



Mobile Phones

Using a mobile phone

Most young people in secondary school own a mobile phone. The devices themselves are becoming ever more powerful and many offer the same functions you might have on a computer. Many mobile phones can now:

- ❖ Access the internet – this is no different to accessing the internet through a computer. Young people can go on any site that you can find online, including sites like Facebook, YouTube and also potentially age inappropriate sites.
- ❖ Take and share photos and videos – most phones have a fully functioning camera. Young people can take images and videos and these can be shared quickly, easily and for free through text message, email or uploading to the internet.
- ❖ Chat with instant messaging, video and text – young people can take part in private chats with people through their mobile phone.
- ❖ Share your location – through GPS, many phones can now identify their user's location in real time. This can then be shared on social networking sites and through other sites and applications. Play games – young people can use their mobile to play games and download new ones, sometimes these can come at a cost.



- ❖ Add and buy 'apps' – apps are programs that you can add to your phone that enable you to do a wide range of things, from playing simple games to finding up-to-date train times. Some of these apps have a cost.

With all these functions available, talking to people is now only a small part of what mobile phones are used for. It can be difficult to keep tabs of what your child is up to on a mobile phone.

How can I help my child use their mobile phone?

Parental settings – some mobile phone service providers allow you to set certain controls over your child's phone. This can include blocking access to certain sites and monitoring your child's activities. When buying a mobile, speak to the sales representative to find out more about what services they offer. You can find out more about what controls are available by looking at 'parents' sections online; here are a few to get you started:

Vodafone :

<http://parents.vodafone.com/mobile> O2— <http://www.o2.co.uk/parents>

T mobile :

<http://www.t-mobile.co.uk/help-andadvice/advice-for-parents/most>

Orange :

<http://www1.orange.co.uk/safety/>

Loopholes – even if you have set controls, your child may be accessing the internet through other sources. Many phones can access the internet through Wifi, which could be available on your street and picked up for free. Accessing someone else's Wifi may mean that your safety settings no longer apply.



Understand what your child's phone can do – all phones are different and you need to know what they are capable of so you can manage the risks.

Set a pin code on your child's phone – setting a pin code is like a password. Without a password, others may use your child's phone. This could enable them to access personal information, online accounts or run up expensive bills.

Set boundaries and monitor usage – this doesn't mean spying on your child! You can set rules with them about where it is used and how long for. For example, if you don't want your child to use their mobile at night, why not only charge it overnight in the living room?

Discuss what they can share – teach your child to think before they share online and the consequence of doing this over the mobile phone, such as sharing their location.

Discuss and monitor costs – phones can be expensive. As well as bills, costs can be run up through downloading apps, music or leaving data-roaming on abroad. Your child should be made aware of the financial responsibility that comes with owning a phone. There are different ways to manage costs, such as having a contract or pay-as-you-go deals; make sure you discuss this in the shop.

Keep their mobile number private – young people need to understand that their phone number should only be given to people they know and trust, make sure that if they are concerned, they ask you first.

Be prepared in case the phone is lost or stolen – know who to contact to get the SIM card blocked.

Every phone has a unique 'IMEI' number; make sure you write this down so if the phone is stolen, the police can identify the phone if they find it. You can get this by dialling *#06#.