CELL PHONE AGREEMENT

Parent Note

You are about to take a big step with your daughter or son. Sure, they've been telling you for months that everyone has a phone. So it shouldn't be that big of a deal, right?

But it is.

Most of us are attached to our phones even more than we care to admit. Sometimes we even call people with them.

A PHONE CAN MEAN SO MANY THINGS.

- Freedom.
- Privacy.
- Access.
- Entertainment.
- Connection.

But one important thing to remember is that it's a tool. A powerful tool that can be used for good, or one that can be used for harm. That's why we believe that giving your child a phone should be more than just a hand-off or opening a gift. In fact, we recommend not giving it to them as a gift at all, but to make clear that it's yours and on loan. Better yet, "lend" them a hand-me-down and you have much more leverage than you would otherwise.

Regardless, there's no better time, before they start using their new-to-them phone, to *collaborate on a plan* and set a few guidelines and expectations about how they will use it. It's helpful for them to know that having a phone is a privilege that is earned, *not something they are entitled to*.

It's always easier to give freedom over time than to take something away, but it's not impossible. So even if you've set things in motion before having this conversation, it's never too late to take a few steps back. That means you can always revisit this with your student even if they already have a phone.

In this cell phone agreement, there are expectations for both parent and child. So go through it together, and talk about it along the way. The front side is for your child, the back side is for you. Feel free to add to this agreement with your own ideas as well.

Be intentional—don't let this be the last time you talk about technology. Hold each other accountable for the things you initiated. As technology changes—and technology will—talk about how each of you can use it in healthy ways. Remember, how you use it also becomes a model for how your kid will learn to use it.

One of the best ways you will get to use it now is connecting with your child in meaningful ways. So go ahead and text them some encouraging words or share a fun gif/video/meme.

And welcome to a whole new world of parenting!

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For Parents

Read through the following list, and initial to show agreement on each point.

_____ I understand that when my child gets a phone, they will have instant access to the world. The way I help them learn to use it responsibly, by gradually earning more freedom, will help keep them safe and set them up for a better future.

_____ How I use my cell phone is a model for how my child learns to use theirs.

_____ I give _____ the right to look through my phone at any time. I know this is a helpful safeguard for me, even as an adult.

_____ I care enough about my child to monitor their cell phone usage and social media accounts.

_____ I will NEVER text and drive.

_____ I refuse to be rude to others when using my phone, and will prioritize face-to-face conversations, especially with my family.

_____ Our family will use tracking features on our devices so each family member knows where we are at all times. This is for safety and convenience.

_____ I care enough about the safety of my child to put filters in place to limit their access to the Internet.

_____ I will abide by the age limitations of apps when giving my child permission to download them. (A family sharing plan requires a child to ask permission for app downloads.)

_____ I will always work to use technology in positive ways and will continually seek accountability from others to help me make and model wise decisions.

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For Students

Congratulations! Getting a phone is a big deal! And we think you're ready for this next big step toward becoming responsible with technology. You will be communicating with the world in a whole new way! This device is a powerful tool that can be used for good, but also for harm—whether that's harm to you, or even harm to others. So to *keep you safe*, let's agree on some guidelines for how and when you will use it.

Read through the following list, and initial to show agreement on each point.

_____ I understand that having a phone comes with great responsibility. I realize that if I can't have full access at once, but can earn more freedom over time.

_____ I will always share my password(s) with my parent(s). This also includes social media accounts.

_____ My parent(s) has/have the right to look through my phone at any time and without my permission. I know this is for my safety as I learn to make wise decisions.

_____ I will not take my phone to my room at night, but will leave it _____ by _____pm.

_____ If I lose or damage my phone and want to repair it or replace it, I will work to earn the money.

_____ I will always show good manners to any person who is in front of me by putting my phone away and looking into their eyes when they are talking.

_____ I will choose to be intentional in building relationships in group settings by putting my phone away and speaking to others face-to-face.

_____ I will choose to be transparent with communication and keep records of all calls and not delete any messages.

_____ I will never bully or harass anyone using my phone. That includes joining in on conversations that tease or make fun of others.

_____ I understand that texting, sending, or posting naked pictures (or pictures of private parts) can forever damage my reputation and get me into serious legal trouble. I will never send these types of photos.

_____ If I receive any inappropriate images, I will tell my parent(s). I know I will never get in trouble for something that someone else sends me as long as I tell someone.

_____ I will tell my parent(s) if I'm being bullied or harassed by anyone, or if I receive something alarming from someone I don't know.

_____ When I drive, I will NEVER text and drive. This is not only for my safety but for others as well.

_____ I am aware that my parent(s) will occasionally track my location using features associated with my phone. This will keep me safe and help to earn more freedom over time.

_____ I understand that there will be filters in place to limit my access to the internet; these are for my safety.

_____ I will request permission for the apps I download.

_____ I realize that I may be told no, especially when there are age limitations.

_____ Just like I would be careful who I invite into my room, I will not video call anyone from my room or in private.

_____ If I break this agreement, I know this phone will be taken away for a period of time until I can regain trust.

_____ I understand that how I use my phone will impact my future in ways I may never know. My goal is to learn to be responsible with how I use this powerful tool, and to always use it in positive ways. I know that this also means that even when I'm older, I will need to seek accountability from others to help me make wise decisions.

We are in this together. There are some things to hold your parent(s) accountable as well.