



Mobile Phone Safety



Maureen Griffin from MGMS Training offers some advice regarding your child's mobile phone safety.



From meeting parents all across Ireland, one of the most common questions posed is “When should I give my child a mobile phone?” Typically in Ireland, most children receive their first mobile phone at confirmation age or when they are moving from primary school to secondary school.

- 1: When is the time right?
- 2: Some questions before getting a phone
- 3: What kind of phone should I get?
- 4: Make sure your phone rules are clear
- 5: Parental Controls

No.1

When is the time right?

I feel that the age at which your child gets their first mobile phone is a very personal choice which depends on a number of factors including lifestyle and circumstances. For instance some parents who work or live away from home find that giving their child a mobile phone allows greater contact. Additional, for children that are involved in after-school activities, having a mobile phone can offer parents a sense of security while the child is not with them.

Personally, I feel that when a child is beginning secondary school is a good time for their first phone. Prior to this, a family phone may be used when they are away from parents. This could simply be an old phone of yours that is used by any of your children when they are away from home.

No.2

Some questions before getting a phone

If you are considering getting your child their own mobile phone, ask yourself the following questions:

- a. Do they really need it for day to day life?
- b. Will it provide greater safety for your child when they are away from home?
- c. Do you feel they will know how to use it responsibly?

If you answer “yes” to these then it may be time to purchase!!!

No.3

What kind of phone should I get?

Child friendly phones such as “**Firefly Mobile**” and “**Teddyfone**” which restrict the number of individuals the child can make and receive calls from and do not provide text or internet access, are not considered “**COOL**” by children.

As a result I meet children across Ireland who receive very expensive smart phones as their first phone. Indeed, the recent **Net Children Go Mobile Study** (2014) demonstrated that smartphones are the most used device for internet access on a daily basis by 9-16 year olds in Ireland (O’Neill, B. & Dinh, T. (2014). *Net Children Go Mobile: initial findings from Ireland. Dublin: Dublin Institute of Technology*).

No.4

Make sure your phone rules are clear

It is important to speak to your child when they are getting their first phone. Work out guidelines with your child, including what you expect from them, what they can expect from you and what sanctions are going to be in place if they do not follow the rules.

If your child has a smart phone, you will also need to discuss chatting Apps which are increasingly popular amongst Irish children. Bear in mind that Apps such as “**Snapchat**”, “**Viber**” and “**WhatsApp**” are designed for children aged 13 and over. There are numerous “**mobile phone contract**” templates available online or you can devise your own.

No.5

Parental Controls

Check out the “**parental control section**” of your mobile phone company’s website. Most mobile phone companies in Ireland offer parents “**dual access**”, allowing both parent and child to access account records including; numbers called, account balances, and the services available on the mobile phone. You can also restrict certain services if you feel your child is not ready to use them yet.

Additionally there are numerous Apps that can monitor what your child is doing on their phone. For example “**SelfieCop**” and “**MobileMinder**” which emails parents an outline of their child’s mobile phone activity.

No.6

And finally...

Finally, keep your child's mobile phone out of their bedroom.

For more information please visit your mobile phones company website or go to www.layahealthcare.ie/onlinesafety

Thank You