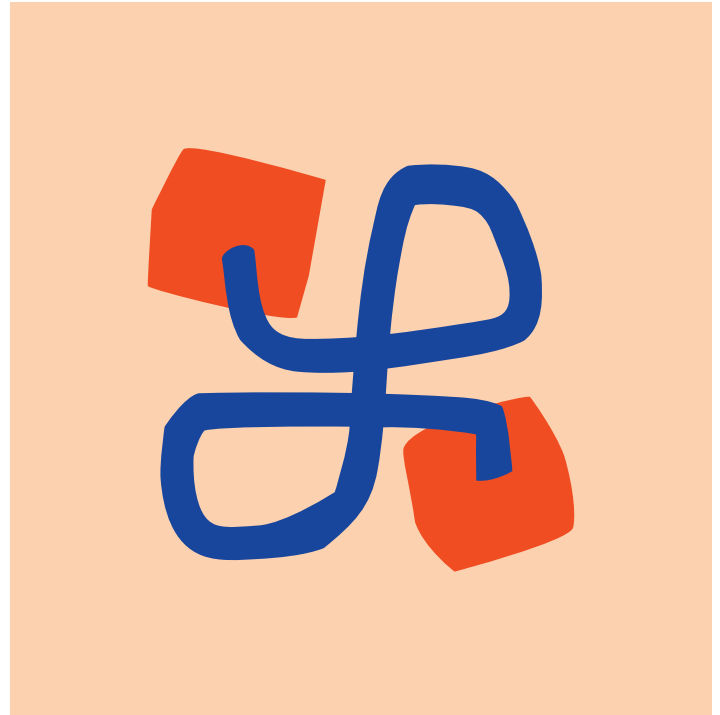


Technology



Your middle schooler might seem tech savvy, but they're not life savvy yet. They might want freedom online, but they're not ready for it. Don't make privacy something you're taking away from them, but rather something you're working toward as a team. Be clear about it and to the best of your ability, paint the picture that both of you have the same goal—an awesome experience with technology.

Your role during this phase is to...

Help them collaborate a plan so your child will respect limits & strengthen social abilities.

This guide is designed to help you meet your middle schooler where they are now, giving you some words to say as you navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep

the end goal in mind: Technological responsibility means leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success.

Continued on next page 

Tips to Help Middle Schoolers Navigate Technology

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future.

To sixth graders...

SAY THINGS LIKE

"I need your phone at 7pm every night." (Whatever your expectations may be, make them clear up front.)

"Let me find out more about that and I will let you know." (When they get a phone, share an account and research their apps.)

"I saw this video and it made me think of you." (Use technology to connect throughout the day—with no agenda.)

"We should respect people online as much as we respect them in person." (Talk about how devices sometimes escalate bullying.)

"Which of your friends have a phone? What do they do on their phone?" (Know what kind of access they have when they are with their friends.)

"I will always love you no matter what you do and you can always come and talk to me." (Create a safe place to be honest.)

To seventh and eighth graders...

SAY THINGS LIKE

"Let me check the age restrictions first." (Most social platforms require a minimum age of 13 years.)

"Saw this video and it made me think of you." (Use technology to connect throughout the day—with no agenda.)

"We should respect people online as much as we respect them in person." (Talk about how devices sometimes escalate bullying.)

"Can you teach me how to use this app?" (Use mobile devices to connect: text, share, learn, and play together.)

"What you post is public, even if it feels private.

Remember

The middle school years are a great time to affirm their journey. Respect their growing need for privacy, but don't hesitate to establish boundaries. They won't always act like it, but they need you now more than ever as they enter the much bigger world of technology. They're now connected to people and information at the touch of a finger. The world of technology can open up a super fun time for your family but it can also bring stress and anxiety. Stay informed. Stay involved. And keep the conversation going.

And it can be permanent." (Help them recognize potential risks related to the words, images, and videos they create.)

"What do you think is a healthy amount of time for you to spend online?" (Collaborate on expectations, rules, and consequences.)

"What should the password be?" (When you are ready, set up social media accounts together, and know their passwords.)

