

Questions & Answers

Q: My daughter wants a cell phone. Most of her friends have them. And to be honest, there are times when I'd really like to be able to reach her. How can I tell if she is old enough to have a phone? What advice do you have for parents before they get a phone for their child?

A: You are the only one who can decide whether your daughter is old enough to handle a phone. If she is generally responsible about her belongings, she is likely to be able to keep track of a phone. And if she usually follows your rules on other issues, she'll probably be agreeable to limits you set on her cell phone.

If you decide your child is ready to handle the responsibility of a phone, establish a clear outline of what will, and will not, be acceptable. Do this before you give her the phone.

Below are just a few of the things to make your child aware of:

- She will need to stay within the limits that you set for talking, texting and other phone use. Some experts recommend getting an unlimited texting plan so there are no surprises when the phone bill comes. However, you can still set limits on your child's usage.
- You will have the right to look at any text messages and photos she sends and receives.
- If she uses the phone in an inappropriate way, you will take it away.
- She must follow the school's rules about cell phone use.

If your daughter agrees to all of your limits, write up a parent- child contract outlining the details—and make sure both of you sign it.

Reprinted with permission from the April 2018 issue of Parents make the difference!® (Elementary School Edition) newsletter. Copyright © 2018 The Parent Institute®, a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.