commons. Students will place their devices in these pouches when they check in with deans at the beginning of the school day. Students may pick up their phones at the end of the school day.

Students may also choose to leave their devices at home.

Are students allowed to check their messages during the day?

Yes. We recognize that parents/caregivers will communicate with students. Students can check their messages and then return the phone to the pouch. We want our children to have a healthy relationship with their devices.

We also encourage the use of other communication methods, such as email or messages left with the Upper School Office.

Can a student use their phone during lunch or task time?

No. Lunch and task time are part of the school day. However, a student may check for messages and promptly return the phone back to their designated pouch.

What if a student arrives late to school?

Students will check in with Mrs. Porter in the Upper School Office and then leave their phone in their designated storage pouch.

What about early dismissal?

Students who need to leave early for a scheduled appointment can take their phones after they check out at the Upper School Office.

When seniors have earned their privileges, they may take their phone on their errand and/or out to lunch. Phones must be returned to the designated storage pouch when they return to campus.

What happens when students must evacuate the building for a planned evacuation drill or unplanned emergency?

In the event of a [school emergency](#), student cell phone use does not increase safety. In fact, it can interfere with emergency protocols and response efforts. Student phone use during a crisis can distract from critical safety instructions, overwhelm communication networks, and unintentionally lead to confusion during reunification efforts.

During any emergency, our priority will be to communicate accurate and timely information through official school channels while keeping students physically and emotionally safe.

What happens if a student is caught with a phone or other smart device during the school day?

Unauthorized use of a cell phone or smartwatch during the school day will result in confiscation of the device and a behavior note sent home. The device may be retrieved at the end of the day. A parent/guardian may be required to retrieve the device upon a subsequent offense by the student.