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IT matters at Columbia.



Q & A

Adapting a Laptop for Travel Abroad

By J.D. BIERSDORFER

Q . My daughter is taking her laptop to study at the American University of Paris. What kind of adapter does she need so that she can plug it in overseas?

A. Many stores that sell travel supplies often stock international adapter plugs for electrical appliances. In addition to having a differently shaped electrical plug, though, France uses a different voltage for electricity, so your daughter will need an electrical converter as well, unless the laptop can handle dual voltage.

Most laptops made over the past few years can run just fine in this country — which generally uses 110 volts at a frequency of 60 hertz — as well as in Europe, which uses 220 volts to 240 volts at a frequency of 50 hertz. You should check the laptop's manual to make sure your computer can handle this type of varying or dual voltage.

You can also check the back of the computer or the power adapter that came with it to see if it is marked with something like 110-120/220-240V or 110-240 VAC, which means it can work within that range of voltage.

The Walkabout Travel Gear site sells adapters, converters and surge protectors for foreign voltages, and has an informative page of links to articles about international electricity and traveling with computers at www.walkabouttravelgear.com/elect.ht

Other travel equipment sites on the Web like Travel Oasis (www.traveloasis.com/international.htm) and Magellan's (www.magellans.com) also sell such items. A page on the American University of Paris site has a brief section on computer use for students at www.aup.fr/orientation/bring.htm.

Q. I have many programs on CD's written for Windows 95 or Windows

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