

## It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

To enhance the conversation, here are a few conversation starters and activities your family can try:

**Have screen-free time.** Grab a bin or box that can become “home” for all technology when it’s not in use. Help your preschooler decorate whatever container you choose. Show them how the technology goes inside the bin and how to remove it (if it requires taking off a lid, unzipping a zipper, etc.). Let them help you decide where to store the bin. Talk to your preschooler about when they can and cannot access the technology from its “home.”

**Create screen-free zones.** Keep activities in your car, diaper bag, or purse that are not technology-related. It’s so easy to default to a tablet or phone to entertain your preschooler when you’re out and about. Giving your child another option may curb the impulse for technology to be your kid’s go-to. Ideas: a coloring book and crayons, an Etch A Sketch, tracing paper and pencils, books, a cookie sheet with magnetic letters, a dry erase board with markers, magnetic puzzles, etc.

**Teach with Technology.** Technology isn’t just for entertainment, it’s an important tool for learning. Introduce early reading and math concepts through websites and apps that involve matching games or associating words with images. There are even some apps that will read books aloud to you and your child. Spend some time investigating some of the best, and get recommendations from friends.

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application. To discover more ways to help your preschooler develop healthy habits, check out <http://PhaseGuides.com>.



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# TECHNOLOGY

## PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

Are you blown away that your preschooler can swipe and click even faster than you can? How did they figure out how to find that Disney video in the sea of app icons on your screen? These keen abilities are exactly why it’s a great time to start a conversation about the big world of technology. Your preschooler is a long ways from having their own phone and social media accounts, but every day they are watching, listening, and learning. They need you to guide their introduction into this world and set them up for success. Remember your role in the preschool phase is to help them . . . . .

**ENJOY**  
The advantages



So your child will . . .  
**EXPERIENCE BOUNDARIES & HAVE  
POSITIVE EXPOSURE**

This guide is designed to help you connect with your child in the phase they are in, by giving you some words to say to navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal for your preschooler in mind:

### TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success.**

## IN THE NEW BABY PHASE, (YOU) THINK THINGS LIKE . . .

"Does it really matter if I forgot to record the last feeding in the app?" *(Answer: No. As long as the baby ate, she doesn't care.)*

**"Is there anyone out there who can relate?"** *(Use technology to connect to other adults.)*

"Look at this baby!" *(Take as many photos as you like. You will enjoy seeing them later.)*

"I put my phone away when we are eating so we can talk to each other." *(Set limits for screen time.)*

"You need to ask before you use the computer." *(Know when they are on a device and what they are using it to do.)*

**"Let me show you what a galaxy looks like."** *(Use technology to enhance your conversations.)*

"Let me see what you did." *(Show interest in what they do with technology.)*

"It's time for you to put the tablet away."

## IN THE FOLLOWING PRESCHOOL YEARS, SAY THINGS LIKE . . .

"No juice by the computer."

"Tablets don't go in the bathtub."

**"Let's turn off the TV now."**

"I'm texting Grandma to ask a question." *(Talk openly about technology as you use it.)*

## JUST REMEMBER

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The preschool years are the years you want to embrace their physical needs. They need to be physically close to you so use screen time as opportunities for 'lap time' where you can cuddle and share the experience. In this phase, your child thinks like an artist, and you can help them learn by engaging their senses through what they see and hear. Remember that screen time doesn't have to be isolating but can be used to stimulate great moments together. Stay informed. Stay involved. Start the conversation.

## It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities your family can try:

**Let them earn it:** Reward what you want repeated by allowing your kid to earn technology time by using access as currency. For example, if your child reads for 20 minutes, they earn 10 minutes of technology time. If your child completes certain chores, instead of money, they're given minutes to use on approved electronic devices. If your child gets a good behavioral report at the end of the school week, they are given a set amount of time over the weekend to use their tablet or device.