"Is it okay if I comment on your posts?" (Be considerate about how you engage with them online.)

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Tips to Help Middle Schoolers Navigate Technology

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future.

Enhance the Conversation

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities you can try:

Engage with technology. Every other week or so, challenge yourself to become familiar with a new aspect of technology—a filter, a GIF, an app, a game, etc. Engage with your middle schooler by sharing the new skills with them, and ask them to show you anything new they've learned, too.

Sign an agreement. Use a cell phone agreement with some healthy guidelines to establish with your middle schooler before (and even after) they get a phone. There are items for them to initial their agreement to, like where they will keep their technology at night, as well as items they can hold you accountable to, like not texting and driving! Use this agreement to lay out a plan of expectations for technology use that leads to increasing freedom. (We've included an agreement with this download.)

Build others up. Technology is a tool that can be used for good or . . . well, evil. Challenge your middle schooler to say at least one positive thing about something or someone on technology three times a week. Help them learn to make a habit of using technology to build others up, and never tear them down. And make sure you're modeling this one as well!

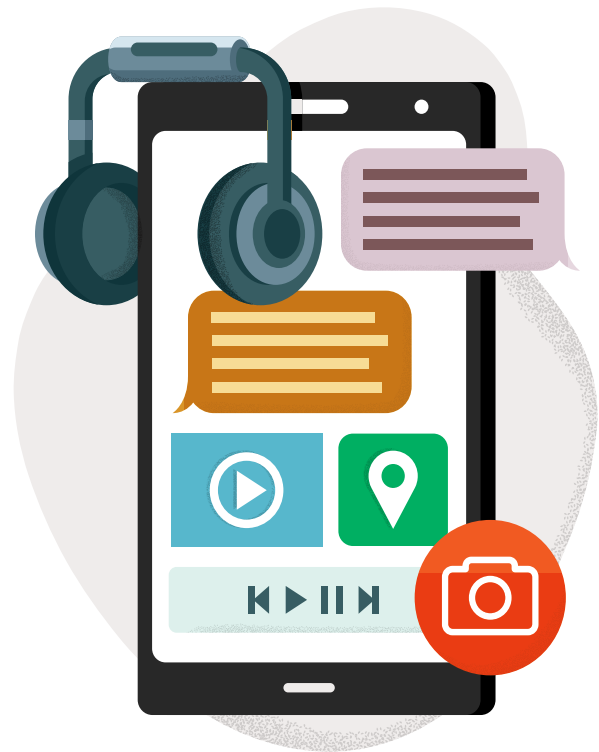
This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application.

To discover more ways to understand this phase, check out the Parenting Your... book series. For more on this subject, check out the Parenting in a Tech World online course. Both are available at parentcuestore.org.

For more information on The Phase Project and other great parent resources, visit theParentCue.org. ©2023 Parent Cue. All rights reserved.

A Letter to Parents

You're about to take a big step with your kid. Sure, they've been telling you for months that everyone has their own phone—so it shouldn't be that big of a deal, right? **Only, it is.**



A phone can mean so many things...

- Freedom
- Privacy
- Entertainment
- Access
- Connection

Most of us are attached to our phones more than we'd like to admit. Sometimes, we even call people with them! One important thing to remember is that a personal phone is a tool. A powerful tool that can be used for good, and one that can also be used for harm. That's why we believe that giving your child a smartphone should be more than just a hand-off or opening a gift. In fact, we recommend not giving it to them as a gift at all, but to make clear that it's yours and on-loan. Better yet, "lend" them a hand-me-down and you will have more leverage than you would otherwise.

Regardless, we suggest sitting down with your kid before they get their phone

to discuss a plan and set a few guidelines and expectations about how they will use it. It's helpful for them to know that having a phone is a privilege that is earned, not something they are entitled to.

It's always easier to give freedom over time than to take something away, but it's not impossible. So even if you've set things in motion before having this conversation, it's not too late to take a few steps back to re-evaluate and adjust.

In this cell phone agreement, there are expectations for both parent and kid. So, go through it together, and talk about it along the way.

