

Cell Phone & Social Media Rules

Dear <Child's Name>,

Because we are your parents, and you are still living in our house, there is no need for a cell phone contract. However, just like you have driving rules when you got your driver's license, we do have some rules that will act as your "seatbelts and guardrails" to keep you safe on the digital road. The purpose of this phone is to be a tool for you to use to connect with friends in person, not as a toy for entertainment 24 hours a day. Our goal is to guide you to keep a balance between your phone and the real world where you develop your real-life skills. We wish for you the best for both!

1. The first 6 weeks of using this phone is a trial period. If we realize that you aren't ready to use it responsibly, we will take it back and start over another time.
2. Using a phone, like driving a car, is a privilege not a right. Treat this privilege with respect.
3. This phone is not yours. It belongs to us and we have the right take it anytime we feel the need.
4. This phone, like a car, can be fun and helpful; however, it can also hurt you if you crash and scar you for life.
5. Because of #3, this phone is not private we can read your texts at any time; if you want privacy with your friends, dial their number and speak to them directly. We are not stalking you, we are just doing our job of equipping you to be a better "driver" online. You will have more privacy when you go to college but even then, remember, that nothing you do online is EVER private.
6. You must always put your phone away the first time I ask.
7. This phone is not to be taken to your bedroom or the dinner table.
8. You will not sleep with your phone or take it in the bathroom when you are taking a shower.
9. Do not try to get around our parental control settings.
10. No gaming is allowed on this phone. We prefer you to go outside and invite friends over.
11. Time allowance. You can use this phone during the following times: _____

TEXTING

1. Less is more. If you have a lot of say, click the green 'phone' icon > click your friend's name> hold the phone up to your ear > say 'hello' when they answer > speak normally :)
2. Do not send inappropriate or mean texts to anyone. If you are mad at someone, get a piece of paper and start writing out what you want to say if you want. Consider the recipient's reaction and how you would feel if you received the text you're getting ready to send. Wait 24 hours and then talk with that person directly, as tone and intent can often be misinterpreted via text; ask my opinion if you need to get advice.
3. Whenever a text conversation is getting heated, see #2.
4. Don't send a text if you would not want that text, post or photo shown to a future coach, college teacher, boss or to everyone at the reception on your wedding day.
5. Never use a curse word or off-color word, or text anything ugly about your parents, siblings, family or anyone.
6. Do not call your parents by their first names via text. Do not talk about your parents or discuss family problems over text or post to social media.
7. If you get caught in a mean text sequence, resist the urge to argue back via text, simply text: "Thank you for sharing" and put the phone down and walk away. Then go burn off some steam (go for run, jump on the trampoline, or listen to some music). This phrase tends to end conversations easily. Remember you are in control of this tool; Don't let it control you.

8. Anytime you need an excuse to get out of an uncomfortable situation, just say your mom or dad won't let you do it and hit "send."
9. When you make a mistake (I promise, you will), come tell us and we will help you figure out the best way to handle it. We have plenty of experience making mistakes and know what it feels like. We promise not to get angry. We love you more unconditionally than any of your friends do and we will always have your back.

PHOTOS

1. If you wouldn't post a photo on a highway billboard or show it to your parents/grandparents, do not post it on a Social Media site.
2. Resist the urge to post silly photos of yourself sticking out your tongue, etc. (See TEXTS #4 above.)
3. Save the swimsuit photos for our family scrapbook. Do not post any photos of you or anyone in a swimsuit or less, this may affect your future internship or job one day.
4. DO NOT take any photos of yourself in the bathroom or bedroom, PERIOD!
5. Do not post photos of our family unless you ask me (unless it's the pet).
6. If you don't want a friend posting a photo of you without your permission, tell them now. This includes group photos as well, but realize that they may not listen to you.

SOCIAL MEDIA

1. You are allowed to use social media during the following days/times: _____
2. You are ONLY allowed to use the following Social Media apps on your phone: _____
3. You are allowed to have no more than _____ followers on any of your social media sites.
4. You must friend me on ALL your social media accounts.

BEFORE PRESSING SEND

1. Do not assume anything you send or post is going to remain private. Assume that I will read all of your texts before you hit "send".
2. There is no changing your mind, anything you send or post will never truly go away.
3. Do not give in to the pressure to do something that makes you uncomfortable.
4. Do not respond to anyone you don't recognize.
5. Do not follow a stranger or allow them to follow you.
6. Control what represents you! Make sure you constantly monitor what others are posting of you. What they post becomes part of your digital footprint, whether you like it or not. If you see something you don't like and they won't take it down, unfriend them or come tell me and we can figure out a solution together.

Your phone/social media will be taken away for an indefinite length of time if:

- You bully someone online (harassment, exclusion, outing)
- You send a "sext" or received one and do not report it immediately to us. This includes selfies of private body parts, theirs or others.
- You lie to us about passwords, phone use, content.
- You go around our parental controls.
- You ever use your phone to cheat in school, send photos of a test, or use during a test etc.
- We feel that the phone or your social media is keeping you from doing your chores, doing your best in school, or doing your best socially.
- If it becomes a toy instead of a tool or in anyway becomes out of balance.

These rules are designed to help you and protect you. They are not negotiable by you; however, you are encouraged to give your opinion and comments as we all work together to make your phone experience a good one and a safe one.

We love you,

Mom & Dad