

Your child's first phone

1. Finding the right time

- As a parent/carer, only you will know when your child is ready, with your support, to take on this new responsibility.
- Even if your child is putting you under pressure to get them a phone, the age that you choose to do so is up to you.
- Whilst it's natural to be cautious, not leaving it too long allows more time to learn how to use the phone together, before your child naturally becomes more independent.

2. Choosing the phone

- There are plenty of options when it comes to choosing a phone, depending on the amount of money you want to spend.
- Whilst the latest model may not be advisable (phones are prone to damage, loss and theft) you could save money by choosing a remodelled phone, or a less expensive new phone, or by passing on a previous phone that you already own – after doing a factory reset.
- Choosing a phone with the same operating system as yours (e.g. Apple / Android) can make it easier as you can often apply content filters from one device to another.
- Talking this through with other parents and carers may help give you an idea of what they have done or are planning to do.

3. Setting it up

- Before giving the phone to your child, it's important to put in place content restrictions and parental controls, to minimise the chances of your child seeing something they are not ready for and managing things like screentime and in-app purchases.
- If you choose a Pay As You Go (PAYG) SIM card, it will help young people recognise the costs involved in using a phone, in terms of data, calls, and texts etc. PAYG can also encourage your child to save their data by using your home Wi-Fi, where content restrictions and parental controls can be applied.

- Under 18s are not able to have a phone contract in their own name. Some parents and carers contact their mobile phone company and add an additional contract to their account for their child. Your child could run up additional costs on their phone, so check if your mobile phone company offers a monthly spending cap to help prevent any further costs to you.
- To set up content restrictions and parental controls on the phone, and in your home, use the step-by-step guides from Internet Matters.

4. Getting them started

- It is essential that children are shown how to use their favourite apps, to enjoy them safely and responsibly, e.g. by using the privacy settings and reporting tools available.
- You may want to use our Childnet [Family Agreement](#) to discuss expectations for your child's phone use. Points to consider could include where the phone will be kept at night, how many hours of screen time per day is allowed, how much credit will be topped up each month etc.
- Talk to your child about their use of the phone outdoors – e.g. keeping it out of sight, when possible, for their security and safety.

5. Ongoing support

- Finding regular opportunities to start conversations around life online, will show you are engaged and interested in your child's activities, and will help your child feel confident that they can come to you if they need assistance.
- Content restrictions are a good starting point, but education is key; talk with your child about what to do if they see something that worries or upsets them. Ensure they know they can come to you for help with anything, even if they've seen something that you wish they hadn't.
- Whatever it is that your child needs help with, try to remain calm. The way that you respond will have an impact on your child's experience and may influence how your child feels about asking for help in the future.

Your child's first phone checklist



Have you?

- Decided on a suitable phone for your child?
- Chosen between Pay As You Go or a monthly contract?
- Set the content restrictions and parental controls for the phone itself?
- Activated the content restrictions and parental controls on your home Wi-Fi?
- Shown your child how to use their favourite apps together and how to spot in-app purchases?
- Found the privacy settings and reporting features on each app?
- Created a family agreement?
- Started regular conversations about your child's online activities?
- Talked to your child about what to do if they see something that worries or upsets them?
- Read our advice about how to respond to sensitive issues?

Useful links

Starting conversations and responding to sensitive issues: www.childnet.com/resources/lets-talk-about-life-online

Family agreement: www.childnet.com/resources/family-agreement

Content restrictions and parental controls: www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls

Making a report: www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/how-to-make-a-report

Register the phone

If it is lost and recovered by the police, they can get it back to you: www.immobilise.com