**Keep it social.** Keep your kids' technology in plain sight. Designate a common area in the house where your kid(s) have permission to use their technology. Have them help you set it up with a comfy chair, lamp, charger, and any other supplies frequently used with their devices. As you set it up, talk about the importance of having rules and boundaries when it comes to using technology. Talk about all the ways keeping what happens *online* in plain sight keeps everyone safe.

**Talk about the good and the bad.** It may feel early, but it's important for your elementary schooler to know that there are people who use the Internet for good *and* for evil. Give your kid a "pop quiz" on online safety by providing them with a variety of scenarios and asking them how they'd respond. Praise them for answers that support your family's boundaries, and redirect when they don't.

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application. To discover more ways to help your elementary student develop healthy habits, check out <http://PhaseGuides.com>.



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# TECHNOLOGY

## PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

They might have not asked yet, but kids want to know when they'll be able to get their own phone, have their own social media profiles, and interact with friends online. Start the conversation about technology now, and begin setting clear guidelines. Kids know they can get their license at sixteen, which gives them something to look forward to. Set expectations about when they can get their 'technology license' too. Technology can be a positive experience as long as parents stay informed and involved. Remember, your role in the elementary phase is to help them . . .

**EXPLORE**  
The possibilities



So your child will . . .  
**UNDERSTAND CORE VALUES  
& BUILD ONLINE SKILLS**

This guide is designed to help you meet elementary-age kids where they are now, giving you some words to say as you navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind:

### TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success.**

## TO ELEMENTARY-AGE KIDS (K-3), SAY THINGS LIKE:

"Never use Google (or any search engine) alone."

"I don't know, but we can look that up together." *(Use technology to enhance your conversations.)*

**"I'm texting Grandma to ask a question."**  
*(Talk openly about technology as you use it.)*

"Siri doesn't always know what we are asking." *(Turn on safe search, and don't let Siri answer your kindergartner's questions.)*

"You have ten more minutes and then it's time to put the iPad away."  
*(Set limits for screen time.)*

**"Let me see what you did."** *(Show interest in what they do with technology.)*

"Never post a phone number or address without checking with me."  
*(Kids are often naïve about sharing personal content with strangers.)*

## TO ELEMENTARY-AGE KIDS (4-5), SAY THINGS LIKE:

"What do you think is a healthy amount of time online?"  
*(Collaborate on expectations, rules, and consequences.)*

"Can you help me figure out how to . . ."

"Tell me more about how that works."

**"Have you ever seen someone say really mean things online?"**

"Let me find out more about that and I will let you know." *(Look up things like age limits, content ratings, and connection to strangers.)*

"Can we play together?" *(Make technology social by playing online games together.)*

"Have you seen anything online that surprised you?"

"We should respect people online just as much as we respect them in person."  
*(Talk about how devices sometime escalate bullying.)*

"Sometimes people pretend to be someone they aren't online."  
*(Caution against contact with strangers.)*

## JUST REMEMBER

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The elementary years are full of possibilities and you want to engage their interests in a healthy way. Use technology to share things you enjoy. Stay curious about what they are seeing and learning, and help them to feel safe in bringing questions to you. When they push back against your rules and guidelines, engage them in talking about the 'why' behind the rules. Stay informed. Stay involved. Keep the conversation going.

## It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities you can try:

**Engage with technology.** Every other week or so, challenge yourself to become familiar with a new aspect of technology—a filter, a GIF, an app, a game, etc. Engage with your middle schooler by sharing the new skills with them, and ask them to show you anything new they've learned, too.

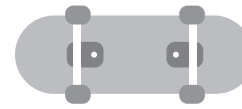
**Sign an Agreement.** At theParentCue.org, you can find a cell phone agreement with some healthy guidelines you can establish with your middle schooler before (and even after) they get a phone. There are items for them to initial their agreement to, like where they will keep their technology at night, as well as items they can hold you accountable to, like not texting and driving! Use this agreement to lay out a plan of expectations for technology use that leads to increasing freedom.

**Build others up.** Technology is a tool that can be used for good or . . . well, evil. Challenge your middle schooler to say at least one positive thing about something or someone on technology three times a week. Help them learn to make a habit of using technology to build others up, and never tear them down. And make sure you're modeling this one as well!

