

Monthly



CELL PHONE SAFETY FOR CHILDREN

1. **Start Simple.** Show your child how to use the phone, pointing out valuable features like the key lock, vibrate, and alarm. Program the speed dial with your contact information and other emergency numbers. For extra security, consider buying one of several models designed just for children. Some require parents to enter all phone numbers, so children can only send and receive calls from approved individuals.
2. **Limit Usage.** Designate time slots for talking; perhaps after homework and chores are completed or before dinner. Do not let constant calls interrupt family time, such as meals or even the car rides to school. It is easy for a chatty child to cuddle up to an itty-bitty phone as she heads to bed, so check in periodically.
3. **Teach Responsibility.** Make sure your child understands a cell phone is not a toy. Explain the fees associated with text messages, data usage, games, apps, and sharing photos. It is a good opportunity to learn a lesson about budgeting. If their phone has extra features, set limits.
4. **Keep It Private.** Instruct them to use caution when giving out their number. If they need to exchange contact information with someone they do not know very well, they should feel comfortable taking the other person's number instead of providing their own. Make sure they do not publicize their number on the internet.
5. **Assess Before Answering.** Teach your child not to answer calls or text messages from numbers they do not recognize. If it is important, the caller will leave a message and your child can decide how to respond. Explain how to block calls from unwanted numbers.
6. **Exercise Etiquette.** In addition to enforcing your own rules, make sure your child respects the rules of other establishments. For example, phones should be turned off or silenced at hospitals, movie theaters, and restaurants. Restrict use during after-school activities or on the bus.
7. **Stay Organized.** Always keep your child's cell phone charger in the same place. It is best to find a central location — like a kitchen counter or a table by the door — so they will not forget to plug it in or grab it on the way out. Mark the end of the monthly billing cycle on a calendar to remind them how long those dwindling minutes have to last.

8. **Protect Your Property.** Invest in a carrying case or cover to protect the phone from spills, scratches, drops, or bottomless backpacks! Teach your child to be discreet and keep the phone tucked away when not in use. It is not safe to flash phones, wallets, jewelry, mp3 players, or other valuable possessions in public places like shopping malls or bus stops.
9. **Utilize Your Landline.** Some parents recommend having your child hand over their phone when they get home. If your family has one, a landline will work for any necessary social or school-related phone calls throughout the evening, without using up any minutes.
10. **Be Wary of Download Overload.** Fun ringtones, games, and backgrounds can be amusing, but before revamping the phone, consider the facts. Such features are unnecessary and can come with potential bugs or hidden fees. Your child may also be more likely to show them off, risking theft or loss.

Recommended free apps to help monitor your child's phone use:

Google Family Link is a free app that parents can download on their iPhone or Android phone to manage their child's phone. It can limit how much time is spent on the phone or make the phone inaccessible at bedtime and block access to the child's phone at the push of a button.

Apple Screen Time for iOS households.

Qustodio for Android households with children 13 years of age and older.

I hope you find this information helpful.