

Is my child old enough?



Get the answers to the questions you're asking about smartphones

A smartphone is a mobile phone that offers more advanced capabilities than just making phone calls or sending text messages. Smartphones offer access to the internet, games, apps, cameras, GPS navigation, and operate more like a computer than a standard mobile phone. Popular smartphone models include iPhone, Blackberry, Samsung Galaxy and others.

Does your child need a smart phone?

If you think your child needs a mobile phone so they are able to contact you or for emergency situations, consider purchasing a phone that is not internet enabled. Smartphones come with unfiltered access to the internet, a camera and programs that may not be necessary for the intended purpose of having the phone.

Does your child understand what types of apps are okay to download and how to use the phone safely and appropriately?

Discuss the most important terms of agreement for the new smart phone; your family's terms of agreement! The best time to tackle these rules is while the device is still in the box, before children can start downloading apps or chatting to friends. This may include times of the day the phone can be used, or only after activities like homework or chores are completed. You might also like to address safety concerns by adding specific contacts to their phone, helping your child set passwords and discussing potential issues like cyberbullying, sexting and e-security.

Does your child understand the pricing structure of phones?

You may have heard stories of enormous bills being clocked up by young people downloading too much data, making too many calls or messages or purchasing in-app add-ons. It is important that your child understands the charges for every action on their phone and what the boundaries are. A pre-paid SIM that you top up is often a good tool to start with.

Some phone providers offer spending management tools that allow users to check their current usage levels. Explore these tools with your child and encourage regular use during the first few months to help them become familiar with the cost of usage.

What phone safety and privacy features should I be aware of?

All smart phones and their features are different, but generally you are able to control settings like location services, blocking of individual contacts, access to the content of the phone through PIN or access codes, and password protection of online stores for music, videos, games and apps.

Talk to your child about spam and scams they might receive on their phone through text messages, and let them know that if they are unsure about anything they receive they should ask your advice. Popular text scams include announcements of fake lottery winnings and free devices like iPhones and iPads.

You may like to ensure features including Bluetooth, infra red and Airdrop are switched off when they are not being used. This will make the phone less vulnerable to cyber attack and also reduce the drain on the phone's battery.

With some devices you can also choose to automatically back up the content of the phone through a wifi connection. Otherwise, manually backing up the phone regularly to your computer is recommended.