

A Letter to Parents

You're about to take a big step with your kid. Sure, they've been telling you for months that everyone has their own phone—so it shouldn't be that big of a deal, right? **Only, it is.**



A phone can mean so many things...

- Freedom
- Privacy
- Entertainment
- Access
- Connection

Most of us are attached to our phones more than we'd like to admit. Sometimes, we even call people with them! One important thing to remember is that a personal phone is a tool. A powerful tool that can be used for good, and one that can also be used for harm. That's why we believe that giving your child a smartphone should be more than just a hand-off or opening a gift. In fact, we recommend not giving it to them as a gift at all, but to make clear that it's yours and on-loan. Better yet, "lend" them a hand-me-down and you will have more leverage than you would otherwise.

Regardless, we suggest sitting down with your kid before they get their phone

to discuss a plan and set a few guidelines and expectations about how they will use it. It's helpful for them to know that having a phone is a privilege that is earned, not something they are entitled to.

It's always easier to give freedom over time than to take something away, but it's not impossible. So even if you've set things in motion before having this conversation, it's not too late to take a few steps back to re-evaluate and adjust.

In this cell phone agreement, there are expectations for both parent and kid. So, go through it together, and talk about it along the way.

And promise us this—don't let this be the last time you talk about technology. Hold each other accountable for the things you initialed. As technology changes—and technology will—talk about how each of you can use it in healthy ways. And remember, how you use your technology also becomes a model for how your kid will use it, too.

One of the best ways you will get to use it now is connecting with your child in meaningful ways. So go ahead and text them some encouraging words or share a funny meme.

And welcome to a whole new world of parenting!

Cell Phone Agreement

For Kids

Getting a cell phone is a big deal! And we think you're ready for this next big step toward becoming responsible with technology. You will be communicating with the world in a whole new way!

This device is a powerful tool that can be used for good, but also for harm—whether that's harm to you, or harm to others. So, to keep you safe, let's agree on some smart guidelines for how and when you will use it.

Read through the following list and initial next to each item to show agreement with each point.

- | | | | |
|-------|---|-------|---|
| _____ | I understand that having a personal phone comes with great responsibility. I realize that I can't have full access at once, but can earn more freedom over time. | _____ | If I receive any inappropriate images, I will tell my parent(s). I know I will never get in trouble for something that someone else sends me as long as I tell someone. |
| _____ | I will always share my password(s) with my parent(s). This also includes social media accounts. | _____ | I will tell my parent(s) if I'm being bullied or harassed by anyone, or if I receive something alarming from someone I don't know. |
| _____ | My parent(s) has/have the right to look through my phone at any time and without my permission. I know this is for my safety as I learn to make wise decisions. | _____ | I am aware that my parent(s) will occasionally track my location using features associated with my phone. This will keep me safe and help to earn more freedom over time. |
| _____ | I will not take my phone to my room at night, but will leave it (Location:) _____ by _____ p.m. | _____ | I understand that there will be filters in place to limit my access to the internet; these are for my safety. |
| _____ | When I start to drive, I will never text and drive. Not only is it dangerous, but it's illegal. | _____ | I will request permission for the apps I download. I realize that I may be told no, especially when there are age limitations. |
| _____ | If I lose or damage my phone and want to repair it or replace it, I will work to earn the money. | _____ | Just like I would be careful who I invite into my room, I will not video call anyone from my room or in private. |
| _____ | I will always show good manners to any person who is in front of me by putting my phone away and looking into their eyes when they are talking. | _____ | If I break this agreement, I know this phone will be taken away for a period of time until I can regain trust. |
| _____ | I will never bully or harass anyone using my phone. That includes joining in on conversations that tease or make fun of others. | _____ | I understand that how I use my phone will impact my future in ways I may never know. My goal is to learn to be responsible with how I use this powerful tool, and to always use it in positive ways. I know that this also means that even when I'm older, I will need to seek accountability from others to help me make wise decisions. |
| _____ | I understand that texting, sending, or posting naked pictures (or pictures of private parts) can forever damage my reputation and get me into serious legal trouble. I will never send these types of photos. | | |

Signature

Date

Cell Phone Agreement

For Parents

Parents, you aren't off the hook on this one. It's your turn to agree to a few guidelines, too.

Read through the following list and initial next to each item to show agreement with each point.

_____ I understand that when my kid gets a smart-phone, they will have instant access to the world. The way I help them learn to use it responsibly, by gradually earning more freedom, will help keep them safe and set them up for a better future.

_____ How I use my personal phone is a model for how my kid learns to use theirs.

_____ I give _____ the right to look through my phone at any time. I know this is a helpful safeguard for me, even as an adult.

_____ I care enough about my kid to monitor their cell phone usage and social media accounts.

_____ I will **never** text and drive.

_____ I refuse to be rude to others when using my phone, and will prioritize face-to-face conversations, especially with my family.

_____ Our family will use tracking features on our devices so each family member knows where we are at all times. This is for safety and convenience.

_____ I care enough about the safety of my kid to put filters in place to limit their access to the internet.

_____ I will abide by the age limitations of apps when giving my child permission to download them. (A family sharing plan requires a child to ask permission for app downloads.)

_____ I will always work to use technology in positive ways and will continually seek accountability from others to help me make and model wise decisions.

Signature

Date