

# **“Cell Phone Use”**

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As a parent of two teenagers, I have been stumbling through this age of technology. But I have gained some useful pieces of information unfortunately through exasperating experiences mostly consisting of trial and error. Hopefully, I can share some of those insights with you parents who have not yet entered into the faltering journey of “cell phone usage” and spare you some of the learning curve time.

## **When to get your child a cell phone**

Most children generally only need a cell phone when they are somewhere else after school other than at home or day care (usually middle school age)

- After school sports (when they are at “away” events they will need to call you as to when to show up at school to bring them home)
- Work (some can begin work as early as age 13 with working papers)

## **Night time with cell phones**

- Turn off cell phone at least ½ hour before bed time. This way your child is then winding down and focusing on going to bed and getting organized for the next day.
- Insist that the cell phone remain in a public area of the house after it is turned off for the night (kitchen, family room). This way you can prevent them from being tempted to turn it back on for one more text and from texting until late into the night.
- No phone should be allowed at the family dinner table. This is family time and should be “technology free” so everyone can focus on looking at each other and having conversations. You would be amazed that they can text with the phone in their pocket without looking at it!

## **School and Cell Phones**

- At school, cell phones should be in a locked locker only to be used after school hours. Many schools have the policy of “if they see it, they will take it” making parents come to school and pick it up.
- Contact your customer service provider and set up a password to check the time and #'s your child is calling/texting. Print it out and share it with your child. This will show them that you will be checking that they are not texting during school hours and you will see what numbers they are repeatedly calling/texting.

## **Safety and Cell Phones**

- Discuss inappropriate texting.
- Everything you text can be sent to everyone and anyone through mass texting (whether they are in your address book or not)
- Do not put anything in a text message that you wouldn't want the world (parents, teachers, coaches) to see.
- Cell phones should only be used for communication.

## **Consequences for poor cell phone use**

- Discuss what the consequences will be up front for going over the texting limit (child pays for additional texts, phone gets taken away)
- Discuss consequences for texting during school hours, after going to bed, sending inappropriate pictures or texts.

If you have these discussions BEFORE you purchase a cell phone the child will know exactly what is expected of him or her and you should be able to avoid many arguments. Writing up a contract with the rules and consequences, and having your child sign it before the purchase will also help to alleviate some future disagreements. The web site below has a family guide to download discussing how to become “cell phone savvy” and it also includes a contract that you and your child can discuss and sign before purchasing a cell phone.

Above all, in this age where we, even as adults, find it hard to “unplug”, it is extremely important for you to set some “technology free” time for you and your family. Turn off the computers, Blackberries, I-phones, TV, video game systems and play a board game. Look at each other and talk. Make family time a priority. They will thank you for it and you might learn something new about them and yourself. Good luck in your journey through cell phone usage.

[http://www.wirelessfoundation.org/GetWise/RWIRE09\\_PARENT.pdf](http://www.wirelessfoundation.org/GetWise/RWIRE09_PARENT.pdf)