New Student FAQ

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We're so excited you're coming to Brown in the fall! These are some technology questions we've heard from incoming students.

If you have a question that’s not addressed here, please get in touch with the IT Service Center. We're looking forward to meeting you and helping you with technology during your time at Brown.

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Computers and Software

What computer should I bring to Brown in the fall?
While computer labs are available, most students at Brown bring laptops. For most purposes, Mac and PC work equally well. We estimate around 65% of students have Mac laptops, and 35% Windows. Some also bring Linux computers or Chromebooks - Chromebooks work for email and paper writing, except they currently do not support Brown's Virtual Private Network (VPN) yet, which doesn't matter unless you're trying to access certain Brown resources (like library journals) from off-campus.

If you want to concentrate in an area that may have computing requirements, you could contact the department to ask, but many of those departments have their own labs for specialized software and we haven't yet heard of a specific departmental requirement. We have some general recommendations on our Buying a Computer page. Also, keep in mind that the Brown Bookstore Technology Center provides warranty repairs for Dell and Apple computers. This will prevent a hassle if your new computer has an issue while you're at school.

Do I get a discount on computers?
The Brown Bookstore Technology Center offers student discounts on Dell and Apple computers. Apple and Dell also have educational discounts on their websites, and you might find other vendors who do as well: Apple Student Discounts, Dell Student Discounts.

Can I get financial aid to buy a computer?
The Office of Financial Aid website has instructions for buying a computer or laptop, whether using an additional scholarship or an outside student loan.

Are there loaner laptops available?
Yes - if your laptop breaks, or you didn't bring a laptop and you need one for a short time, the IT Service Center has some loaners. More information about IT Service Center equipment loans.

What type of hardware or software will I need for particular courses?
If you want to concentrate in an area that may have computing requirements, we recommend contacting the department to ask, but many of those departments have their own labs for specialized software.

What software is available for free for incoming students?
We're glad you asked! Before you buy any software, check software.brown.edu to see if we already offer it for free. Three you should especially note are Microsoft Office, Rosetta Stone, and Adobe Creative Cloud. If you're a committed student for the class of 2020, you will be in our systems as a student starting June 1st and can start installing and using this software at that time.

What type of computer support is available?
If your computer has a problem, the IT Service Center can help you troubleshoot. However, they don't repair student computers, so if you need a repair or part, they'll send you a block away to the Brown Bookstore Technology Center. The Bookstore does warranty repairs for Dell and Apple computers under warranty, and for-fee repairs for anything else.

Printing

Are there printers on campus?
Yes, MyPrint allows students to print to Brown printers from their personal computer or a computing lab.

Where are printers located?
Here's a map!

How much does printing cost? Do we get a credit
7¢ black and white single sided, 10¢ black and white double sided, 25¢ for color prints. You will receive a $30 credit at the beginning of the year.

Do wireless printers work in residence hall?
We've found some wireless printers are difficult, or sometimes impossible, to set up on an enterprise wireless network like Brown's. In addition, other people may be able to see and print to your printer. In most cases, you can still use wireless printers the old-fashioned way (with a USB cable) if this is a problem. If you bring one, use these instructions to connect it. If you just try to connect without the instructions, it will not work.
Wifi

Is wifi available throughout campus?
Yes! We're proud of our wireless coverage and trying to improve it all the time. All of our residence halls are upgraded for fast wireless and great coverage. Here's a coverage map and a list of completed and planned improvements.

What network should I connect to?
Definitely Brown! It’s the secure network. If you use Brown-Guest instead, your traffic is not encrypted. However, we've made it available for guests and for devices that can't connect to Brown (like a gaming system).

How do I connect my gaming system / wireless printer / Roku / etc.?
You will need to register these devices in our system before trying to connect them to Brown-Guest. Please see instructions at http://brown.edu/go/browserless. If you try to connect them to the network before following the instructions to register the device's address, you may have to contact the IT Service Center to have the device un-registered. We've found that a lot of devices are able to connect, but unfortunately Chromecasts are not.

Can I plug in with an Ethernet cable?
Though you may see Ethernet ports in residence halls, they are disabled by default because they are used so rarely. Disabling them helps Brown be greener and save power. If you have a device that isn’t wifi enabled, you can use a wifi adapter to connect it. The IT Service Center can help.

Television

Is there cable at Brown?
If you live in a residence hall, you automatically receive access to a ton of great channels through our TV service, which uses a product called Philo. You can watch anywhere on campus as long as you’re connected to Brown’s wireless network (Brown).

What kind of TV should I bring?
We actually don’t recommend bringing a TV unless you plan to use it for gaming or some other specific purpose. Our TV service, Philo, can be viewed on your computer or using an app on your tablet or smartphone. It’s actually more complicated to view channels on a TV - you’d need to hook your computer up to the TV (for example, with an HDMI cable) or use a Roku. Some public TVs are also available in residence hall lounges.

How do I watch TV?
Check out our instructions for watching IPTV / Philo on different devices.

Phones

Are there land lines in residence halls?
No, but we offer free videoconferencing services as well as an app called Jabber available by request (at no cost). This app can be used on phones, tablets, and computers. The app gives you a local Brown phone number, and you can make and receive local calls from that number.

Do Brown students get cell phone discounts?
Yes - check out discount codes on our Buying a Cell Phone page.

Course Resources

Where can I find information about courses, like syllabi?
Courses@Brown is a great place to browse courses.

Does Brown have online courseware / a Learning Management System?
Yes, we use Canvas! You can access Brown's Canvas system at canvas.brown.edu.

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