

5 Questions to Ask Before You Get Your Kid a Phone

Make sure they (and you!) are ready for the next step with conversation starters that get everyone on the same page. By [Sierra Filucci](#)

You're on your way to pick up your kid after school, and traffic is crawling or your train is delayed or your car breaks down. If only your kid had a phone, you could tell him you'll be late. It's moments like these that lead many parents to get their tweens or teens their first phones. But even though the convenience is compelling -- and your kid has probably been begging for one -- how do you know he's really ready?

If you're considering a smartphone for your kid, you'll need to think through a few things, from who will pay for it to whether she's responsible enough to use it appropriately. But once you decide to take the plunge, start the conversation with these five questions. Also, consider requiring your kid to complete **Digital Compass** (a Common Sense Media game that teaches digital citizenship) before handing over the device.

Why do you want a cell phone?

The answer to this question will help you understand what to expect once she gets the phone and where she might need some limits. Does she want to text with friends? Or play Crossy Road for hours?

Do you understand the rules your family and school have for phone use?

Most kids know they have to answer yes to this question, but it can help start the conversation about your family and school's expectations around how the phone is used, from whether they can download apps without permission to how they can or can't use the phone in the classroom. Be sure to discuss the consequences if rules are broken.

What are some concerns you think your family and teachers have about phones?

This question helps you understand what your kid thinks are the main sources of tension around kids and phone use. You can use this conversation to clarify any of your concerns, such as how often your kid is on the phone, whether he uses social media apps, and how to handle a call or text from a stranger.

What are five places it's not OK to use your phone?

Phone etiquette and safety are ongoing conversations, since kids will be experiencing some phone situations for the first time. But this is a good time to lay down the absolute basics, like no staring at your phone when Grandma's talking, no taking photos in locker rooms, no phones at the dinner table, and so on.

What will you do if you lose or break your phone?

Unfortunately, this is a real possibility. Talk about whether the phone will be replaced and, if so, who pays for it. Is insurance an option? Discuss options for preventing loss or breakage.