



smartphone

RULES OF THUMB

Ready to start your child's smartphone journey off with the gift of clear expectations, but not sure where to start? **We gotcha covered!** Here are some rules of thumb to consider, along with example language you can use when having conversations with your child. Please know, this is simply example language — you may not be doing all of the things mentioned here. What's most important is that you get aligned, having these conversations so you and your family can honor and respect each other on the road ahead.

THE BIG PICTURE

This phone does not belong to you. It belongs to me, your parent.

It is a tool, not a toy — and it has the potential to harm you if you don't learn to use it in healthy ways. I bought it, and I am giving you the gift of loaning it from me.

If it falls through the bleachers, shatters on the sidewalk, or vanishes into thin air, you are responsible for the replacement costs or repairs.

This tool is powerful, and can draw us closer together, or further apart. How we make sure that we use this new device to support the things that matter most to us?

When we accidentally phub each other (snubbing each other for our phones), what's a way we can signal to each other that we need some face-to-face time?

Tip: At Screen Sanity, we tell our kids to alert us when our own phone use isn't following these same guidelines.

DEVICE FREE ZONES

Our phones need to recharge, and we do too!

That's why from this point forward, we are going to have **device-free zones**: mealtimes, bedrooms at night, and when it goes to school, it should stay in your locker.

I will not text you during class, and I give you permission to not always be available, putting the phone away anytime you need to be present, focused, or just taking a mental break. (I won't expect an immediate response when I text you.) This is especially true at night. I'm going to show you right now where you can plug your phone in when it's time for you to unplug and go to bed. Let's talk about what time that should be.

parents!

Give yourself permission to create your own device-free zones.

You deserve a break too!

ACCOUNTABILITY

I love you. The internet is not looking out for your well-being, but I am. And there is nothing that you could do or see online that would make me love you less.

Accidents are bound to happen; you will make mistakes. And when you do, I will be here to walk you through them. **I will not freak out or judge you. I will not throw your phone in a lake somewhere. I am a safe person. You can talk to me.**

Because I love you, I'm not letting you go into the digital world unprotected. Let's talk about safety nets. First, we are going to take a moment and download a filter (like OurPact, Securly, Disney's Circle, or Bark) on your phone, and make sure your accounts are all set to "private."

But, I want you to know that these won't protect you from everything. Your best way to stay safe is to keep talking to me.

Second, I need you to avoid using your phone in private (like bedrooms and bathrooms) — where it is more tempting to make choices you might regret.

Let's make a plan right now for what you will say if anyone asks you to send any pictures of yourself partially or fully naked, because there is no guarantee of privacy when it comes to sexting.

And third, I need you to keep me updated on your passwords. I won't hover over you and I'm not going to check in every day, but I need to have it in case of an emergency.

LEARNER'S PERMIT

Someday you will have full use of this phone. But today, we will strip it down to a few features, the ones you really need. **The next few years will be a little bit like going through driver's ed, and this is your learner's permit.**

You can expect me to ride right by your side, helping you with every new challenge you run into. As you get older, I will allow you to earn more freedom as you prove you can steward your phone well.

My goal is for you to have full use of your phone by ____ year.

Perhaps their senior year of high school — we recommend they have their full license sometime before they flee the nest.

TIME WELL SPENT

At the end of your life, all you have is your time and attention. Unfortunately, the tech companies (especially social media companies) know this well, and want you to spend as much time as possible looking at your screen. The only problem is — they don't know you or care about helping you make each moment count.

Life is big, screens are small...and you deserve to live your fullest life. So, let's make a plan for a reasonable amount of minutes to limit your social media or entertainment apps to. And let's talk about ways you can use social media to be authentic to your true self, speak up for causes you care about, and lift up others.

Oh, and don't be surprised when I occasionally ask if time on your phone is "time well spent?" I promise you, I'll be asking myself the same question.