

How to Communicate with an Incarcerated Loved One Virtually

Disclaimer*

This is a comprehensive guide on what to expect while communicating with an incarcerated loved one virtually. With this being said, rules and regulations still vary from facility to facility so, to get the clearest and best information, check the website that your loved one is located to ensure that you receive the most accurate information for contacting them.

Virtual Communication

Emailing

Virtual communication can vary from jail to prison, and from state to state. However, many jails and prisons offer email as an easy way to communicate. To email with your loved one, you will need to create an account on their platform (JPay, ConnectNetwork, Corrlinks, etc). If you are able to look up the jail or prison where your loved one is currently, it should tell you which specific website they use for email communication. For some platforms, you will need to pay for the service.

In order to sign up for these services, you will need to verify that you are older than 18. If you are younger than 18, you will need your parent or legal guardian to make an account for you. This can then be attached to your own personal email, so that you may communicate directly with your loved one.

A major benefit of this is the quick response time in comparison to writing a letter. Your loved one should receive the email within about 24–48 hours from the time it was sent. It will likely be closer to two days if you send an attachment, so we suggest keeping it just to write if you want it to get there faster.

Video Calls

We were unable to find a substantial amount of information in this section to help provide step-by-step guidance. However, we still suggest contacting or checking the website of the facility your loved one is located to find out whether or not they offer this kind of service. There, there should be links to setting up your account and learning how to video chat.

Phone Calls

Getting in Touch

Talking with a loved one on the phone is a great way to stay in touch. With this being said, you will not be able to call your incarcerated loved one, they have to call you. Some facilities restrict who an incarcerated person can call, allowing only verified family members or people who are on their approved visitation list. With that being said, make sure that they have your phone number to put on this list.

Cell phone minutes often cost commissary money for your incarcerated loved one as well. This may limit how much they are able to call. On the website for the facility they are residing at, it may have more information on how to add funds to their commissary if that is something you are interested in.

The Call

When you receive a phone call from your loved one, it will likely come from a blocked number. When you pick up the phone, it will tell you that you are receiving a call from a correctional facility, asking whether or not you want to pick up. You will either respond verbally, by pressing a number, or just allowing the call to go through. When it does, you will be able to speak with your loved one!

Calls are typically limited to about 15–30 minutes (per day) to allow all of the people in that facility to make phone calls who want to. Your conversation will be

occasionally interrupted to alert you how much time you have left. Once time has run out, if you have not hung up, the call will immediately end so make sure to say your goodbyes when it gives you a final warning.

Written Communication

Check out our resource guide on how to write a letter to someone who is incarcerated:

[How to Write a Letter to Someone Who is Incarcerated](#)

Visitation

Visitation can be an exciting and overwhelming experience. To understand more what the process is like, check out our resource guide to visitation:

[How to Visit an Incarcerated Loved One](#)