

Rule #4:

Make sure that each mobile phone contact is a real friend or family member

Why this rule is important:

- When you decide that your child should have a mobile phone and you give them one, of course, they are eager to show it off to their friends and pass along their number to anyone else with a mobile phone, whether or not they are *really* friends.
- Children that you may not really prefer your child to hang out with outside of school now have a 24/7 connection and this can ultimately be a really bad thing.

The best way to carry out this rule:

- When your child is older, perhaps in secondary school, you may have to trust them to use good discretion when giving out their phone number. However it is important to explain to them why this is a rule.
- When your child is young, you might ask to see their list of mobile phone contacts periodically.
- Some mobile phone carriers will let you set up the phone so it only works with the phone contact numbers that you allow.
- Also check who is following them on social media such as Instagram

Possible reaction(s) to this rule:

- Older children may not be happy with this rule, but for younger ones who are just happy to finally get a phone, they probably won't protest too much. At first, they really do just want to text with their friends.
- If they do complain, just explain to them that you are willing to provide them with a phone to communicate with their family and friends, not every child they know with a phone.

Websites

- www.internetmatters.org
- www.netaware.org.uk
- www.saferinternet.org.uk
- www.parentzone.org.uk
- www.childnet.com
- www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Rule #5:

Set up parental controls

Why this rule is important:

- Many mobile phones today are equipped with Wi-Fi capabilities, making it easier than ever for your child to access the internet. Your child's phone will also likely include a camera and video feature and you can bet that they'll start sending photos to friends as soon as they can.

The best way to carry out this rule:

- Fortunately, there are numerous parental controls available on almost all smartphones. Apple iPhones even have built-in controls that can easily be enabled. While you can't set up restrictions on non-Apple apps, like Instagram and Snapchat, you can block your child from downloading new apps.
- For Android phones, there are a lot of options available in the App store, like **Kids Zone** or **Kids Place**, which only allow your child to access apps you've approved.
- Mobile phone shops will help you with this if you're struggling.

Possible reaction(s) to this rule:

- Take the time to talk to your child about why you are setting up these parental controls and about the importance of being safe while surfing the web or using social media. Many children don't understand the dangers, like sharing their personal information or looking at inappropriate content.
- Having these conversations may reduce the likelihood that they'll immediately try and figure out a way to get around these restrictions.
- You can even say that every so often you can revisit this conversation and discuss removing some of the restrictions as they get older.
- Make sure you stick to this rule. It's much more important to keep your child safe than to please them.

Mobile phone use for children and teenagers



Finding the Balance

Technology is part of our lives but it is important to maintain a balance with other activities and quality family time

www.cumbria.gov.uk/ph5to19

Rule #1:**No mobile phones in the bedroom at night****Why this rule is important:**

Children need between 9 to 11 hours sleep per night and even if they promise they will not go on their phone, there is a very good chance that without your watchful eye they will be quietly messaging friends for hours on end. The way they look in the morning can be a dead giveaway.

Keep in mind that not every one of your child's phone contacts is really a friend or someone you want messaging your child at night, let alone during the day. Messaging frees them up to "say" things that they would not normally say out loud, so beware.

Research published online by the *Journal of Youth Studies* says that children who logged onto their mobile phones every night were about three times more likely to report feeling "constantly tired" at school compared to their peers.

The best way to carry out this rule:

Everyone in the house should put their mobile phone in one location to charge overnight, and that means parents too. You can get a box for charging multiple electronics at the same time and keep it downstairs.

By a certain time of your choosing, mobile phone usage needs to be shut down for the night. Lead by example.

Possible reaction(s) to this rule:

They might say: "My friends are allowed their phones at night!"

You say: "night time is for sleep, and you are happy to let them have their phone during the day, but at night everyone needs to charge their phone and get a good night's sleep." Be clear, fair & firm.

They might say:

"I need the phone alarm to wake up in the morning."

That's purely a desperation move. Get them a cheap alarm clock - problem solved.

Rule #2:**No mobile phones on family days, family meals, or other important family times****Why this rule is important:**

Nothing can interfere with your family relationships quicker than endless texting while you are doing some sort of family activity together. The disinterested looks on their faces, the choppy conversation from being interrupted by the vibration of an incoming text, and the questions concerning when the family-time will be over can all be avoided if the mobile phone is off and remains in the car or at home.

The best way to carry out this rule

You will need to decide as a family your tolerance level for mobile phone usage and what works best for the whole family—often this depends on the age of the child.

For younger children, you may decide that the phone is left at home.

For older children, you may decide that mobile phone use is allowed during the car ride but the phone then remains in the car during the family activity.

Possible reaction(s) to this rule:

You may get complaints because they feel they are missing out on something very important. This could be a tween or teen crisis, or dire friend emergency.

Give them five minutes to finish up and let their friends know they will be 'off-line' but then be firm and ensure that the family-time rule is followed when the time is up.

**Rule #3:****Restrict camera access****Why this rule is important:**

Children have been known to take pictures of everything, even if it's inappropriate. This is yet another reason schools do not allow mobile phones; often equipped with cameras, they have been used in changing rooms and have been the cause of a lot of heartache.

Even children who have voluntarily taken exposed pictures of themselves have been labelled as sex offenders.

Constantly taking selfies and altering the image is not a true picture of themselves, encourage them to post a mixture of pictures. Self esteem and confidence can be knocked.

The best way to carry out this rule:

If possible, choose a mobile phone plan that does not include the ability to send pictures via text.

Just be aware that this feature usually still functions even if it's not part of your plan—you just pay a lot for it when it occurs (receiving or sending).

In addition, you need to be aware of them sending pictures via Wi-Fi and be sure to monitor mobile phone usage to ensure that your child is not sending or receiving pictures.

Possible reaction(s) to this rule

This shouldn't be too much of an issue. I would think that if it is, then they're up to no good, and you need to remain firm.

