



First Phone Conversation Guide

Using books to help families navigate childhood's biggest milestones.

Giving our children their first phones felt like one of those milestones that our kids couldn't wait for and that I wasn't quite ready for. We quickly realized that preparing them wasn't about finding the perfect list of rules. It was about having honest conversations over time.

Before They Get Their First Phone, Ask These Questions

There is not one big talk before your child gets a phone. Instead, look for lots of small conversations over time.

Kindness Matters

- What would you do if your friends were making fun of someone in a text thread?
- Do you think people say things online that they would never say in person? Why?
- Have you ever seen someone left out of a group chat? How do you think that felt?

Trust Your Instincts

- If a message ever made you feel uncomfortable, what would you do?
- How would you know if someone online was not who they said they were?
- What kinds of things should always stay private?

Phones and Friendships

- What do you think makes someone a really good friend both in person and online?
- How can a phone sometimes make friendships harder?
- If you accidentally hurt someone's feelings in a text, what could you do to make it right?
- What kinds of messages do you think are better to talk about face to face instead of over text?

Building Healthy Habits

- When do you think it is important to put your phone away?
- How do you know when you have had enough screen time?
- What are some things you never want your phone to replace?

♥ Rosie's Note

Some of our best conversations happened in the car on the way to school or practice. There was something about not sitting face to face that made it easier for my kids to open up. Don't worry about having the perfect conversation. Just make sure you're giving your kids an opportunity to talk with you.

Building Healthy Phone Habits

A phone is a communication tool. Like any skill, good communication takes practice.

Encourage your child to:

- ✓ Avoid texting something you wouldn't feel comfortable saying face-to-face.
- ✓ Answer the phone with a friendly greeting and end the conversation politely.
- ✓ Speak clearly and listen respectfully during phone conversations.
- ✓ Share passwords with your parents and ask permission before downloading new apps.
- ✓ Ask permission before taking or sharing photos of someone else.
- ✓ Charge phones overnight in a shared family space, not in the bedroom.
- ✓ Put the phone away during meals and family conversations.
- ✓ Give the person you're with their full attention.
- ✓ Think before you post, send, or share. Once something is online, it can never be taken back.
- ✓ If something online makes you feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or scared, tell a trusted adult right away. You will never be in trouble for asking for help.
- ✓ Remember there is a real person with real feelings behind every message.



Three Books That Help Start These Conversations

Reading these books together gave us a comfortable starting point for conversations about online safety, friendships, social media, and what it means to be a kind and responsible digital citizen.



***First Phone* by Catherine Pearlman**

A practical guide that covers a wide variety of phone safety in a surprisingly engaging way and empowers tweens to make good decisions with their device.



***The Phone Book* by Amy Alamar and Jacqueline Nesi**

An excellent conversation starter about social media, group chats, online safety, digital footprints, and healthy technology habits.



***The Amazing Generation (Young Readers Edition)* by Jonathan Haidt**

A thoughtful look at how smartphones and social media affect kids and why building healthy habits from the beginning matters.



My Biggest Tip

Don't worry about having all the answers before your child gets a phone. Instead, aim to become the person they always feel comfortable coming to. Your family's expectations can grow and change as your child grows, and that's okay. Technology will keep changing. New apps will appear. Challenges will come and go. What matters most is that your child knows they can always bring their questions, mistakes, and worries to you. Those conversations will always be more important than the phone itself.