



Guide and Tips for Mobile Phones to be used by Children.

With a first mobile phone, there comes a lot of new responsibilities. When deciding whether your child is ready for a phone of their own, you should discuss the dangers that come with using phones to make sure they understand how they should conduct themselves online and what to do if they come across something inappropriate. It is a family time to discuss the freedom that a mobile also offers them.

The main concerns to think about include:

- Sharing personal information
- Messaging or posting inappropriate things
- Accessing inappropriate material
- Making online or in-app purchases
- Spending too much time on their phone, especially when in school

Although your child must be aware of their responsibilities, it is also up to you as the parent to enforce any rules and ensure they're remaining safe.

Understand Basic Safety Best Practices

You should have a basic knowledge of your child's phone, how to navigate it and understand the key safety issues to be aware of.

There are three essentials when considering children's online safety:

1. Contact - Who is your child communicating with? Do they really know them?
2. Content - Are they accessing appropriate media, and can they find anything they shouldn't?
3. Conduct - How does your child act online? Are they being bullied or bullying others?

Set Up Rules

Before giving your child free rein on a phone, you should set out clear rules. This might include rules about how much time they can spend on their phone, the number of apps they can download and the type of apps they can access and where it is to be left at night ie charging in the kitchen not in their bedrooms.

Setting up clear guidelines will help establish what is expected of you both. Your child will likely not be too happy about the restrictions you place on them, but remind them that they are necessary - help them see it as an opportunity for them to build trust and show they can be responsible but also ensure that by having an open conversation if/when something goes wrong together you will deal with it.

As your child gets older and understands the responsibility that comes with owning a phone, you can begin taking away the restrictions, giving them more freedom.

Activate Parental Controls

One of the easiest ways to maximise your child's safety as they use their phone is to activate and manage any parental controls.

Pretty much all modern phones will have a range of in-built parental controls that you can set up. You will be able to limit a range of things like screen time and purchases while also controlling the kind of things your child has access to.

How to Activate Parental Controls

Android phone:

1. Launch the 'Play Store' application and go 'Settings' from the top left 'Menu' button.
2. Scroll down to 'Parental Controls' and toggle on.
3. You will then need to create a PIN.
4. Once created, you can set up restrictions for various app categories.

This will help ensure you can control the kind of things your child has access to.

iPhone:

1. Go to 'Settings'.
2. Tap 'Screen Time' and 'Turn on Screen Time'.
3. Go to 'Content & Privacy Restrictions'.
4. Here, you'll be prompted to create a 4-digit code.
5. When you've confirmed the passcode, you'll be able to restrict the type of content that can be accessed - this includes restricting in-app purchasing, blocking websites, location sharing and more.

Use Parental Control Apps

There are also plenty of third-party parental control apps that will help you keep your child safe when using their phone, a lot offer apps for free and there are also more detailed apps that you can subscribe to. After some research below are some apps, but also check your mobile/internet provider as they may also offer controls.

- Famisafe <https://www.educationalappstore.com/app/famisafe-parental-control>
- OurPact <https://ourpact.com/>
- Norton Family <https://family.norton.com/web/?sr=https://www.google.com/>
- Screen Time: <https://screentimelabs.com/>

Monitor Phone Usage

Even with a variety of apps or restrictive settings in place, it will also help to keep a physical eye on your child's phone usage - there can be flaws with these controls no matter how extensive, and it is always beneficial to keep having conversations about technology.

Don't make them feel like they have to hide things, but talk to them about their online activities. Show an interest in how they are spending their time on their phone without turning it into an interrogation.

If you are keeping a keen eye on how much your child uses their phone and what they get up to on it, you can have more productive conversations

When something goes wrong

What should you do when you find something disturbing or inappropriate on your child's phone/or they come to you with a disturbing message/picture.

Stay calm, approaching the situation in a non-judgmental way, talk to them and listen to their answers. If they have come to you reassure them as they will be just as troubled/upset as you will be. Take a screen shot on your device and block the number but reminding them if they ever get a message/call from a number that is not in their contact list do not respond, if it is an app you can report it online (link: <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>) Tell them how sensible they have been to come to you.