



St. Andrew's CE Primary School

Mobile phones – a guide for parents

Deciding when to let your child have a phone:

As your child gets older, they may show signs of wanting independence and may ask if they can have a mobile phone. This could be so that they can contact you when they're away from you, communicate with friends, or to use apps and games.

Things to consider:

The age children show interest in getting a mobile phone seems to be getting younger and younger. But don't let that pressure you into doing something that neither you nor your child is ready for. It's a big decision to make. Here are some things to consider:

- Your child's age, development stage and how responsible they are.
- How much independence they have – do they walk to school on their own or with friends?
- What type of phone would be suitable for their age?
- How will you check the use of the phone?
- Do they have a good understanding of how to stay safe online?
- Do you as a parent understand how to use the parental controls on a phone?

Understand why your child wants a phone:

If your child has asked you for a mobile phone, listen to their reasons for why they want or feel they need one.

- If they're at an age where you're thinking about letting them [go out without an adult or stay home alone](#), it might be a good idea for them to have a phone to contact someone in an emergency.
- It's important to consider the social aspects of having a phone. The average age most children have a phone nowadays is 11 years old, and it may be that your child may feel left out or that they don't fit in with their peers if they don't have one.
- Make sure you talk to your child about their phone use and what they are doing. Having honest conversations together is important for their protection. Talk to them about not giving away any personal information or sharing location openly for safety.
- If your child wants to use social media, talk to them about the risks such as dangerous trends and challenges and [how social media affects self-esteem](#). Most social media platforms have a minimum age of 13

Choosing a phone for your child:

Whatever age you decide to give your child a mobile phone, it's a good idea to put some rules and boundaries in place from the start around appropriate phone use and online safety.

There are some phones specifically designed for young children and teens. These have the basic aspects of a smart phone and look like a regular phone but have complete parental control as well as no internet connection and no social media apps. You can also limit screen time and look at their whole call and message history. These are probably good phones to start off with to introduce your child to using one safely and responsibly, particularly younger children.

Is my child ready to have their own phone?

We know that deciding whether your child is ready for a mobile phone is a challenging decision and one you want to get right. There is no one size fits all approach, but there are some key factors that can help you make a decision that feels right for your family.

This tool has been created by NSPCC experts to help you think through those factors. It includes 8 short questions and should take around 10 minutes to complete. The tool is designed to help you reflect on what is right for your family - whether you're ready to decide now or just starting to think it through. Click on the link below to access the tool.

[How to Choose Your Child's First Phone | Vodafone UK](#)

How to start a conversation with your child about using a mobile phone safely

■ Why do you want to get a phone?

Whilst deciding if it is time for your child to have their first phone can be a great opportunity to find out what your child expects to use their phone for. This could be for connecting with friends, playing games, for keeping in touch whilst out of the house or other reasons.

▲ What do you like about using your phone?

You can ask your child about their favourite apps or games, what they like using their phone for, or you can ask them to show you how to play or use their favourite game or website.

● What would you do if something worrying or upsetting happened on your phone?

You can ask them about the places they can go to find the safety advice, find out what they know about privacy settings, and ask them how to report or block on the services they use.

◆ How can we do more online together?

Ask your child about activities or games that you could enjoy as a family, this can be a great time to establish a family agreement to manage your families time online.



Talk with your child about responsible use of their phone

Discuss what is okay and not okay to use their phone for. Talk about time limits and expectations of where the device can and cannot be used, this could include things like the phone being charged outside their bedroom overnight.



Discuss what to do if something upsetting or worrying happens

Give them the strategies they need in case something concerning happens whilst they are using their device. This could be to lock the screen and tell an adult, to make a report to the platform they are using, or to block the user.



Explore parental controls

Take a look at the controls available both on the phone itself and on your home Wi-Fi. Talk these through with your child too. Parental controls are a helpful tool, but an open conversation with your child is the most important thing.

Useful online links for further information:

- [Keeping your child safe on their smartphone | Barnardo's](#)
- [Children and technology: Age-appropriate usage advice | NSPCC](#)
- [Keeping children safe online | NSPCC](#)
- [Talking to your child about online safety | NSPCC](#)
- [Online safety | Childline](#)
- [Phones - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)
- [Deciding when to let your child have a mobile or smart phone](#)