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How to Know When Your Kid is Ready for a Phone

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If you're a parent navigating our increasingly online world, you're likely aware that at some point, your kid is probably going to want a phone. But before you start diving in on doing research on the best phones for kids, it's important to determine whether or not it's the right time for your kid to have a phone.

You might think that once your child reaches a certain age, it's time to start looking into smartphones for kids. But you should also consider whether your kid is mature enough to handle the responsibilities of having their own phone, how you can help them create a healthy relationship with technology, and how giving your child a phone fits into your family value system.

To help take some of the guesswork out of this exploration, [AT&T collaborated with pediatricians](#) from the American Academy of Pediatrics to develop [the PhoneReady Questionnaire](#), a 10-question online tool designed to help parents decide whether or not their kid is ready for their first phone. Here are some of the questions it asks to help you come to the decision that is right for your family:

How often do you feel your child needs a cell phone for their safety?

If your kid goes to school on their own or has a lot of after school activities, this may be a scenario where your child having a phone could be a helpful tool to keep them in contact with you while they're out and about—and to have them let you know when they're coming home.

How often does your child act responsibly, such as finishing things they are assigned at school?

Going beyond the situational needs of phones for kids, it's also important to explore how your child handles increasing responsibility as they get older. Are they capable of handling the responsibilities they've been given, or do they tend to falter under pressure? Have they had trouble with responsibility in the past, but now they're showing improvement?

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How often does your child follow rules about other media in the home?

While smartphones for kids might be a good idea for safety's sake, they do introduce more screen time into your child's life. Knowing how they respond to set boundaries can help you determine whether or not they'll spend all day with their nose in a phone, or if they're ready to have a healthy relationship with mobile technology.

How often do you trust your child's judgment when they make decisions when you're not there?

This question speaks directly to your child's maturity level. If you find they're capable of working autonomously to solve problems when you're not around, or that they're strong critical thinkers on their own, this may signal that your child is mature enough—or at least, nearing maturity—to handle their own smartphone.

Are you prepared to take steps such as setting parental controls, creating a family media plan, and talking with your child about what they see and do online?

Of course, phones for kids isn't just about what your child will do with their phone—it's also about how you as the parent will help them manage the responsibility and set healthy boundaries for both media consumption and technology awareness. If you're not prepared to have these difficult discussions with your kid and other family members, you may not be ready for your child to have a phone—even if they think they're ready.

Once you go through the entire questionnaire, you'll be placed in one of three categories: Ready Zone, Almost Ready Zone, or Not Yet Ready Zone. Each category offers helpful tips for parents to take next steps on this journey with their kids, so you can prepare for the next stage of their digital journey. And, if you fall into the Ready Zone, you'll get great information about the value of parental controls, how (and why) to create a Family Media Plan, and even some additional guidance to encourage discussion between you and your kid about what healthy phone usage looks like.

The subject of phones for kids can be challenging to address, but with the PhoneReady Questionnaire, parents have a useful tool that can make the conversation—and decision—easier for everyone.

Feeling ready?

Parents can visit [AT&T Kids Phone & Family Plan](#) to access recommendations on products and services based on what's important to their family.

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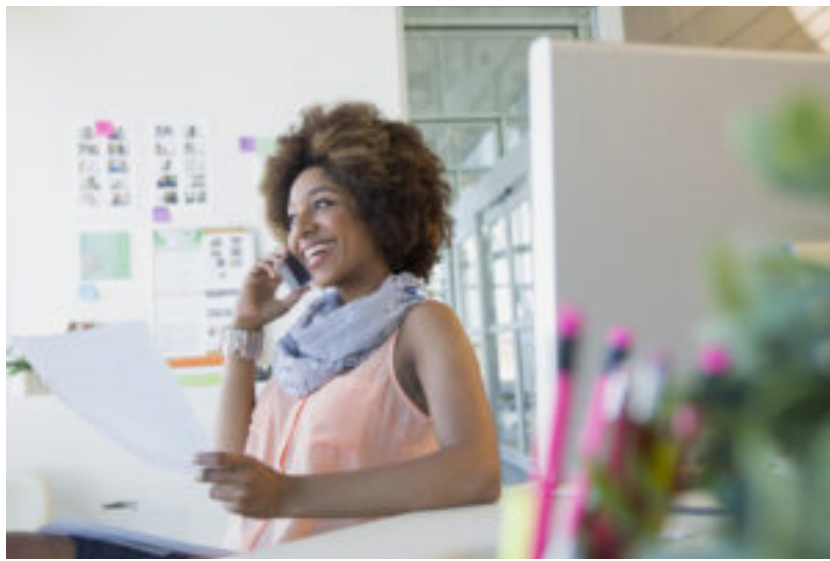
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