

5 tips for parents deciding when to get their child a smartphone

If you're worried about giving your child a smartphone but don't want them to feel left out, you're not alone. Many parents are facing the same dilemma. Here are five practical tips to help you decide when—or if—it's the right time.

01. Educate yourself about the issue

Before making any decisions, take some time to understand how smartphones can impact young people's mental health, sleep, and focus. Watching the Channel4 documentary [Swiped](#), on which Dr Chatterjee is the expert voice, is a great start.

02. Have open conversations

Talk openly with your child. Share your concerns, but also listen to how they feel. Explain that this decision is about supporting their health and future, not just enforcing rules. Honest conversations build trust and understanding.

03. Discuss the benefits of being smartphone-free

Help your child see the positives. Without a smartphone, they have more time for hobbies, spending quality time with friends, and building independence. Focus on what they'll gain, not what they're missing.

04. Offer alternatives

If they feel left out or are concerned about not having a particular app, consider letting them use it on a shared family device so you can keep an eye on what they're up to. Or get them a simple phone – there are loads of good options which enable them to keep in touch, without the potential risks of the internet or social media. Check out our guide to the best [simple](#) phones.

05. Sign a Parent Pact with others

The [Parent Pact](#) lets you join a community of like-minded parents waiting until at least Year 9 to get their child a smartphone. See how many others have signed in your child's school and year group, and connect with them via your regional Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp group, to reduce the peer pressure.

Delaying doesn't mean forever – it can simply involve waiting a few more years until your child's better able to deal with the digital world, and giving a simple phone in the meantime.

5 ways to help your kids build healthier smartphone habits

Smartphones have been around for barely 15 years, and as parents, we're still figuring out how best to navigate bringing up kids in the digital age. If your child already has a smartphone, it's never too late to help them build healthier habits. Here are five simple steps to support them.

01. Set up parental controls

Use parental controls to limit screen time, block inappropriate content and ensure their device is as safe as it can be. Most phones have built-in options, or you can explore third-party tools for more control.

02. No phones at mealtimes

Set a rule: no phones at the table. This encourages real conversations and helps everyone stay present and connected in real life for regular times each day.

03. No phones an hour before bed

Phones before bed can disrupt sleep. Set a rule that phones go away at least an hour before bedtime. This helps reduce blue light exposure, allowing your child to get a better, longer night's sleep.

04. Take a break

Introduce regular phone-free times, like 'Smartphone Free Sundays' or family outings with no screens. These breaks give everyone a chance to disconnect, recharge, and connect with each other face-to-face.

05. Create tech-free zones

Establish tech-free zones in your home, particularly in bedrooms. Alone at night in their bedroom is where kids are most likely to come to harm via their smartphone, so a no phones in the bedroom rule keeps them safe and promotes better, deeper sleep.

These boundaries help your child build a healthier relationship with tech so that they can thrive at school, with friends and at home.

Use a sticker to answer the following questions:
How do you feel about children having smartphones?

 _____  _____ 

How confident are you in setting controls on a smartphone for children?

NOT AT ALL _____ **VERY CONFIDENT**

At what age do you think children should first have access to their own smartphone

Under 5	5+	7+	9+	11+	13+	15+	17+
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which of the following issues causes you greatest concern when you think about children's access to smartphones?

Phone addiction	Bullying	Mental health	Harmful content	Reduced attention spans	Loss of childhood
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Would you be supportive of a voluntary pact for parents to limit smartphones and/or social media until a certain age?

No  _____ **Yes** 