

Read this before you give your kid his or her first smartphone

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While it might not bring parents as much joy as a first step or first word, the right time to introduce kids to a smartphone is an important moment.

Smartphones have become the most important piece of technology we own, connecting us with friends, keeping us updated on the world around us, and letting us capture our biggest moments.

If you're a parent, handing one over to your kid can bring a sense of dread. Who is she talking to? What is he watching? Why can't she stop texting?

There are ways to limit what your kids can access on their new device, as well as track what they download. Before you do that, consider the following question:

Is my child old enough for a [smartphone](#)?

Kids aren't waiting as long to get their first smartphones. According to a 2016 study from research firm Influence Central, the average age for a child getting his or her first smartphone is 10.3 years old, down from 12 in 2012.

There's no real consensus among experts on the right age to buy a smartphone. During an interview earlier this year, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates said all three of his kids waited until they were 14. Campaigns like Wait Until 8th urge parents to wait until their kids get to the eighth grade.

Ultimately, the decision could come down to whether parents think their child is mature enough to handle a smartphone, said Scott Steinberg, author of *Parenting High-Tech Kids: The Ultimate Internet, Web, and Online Safety Guide*.

"When they're going to be so far outside your oversight or outside of ready accessibility, when they start going off doing activities, camps, or they need to be able to get in touch with you but can't, that's a possibility

for when you can introduce it," said Steinberg.

Use your phone's parental controls

Depending on the device, parents can set restrictions to limit what their children can access on that new smartphone.

For the iPhone, go to Settings, then General, then scroll down to Restrictions. When you first enable restrictions, the device will ask you to create a four-digit PIN.

Restrictions allows parents to control everything from what apps kids can open to whether they can make purchases within apps. Users can also adjust the type of content kids can view based on ratings.

On Android devices, restrictions will vary depending on the handset you own. On Google Play, users can set similar limits on what content kids can access based on ratings.

Keep an eye on app downloads

Both iOS and Google Play include ways to check out your app history if you plan on sharing accounts with your kids.

In Apple's App Store, for example, users can view what apps they've downloaded as well as what apps aren't on their current devices. In Google Play, users can head to their account, then order history to view downloads.

Also, on the App Store, users can enable automatic downloads, which will automatically add an app downloaded on one device on all of them. It's handy for knowing when your kids have downloaded a new app.

Depending on the age of the child receiving the smartphone, parents can also explore settings within apps to limit activity.

There are also apps dedicated to tracking how much time someone is spending on their phones or in a particular app: Moment for iPhones, Space (formerly BreakFree) for Android. Moment also has a feature that makes the whole family (including parents) go screen-free for a period, say dinner time.

The more you know

Perhaps the most important thing [parents](#) can do is stay informed. Talk to your kids about why they want a phone and how they plan to use it.

"It's not high tech parenting that's going to win the day here," said Steinberg. "It's traditional low-tech parenting and just making a point to ask the right questions, to be having the conversations in households and schools and making a point to stay on top of the latest new high tech developments."

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