



Tips for Parents - Smartphones and Social Media

Ninety percent of children own a smartphone at age eleven, and most children have a social media profile by the age of thirteen. There are many benefits to increased access to technology, but it can be hard to know how to keep your child safe online.

Here are a few tips from experts on how to help your child develop a healthy relationship with their phone and social media.

Tip 1 - Prepare before giving them a phone

Have a conversation with your child before they get a phone to set ground rules. Listen to their views and collaborate with them to explore the principles of online safety.

Tip 2 - Agree clear rules

Alongside rules about safety, consider setting time limits on phone use and when you would take a phone away. Let them know if you intend to monitor their online activity.

Tip 3 – Teach them how to stay safe online

Even with the best intentions, as your child gets older it will be harder to control everything they see or say online. Here are a few tips for teaching them how to keep themselves safe:

- Be respectful to everyone, as you would be in person
- Assume any message you send could be made public
- Don't respond to messages or accept friend requests from unknown numbers
- Always answer the phone when it's a parent or carer
- Don't share private information online
- Ask permission before you take a photo or video of someone or share anything about them
- Be aware of apps which have location sharing
- Report concerning content to a trusted adult
- Explain what to do if they lose their phone

Tip 4 – Model healthy phone habits

If you ask your child not to use their phone during mealtimes or before bed, then it's a good idea to follow this yourself. If you are breaking these rules, let them know why.

Tip 5 - Keep phones out of the bedroom

Having time away from screens for an hour before bedtime can help us to calm down and improve sleep. Establishing a bedtime routine like reading or listening to podcasts can also help them wind down for the night.

Tip 6 - Let them know they can talk to you

Try to encourage open and honest conversations with your child. Make sure they feel able to talk to you if they have made a mistake or see upsetting content.

Tip 7 – Set up parental controls

Review privacy settings and look out for apps which share personal information or location data. Make sure your child has to ask permission before installing anything new, so that you have time to research measures to keep them safe.

Tip 8 - Stay strong and be kind

It's important to protect your child's safety and mental health, and children need our support online as much as any other area of their life. Be kind if they make mistakes and be ready to keep learning.