

China Teachers

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Sent: Tuesday, April 07, 2015 5:02 PM
To: byu-china-teachers@googlegroups.com
Subject: My Advice to China Teachers Regarding Technology

To the incoming teachers:

Welcome to this great adventure. I wanted to give you a bit of advice regarding technology as you come join us. I'll try to couch this in terms that shouldn't intimidate you, but if it does, ask questions or grab an adult child or grandchild.

Internet

You will either find the internet in China to be either adequate, maddening, or unusable – sometimes on the same day. Connection speeds are slower than you are used to and there is also the Great Firewall of China that you will have to contend with, where China deliberately blocks certain sites.

You will have internet access in your apartments. Most will have wireless routers, meaning that you do not have to be physically connected to use the internet. Make sure you get the router name and password from whoever you will be replacing.

Some have bought “my-fi” devices in China, which will use wireless phone capabilities to provide a more reliable internet connection. You prepay for the amount of data that you will be using over the network.

VPN (Virtual Private Networks)

Plan on using a VPN if you use Facebook, YouTube, Gmail, Google services and many other US sites. VPNs will help you get around those sites which are blocked.

Many have used Astril in the past but it is getting less dependable. I have had good success with PureVPN and others are recommending Express VPN and VyperVPN. It's worth googling top VPNs for China to decide, but I would recommend getting a VPN in August, (They have annual plans and you want it to last the whole time you are in China), and installing it on your laptops, iPad, tablets and smart phones. You'll want to test it before coming and realize that it is very hard to install one once you get here. I would look for one that lets you run multiple devices at the same time.

Laptops

Either Windows or Mac will work for you. Don't do a Chromebook, due to Google issues.

If you are buying a new laptop, check with those in your university to see if you will need to be carrying your laptop to class regularly. That will help you to know whether you need to focus on portability (a lightweight laptop) or durability or ruggedness (heavier, but can take more abuse). We thought we would have to take

the laptops to and from class daily and got a lightweight machine, but knowing what I know now, I would have gotten a more heavy duty laptop for my school.

Most laptops do not have DVD drives and you need an external one. We brought two. We could have done just as well with just one.

Viruses are prevalent here. Get a virus protection like Norton 360. Again, it's an annual plan, so start it up in August and test it before coming over.

You want to make sure you have a copy of Microsoft Office on whatever machine you are using. Don't worry if it is not the latest. All the classrooms I have seen have old versions of Office (like Office 2007), so you should be able to have something compatible. If you see newer versions of files like a PPTX instead of PPT or DOCX instead of DOC and you have an older version of Office, you can get a download from the Microsoft website which will convert the newer files into ones you can use.

Don't bother to try to imbed videos into the presentations you make. The older versions of Office in the classrooms will not play an imbedded video. When I have a video to show, I jump from my presentation to the video as a separate file and back again.

Most apartments will have printers and scanners, so you will not need to worry about those things. Note that the paper size will be A4 instead of 8.5 x 11.

Telephones to call the US

Magic Jack, Skype, FaceTime, and Republic Wireless are all alternatives that you can use to call home for little or no money.

Republic Wireless is a mobile phone that you can use over the internet for \$5 per month after you buy the handset. You can use it as your normal phone in the US before or after China and port a home number to it.

FaceTime works for talking from one Apple device to another. It includes video capability

Skype is an application that you will need to have installed and running on both ends of the conversation if you want video capability.

Magic Jack is a device that plugs into your laptop to enable communications.

Google Hangouts are not recommended for China.

Telephones for use in China

I highly recommend having a smartphone in China. Besides making calls, it will let you text, have a language translator app, mapping app, and there are apps for navigating around the subways in major cities.

If you don't already have a smartphone, I would get a used inexpensive iPhone for use in China – like a used iPhone 4 or 5c. Make sure the battery is solid and that a Chinese sim card will work for you. Perhaps other China teachers can help with the specifics here.

I was able to find a micro-sim for my Android phone and get it to work in China. It makes calls fine and works on wireless LANs, but I cannot get 2G/3G/4G support for it.

There are also a number of knockoff smartphones available in China. I would also check with your people you are replacing to see if they are leaving a phone behind.

The phones in China all run on “pay as you go” plans. When you run out of minutes, you take your phone to a store who can add minutes very inexpensively. These stores are everywhere.

Entertainment

Check with your local library to see if they offer Overdrive or Zinio capability. Overdrive is an application that will let you check out ebooks and let you stay up with the latest John Grisham novel (or whatever floats your boat). Zinio does the same for magazines. Both of these are free and will give you reading material.

If you haven't done so already, download and install the LDS Gospel Library app.

Many apartments have a large selection of DVDs left behind. If you want something more current, you will probably find DVDs for around \$1.50 US in your city. There are sites in China like youku.com that will let you stream television programming. Some shows are deliberately blocked in China such as The Good Wife or Big Bang Theory. USA Today called out these shows as blocked.

Using something like Netflix will require a VPN and a strong internet connection.

Chargers and Electricity

China runs on 220v. North America is 110v. Most chargers for phones and laptops will automatically correct for the proper voltage. Some electric shavers can do the same. Don't plan on bringing over hair dryers or curling irons and being able to use them more than once. There may be some left in your apartment or you can find them in the stores at a reasonable price.

I hope this is helpful. Again, send us your questions and comments.

Kent Perry

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