

Is your child phone ready?

How do I know if my child is phone ready?

Discuss with them:

- the purpose of the phone,
- how it will be used, and
- how it will be monitored.

This can be part of ongoing family digital media planning.

Readiness depends on maturity, responsibility, and behavioural traits.

Is there a “right” age for getting a phone?

Experts say later is usually better. Research shows that earlier and higher smartphone use is associated with poorer mental health, such as depression, sleep problems, and increased risk of obesity.

If managed well, a phone can support connection with family and peers.

I'm putting my phone away while we eat

TIP: Model setting limits and taking breaks.

Use this guide to support family discussions about when to get a phone and how to safely introduce it when ready.

1. Phone ready check-list

My child ...

- Completes their bedtime routine without parent help.
- Keeps devices out of the bedroom overnight.
- Follows rules about media, such as time limits.
- Keeps track of things like their backpack or money.
- Manages strong emotions without turning to a device.
- Handles conflict appropriately.
- Seeks help if something makes them uncomfortable.
- Protects privacy and looks out for others online.
- Recognize scams or misinformation.
- Needs a phone for safety or basic communication.

NO	Some-times	YES
☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐
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I (caregiver) -----

- Am ready to set rules, use parental controls, and talk about daily phone use?

☐	☐	☐
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2. Review your responses

If you answered **sometimes** to some of these questions, or **no** to any of them, your child is likely

not yet ready

If you answered mostly **yes** to these questions, your child *may be* for a phone with family support, supervision, and clear expectations.

ready

Try these interim strategies to build foundational phone ready skills:

- Discuss why it's not yet time for a phone.
- Provide goals to work on, such as completing homework regularly.
- Support building communication skills using shared devices.
- Consider smartphone alternatives like watches and flip phones.

Consider a gradual introduction:

- **Communication:** Create a family media plan or contract.
- **Content:** Determine what type of device makes sense and how it will be used.
- **Calm:** Discuss managing emotions and getting enough sleep.
- **Crowding out:** Discuss the hooks that keep us online. Plan how to balance phone use with other daily activities.

3. Plan safety

Before giving a phone:

- Review privacy settings.
- Discuss location-sharing.
- Create a help-seeking plan.
- Discuss monitoring of messages.
- Talk about the risks of sharing photos and personal information.
- Plan what to do if your child faces bullying, bad content, or distress online.



Check first with friends or family before sharing

TIP: Talk often and openly about consent and privacy.



This guide was informed by evidence from the American Academy of Pediatrics' [Digital Ecosystem, Children, and Adolescents: Policy Statement](#).

It supports family decision-making, rather than determining a fixed age for phone ownership.

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