

PRINTABLE GUIDE

Decide if a child is ready for a phone

There is no single phone-buying age that fits every family. Readiness, the reason for a phone and available adult support all matter. Owning a phone also does not make a child eligible for every app; account rules differ by service and region.

Family planning | 2 min read | 5 steps

Before you start

- ☐ Talk with the child and other carers involved.
- ☐ Check school rules and current requirements for any proposed accounts.

1. Describe the real need

Write down whether the phone is for travel contact, learning or another purpose. Consider a basic calling phone or shared device if it meets that need with fewer features.

- ☐ Done this step

2. Discuss readiness

Ask whether the child can follow agreed boundaries, care for equipment and tell an adult when something feels wrong. Use everyday examples rather than treating peer ownership as the only reason.

- ☐ Done this step

3. Agree how help works

Explain that upsetting content or unwanted contact should be reported to a trusted adult. Practise saying no, blocking and reporting. Make clear that seeking help will be taken seriously.

- ☐ Done this step

4. Plan access and privacy

Choose needed apps and review who can contact the child, view posts or see location. Set suitable parental controls and explain them openly. Avoid public personal details and unnecessary location sharing.

☐ Done this step

5. Start gradually and review

Begin with a small agreed set of functions. Write down charging, storage and use routines, then schedule regular check-ins. Change access when the child's needs or account requirements change.

☐ Done this step

Try it for yourself

Write a one-page agreement for contacts, apps, privacy and asking for help.

☐ I tried the task.

My notes

What if we decide to wait?

Explain the reasons and agree how the child can still contact you or use shared technology. Review the decision later instead of making it a competition with peers.

Official help and the online guide

NSPCC children, phones and online safety -

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/children-phones-online-safety/>

Read online: <https://plaintech-guides.pages.dev/guides/decide-if-a-child-is-ready-for-a-phone/>