

Is Your Child Old Enough to Get a Cell Phone?

These days, kids are begging their parents for a cell phone. Whether they should have one or not is your job to decide.

But what factors should you take into consideration? Here are a few questions you should answer to figure out whether or not your child is old enough for a cell phone.

Need vs. Want

Is it a want or need?

These days, cell phones are a status symbol. Kids with the newest technology and the best games are seen as “popular” and “cool.” Your child might be trying to earn points with neat technology. But is that the purpose of a cell phone? The No. 1 reason kids get a cell phone is to stay in communication with their parents.

Working parents, busy schedules, bus dropoffs and after-school programs are legitimate conditions where a cell phone may be necessary. Practices could run late, and alternative arrangements may need to be made. But if your children are picked up and dropped off each day, there are other options available to stay in contact.

Make sure a cell phone is more of an emergency tool, not a social tool.

Responsibility

Is your child responsible enough to have a cell phone?

Each child is different. Parents know if kids are responsible with their belongings or if they are scatterbrained and prone to losing things. Their level of personal responsibility

should determine whether or not they have a cell phone. Evaluate your child's handling of present responsibilities. Do they complete their chores without being asked? Do they stay on top of their homework? Their actions with these small tasks are telling of their overall responsibility.

Perhaps they're not quite there yet. Make a pact with your child that once they demonstrate personal responsibility in other areas of life, they'll earn the responsibility of a cell phone. A specific plan can develop the skills your child needs before owning technological tools.

Pay attention to their level of responsibility, and if they're not ready, teach them.

Cost

What if my child runs up my cell phone bill? This is a legitimate concern!

Here's our advice: When phones have Internet access, parents are often surprised by the size of the phone bill. You can choose a basic phone without web access, but smartphones typically require Internet access. Consider the most affordable plan, and make sure your child is informed of its conditions.

Look into plans, then monitor and set restrictions.

Limits

Can you control their cell phone use?

We've all heard horror stories of \$700 dollar cell phone bills, inappropriate photos and bullying text messages ... even for young children. But could these issues have been avoided? As parents, we have the ability and obligation to ensure that technology is being used for good. Can you limit and track their cell phone use? Will they have a camera phone? Will there be an open text message policy? Can they have their

phone at night?

You have the ability to set limits. Create a cell phone contract! These restrictions could be negotiated over time once more responsibility is earned. By first enforcing these limitations, you will teach your children self-control.

Parents can use their limitations to teach self-control.

Tools

What tools are available to ensure responsible cell phone use?

As technology advances, more options and apps are available to empower parents. Tools like Find My Friends help you locate your child. Code9 is a paid-service that tracks children, limits usage and informs parents.

Even without downloading apps and purchasing subscriptions, parents can use cell phones as teaching tools. While there are many great educational apps, the cell phone itself teaches self-control, responsibility and communication skills.

Apps and the cell phone itself are tools for parents.

Effects

Don't cell phones cause cancer?

The idea that cell phone waves cause brain tumors was popular for years. But a recent study published in the *Journal of National Cancer Research*, explained here, reported "no link between rising cell phone use and rates of brain cancer." The researchers argued, "If cell phones were a significant cause of brain tumors after five to 10 years of usage, the incidence rates should show an acceleration in brain tumors relative to earlier trends."

Recent research shows no link between cell phones and brain tumors.

All Pro Dad is Family First's innovative and unique program for every father. Their aim is to interlock the hearts of the fathers with their children and, as a byproduct, the hearts of the children with their dads. At , dads in any stage of fatherhood can find helpful resources to aid in their parenting. Resources include daily emails, blogs, Top 10 lists, articles, printable tools, videos and eBooks. From , fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **YouTube** and **Instagram**.

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