And promise us this—don't let this be the last time you talk about technology. Hold each other accountable for the things you initialed. As technology changes—and technology will—talk about how each of you can use it in healthy ways. And remember, how you use your technology also becomes a model for how your kid will use it, too.

One of the best ways you will get to use it now is connecting with your child in meaningful ways. So go ahead and text them some encouraging words or share a funny meme.

And welcome to a whole new world of parenting!

Cell Phone Agreement

For Kids

Getting a cell phone is a big deal! And we think you're ready for this next big step toward becoming responsible with technology. You will be communicating with the world in a whole new way!

This device is a powerful tool that can be used for good, but also for harm—whether that's harm to you, or harm to others. So, to keep you safe, let's agree on some smart guidelines for how and when you will use it.

Read through the following list and initial next to each item to show agreement with each point.

- | | | | |
|-------|---|-------|---|
| _____ | I understand that having a personal phone comes with great responsibility. I realize that I can't have full access at once, but can earn more freedom over time. | _____ | If I receive any inappropriate images, I will tell my parent(s). I know I will never get in trouble for something that someone else sends me as long as I tell someone. |
| _____ | I will always share my password(s) with my parent(s). This also includes social media accounts. | _____ | I will tell my parent(s) if I'm being bullied or harassed by anyone, or if I receive something alarming from someone I don't know. |
| _____ | My parent(s) has/have the right to look through my phone at any time and without my permission. I know this is for my safety as I learn to make wise decisions. | _____ | I am aware that my parent(s) will occasionally track my location using features associated with my phone. This will keep me safe and help to earn more freedom over time. |
| _____ | I will not take my phone to my room at night, but will leave it (Location:) _____ by _____ p.m. | _____ | I understand that there will be filters in place to limit my access to the internet; these are for my safety. |
| _____ | When I start to drive, I will never text and drive. Not only is it dangerous, but it's illegal. | _____ | I will request permission for the apps I download. I realize that I may be told no, especially when there are age limitations. |
| _____ | If I lose or damage my phone and want to repair it or replace it, I will work to earn the money. | _____ | Just like I would be careful who I invite into my room, I will not video call anyone from my room or in private. |
| _____ | I will always show good manners to any person who is in front of me by putting my phone away and looking into their eyes when they are talking. | _____ | If I break this agreement, I know this phone will be taken away for a period of time until I can regain trust. |
| _____ | I will never bully or harass anyone using my phone. That includes joining in on conversations that tease or make fun of others. | _____ | I understand that how I use my phone will impact my future in ways I may never know. My goal is to learn to be responsible with how I use this powerful tool, and to always use it in positive ways. I know that this also means that even when I'm older, I will need to seek accountability from others to help me make wise decisions. |
| _____ | I understand that texting, sending, or posting naked pictures (or pictures of private parts) can forever damage my reputation and get me into serious legal trouble. I will never send these types of photos. | | |

Signature

Date

Cell Phone Agreement

For Parents

Parents, you aren't off the hook on this one. It's your turn to agree to a few guidelines, too.

Read through the following list and initial next to each item to show agreement with each point.

_____ I understand that when my kid gets a smart-phone, they will have instant access to the world. The way I help them learn to use it responsibly, by gradually earning more freedom, will help keep them safe and set them up for a better future.

_____ How I use my personal phone is a model for how my kid learns to use theirs.

_____ I give _____ the right to look through my phone at any time. I know this is a helpful safeguard for me, even as an adult.

_____ I care enough about my kid to monitor their cell phone usage and social media accounts.

_____ I will **never** text and drive.

_____ I refuse to be rude to others when using my phone, and will prioritize face-to-face conversations, especially with my family.

_____ Our family will use tracking features on our devices so each family member knows where we are at all times. This is for safety and convenience.

_____ I care enough about the safety of my kid to put filters in place to limit their access to the internet.

_____ I will abide by the age limitations of apps when giving my child permission to download them. (A family sharing plan requires a child to ask permission for app downloads.)

_____ I will always work to use technology in positive ways and will continually seek accountability from others to help me make and model wise decisions.

Signature

Date