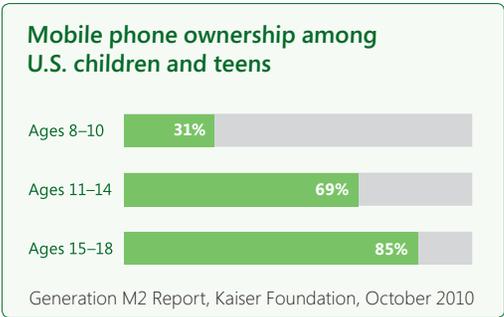




For many children and teens, a world without mobile phones is unimaginable. Recent research makes it easy to see why. In the U.S., the Kaiser Foundation reported ownership broken down by age.



The research also found that the kids surveyed average over half an hour talking on the phone and send more than 100 text messages, *every day*. (That is more than 3,000 a month.) Yet, the same research indicates that relatively few seventh through twelfth graders have any established rules around mobile phone use.

This brochure will help you better understand the features and risks for kids of mobile phones (and other mobile devices like Kindles and iPads). It explains how you can teach kids to use them smartly and safely.

**Watch a video**

For a compelling and concrete sense of mobile phone and media use among young people, watch the three-minute video, "Go Figure."  
<http://bit.ly/gUm7gB>.

## What to Do If There Are Problems

**Teach children to listen to and trust their instincts.** If something feels uncomfortable or alarms them, that's a good warning sign. Let kids know they can come to you and that you will help solve the problem. Agree that you won't take away their phone or curtail privileges because of someone else's actions.

**Immediately report:**

- > Physical threats, persistent cyberbullying, or any form of exploitation to the police and the carrier. (Consider blocking the caller.)
- > Inappropriate content or behavior to the carrier or application.
- > Content that exploits minors to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: **(800) 843-5678**.

**More Helpful Info**

Learn about the family safety features that different carriers offer:

- > [besmartwireless.com/pages/tools\\_from\\_the\\_wireless\\_industry](http://besmartwireless.com/pages/tools_from_the_wireless_industry)
- > [getparentalcontrols.org/parental-controls/mobile-phones](http://getparentalcontrols.org/parental-controls/mobile-phones)

Get additional straightforward advice about mobile phone safety for children:  
[lookbothways.com/2010/07/13/child-cell-phone-safety](http://lookbothways.com/2010/07/13/child-cell-phone-safety).



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## Teach Kids Mobile Phone Safety

- > Agree on clear use limits
- > Teach kids to use the phone safely and responsibly
- > Get help from technology
- > What to do if there are problems

## Know the Phone, Plan, and Risks

Mobile phones range from the most basic, like those for younger children that can place calls only to restricted numbers, to smartphones that are essentially tiny computers. These add text messaging, and:

- > Internet access to social networks such as Facebook, as well as to games, videos and video chat sites, TV shows, music, applications (*apps*), and other content.
- > Use of camera and video that are fun, but also give the opportunity for bullying, and enable taking and sharing suggestive photos or videos (*sexting*).
- > GPS tracking that makes it possible to pinpoint the location of the phone—and the child. You can use this to monitor where your kids are, but if it is not used carefully, so can others. Also, smartphones may tag a photo (*geotagging*), revealing precisely where and when it was taken.

Pick a service plan with the functionality and safety features that are right for each child. Add features such as texting, photo-sharing, or Internet access only when you feel your child is ready to take them on.

Choose between a prepaid or billed-monthly plan. Billed plans let you monitor calls or check for unexpected or unusual charges. (These could be from “free” offers with hidden monthly charges that your child accepted, or from malware on the phone.)



## Practical Advice for Mobile Phone Safety

### **Agree on clear use limits**

Based on the age and maturity of each child, agree on the features on their phones, and define clear rules for sensible use and the consequences for breaking them. Talk about usage: who they can talk to or text and when, the websites they can visit, and so on. With older kids, discuss cyberbullying, sexting, and the dangers of driving while using the phone.

From time to time, ask your kids to show you what is on their phones—photos, music, games, videos, apps. Periodically re-examine rules as children mature and mobile technologies evolve.

### **Teach kids safe and responsible phone use**

Help kids understand that they should:

- > Share their phone number only with family and close friends. Do not put it on social network pages, use it to enter contests, or give it to just anyone who asks for it.
- > Lock the phone with a PIN that they keep secret (even from best friends) to prevent others from snooping or misusing it.
- > Not say, text, or post anything that would hurt or embarrass someone. NO bullying. Period.
- > Not make, send, or accept provocative texts, photos, or videos. Once they are shared, they can be forwarded to anyone, anytime, even years in the future.
- > Avoid clicking links in ads, contests, text messages (even from friends) offering free prizes and the like. It may allow malware that could damage the phone, or lead to the sale of their information or theft of their identity.



### **Get help from technology**

If you use safety tools to help manage or limit kids' phone activity, clearly explain why you are using them and what they will do. Consider setting them up together.

Some protections are provided through the carrier's service; others can be set on the phone. The most reliable are those on the phone, because when a phone uses a wireless network, it bypasses the carrier and its protections.

**Filter or block websites and content** as appropriate for your child's age and maturity:

- > Consider blocking Internet access for the youngest; for teens, think about restricting access to adult, gambling, and other inappropriate websites.
- > Set filters on lyrics, video, and other content that is violent or explicit.
- > Restrict access to forums (including in games) unless they are moderated by adults.

**Use GPS cautiously.** If you use a family location service to monitor your kids' whereabouts, make sure others cannot locate them. Otherwise, consider disabling the location feature on your child's phone; at the very least, turn it off in the phone's camera.

**Manage contacts**, which can include blocking callers and restricting contact to approved numbers only.