



12-14
years old

Digital Safety
Basics

Mobile Phones and Your Kids

KIDS ARE MORE MOBILE THAN EVER.

- ▶ Mobile phones are the #1 form of communication for teens (Pew, 2010).
- ▶ More kids have mobile phones than ever before, including 31% of 8- to 10-year-olds, 69% of 11- to 14-year-olds and 85% of 15- to 18-year-olds (Kaiser, 2010).
- ▶ Teens text more than they talk — averaging 3,146 text messages a month, compared with 203 calls (Nielsen, 2010).
- ▶ 1 in 3 teens use their phones to browse the web (Harris Interactive, 2009).

PARENT TIPS FOR PRETEENS

- ▶ **Choose the right mobile plan for calls and texts.** Service plans for mobile phones vary in the number of minutes and texts allowed per month. If you allow your preteens to text, set texting limits or consider a plan with unlimited texting to reduce “bill shock” once a child goes over his monthly limit.
- ▶ **Explain the real cost of mobile phones and that very few “extras” are free.** Make sure your kids understand how quickly ring tones, sports updates or internet access can add up.

- ▶ **Create guidelines for use with your kids.** Have a conversation about when and where mobile phones are okay. Prohibiting phones in the classroom, using phones at night and bringing phones to the dinner table are just a few examples.
- ▶ **Make sure your kids are using phones appropriately.** Talk to your kids about what kinds of exchanges are appropriate and how something as simple as a misunderstood text can get them into trouble with friends or family.
- ▶ **Talk about cyber-bullying.** Make it clear that being bullied or being a bully are unacceptable. Explain that bullying via phones or the internet is just as harmful as physical or verbal abuse. Set firm punishments when children bully others, and conversely, make sure they know to tell an adult if they become victims of bullying.
- ▶ **Tell your children that sexual talk of any kind is not allowed.** Kids often jokingly use sexual language and sexually aggressive speech. Yet, on a cell phone, a message can be instantly forwarded out of context to anyone, putting the sender and the recipient at risk.
- ▶ **Establish real consequences for violations of your rules.** Having access to a mobile phone is a privilege, not a right. Be sure kids are aware of the consequences when mobile phone rules are broken.