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application. To discover more ways to help your middle-schooler develop healthy habits, check out <http://PhaseGuides.com>.



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Middle School

# TECHNOLOGY

## PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

Your middle schooler might seem tech savvy, but they're not life savvy yet. They might want freedom online, but they're not ready for it. Don't make privacy something you're taking away from them, but rather something you're working toward as a team. Be clear about it and to the best of your ability, paint the picture that both of you have the same goal—an awesome experience with technology. Remember your role in this phase is to help them . . .

**COLLABORATE**  
A plan



So your child will . . .  
**RESPECT LIMITS & STRENGTHEN  
SOCIAL ABILITIES**

This guide is designed to help you meet your middle schooler where they are now, giving you some words to say as you navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep the end goal in mind:

### TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success.**

## TO SIXTH GRADERS, SAY THINGS LIKE:

"I need your phone at 7pm every night." *(Whatever your expectations may be, make them clear up front.)*

**"Let me find out more about that and I will let you know."**

*(When they get a phone, share an account and research their apps.)*

"I saw this video and it made me think of you." *(Use technology to connect throughout the day—with no agenda.)*

"We should respect people online as much as we respect them in person." *(Talk about how devices sometimes escalate bullying.)*

**"Which of your friends have a phone? What do they do on their phone?"**

*(Know what kind of access they have when they are with their friends.)*

"I will always love you no matter what you do and you can always come and talk to me." *(Create a safe place to be honest.)*

## TO SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADERS, SAY THINGS LIKE:

"Let me check the age restrictions first." *(Most social platforms require a minimum age of 13 years.)*

"Saw this video and it made me think of you." *(Use technology to connect throughout the day—with no agenda.)*

"We should respect people online as much as we respect them in person." *(Talk about how devices sometimes escalate bullying.)*

"Can you teach me how to use this app?" *(Use mobile devices to connect: text, share, learn, and play together.)*

"What you post is public, even if it feels private. And it can be permanent." *(Help them recognize potential risks related to the words, images, and videos they create.)*

**"What do you think is a healthy amount of time for you to spend online?"** *(Collaborate on expectations, rules, and consequences.)*

"What should the password be?" *(When you are ready, set up social media accounts together, and know their passwords.)*

"Is it okay if I comment on your posts?" *(Be considerate about how you engage with them online.)*

## JUST REMEMBER

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The middle school years are a great time to affirm their journey. Respect their growing need for privacy, but don't hesitate to establish boundaries. They won't always act like it, but they need you now more than ever as they enter the much bigger world of technology. They're now connected to people and information at the touch of a finger. The world of technology can open up a super fun time for your family but it can also bring stress and anxiety. Stay informed. Stay involved. And keep the conversation going.

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities to try:

**Leverage technology for good.** Encourage your teen to find an existing cause they are interested in that uses social media or the Internet as a primary form of communication. Challenge them to think of ways they can use their own social media accounts to bring attention to the cause, and promote the organization or issue.

**THINK about it.** Help your high schooler maintain digital integrity by monitoring what they post. Make it clear that you will always “follow” and “friend” and “subscribe” to any social media app or blog they’re a part of. Talk about the permanency and ramifications of anything posted to the Internet. A good acronym to give them is *THINK*, and to ask, “Is what I’m posting . . .”

- T – True?
- H – Helpful?
- I – Inspiring?
- N – Necessary?
- K – Kind?

If the post doesn’t pass the “THINK” test, it’s not worth posting. Write down this acronym and post it somewhere visible. Also assure them that if you have an issue with something they post, you will talk with them about it offline—not online.

**Your technology world.** While all of us know that no one inherently understands technology better than a teenager, as adults we do know a thing or two. Let your teen into your technology world. Maybe you use software to keep track of your finances or pay bills online. You can be a whiz at spreadsheets, putting together a presentation, or maybe you use a Bible app or health tracker. Share your technology skills, and in turn, let your son or daughter teach you some things as well.

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application. To discover more ways to help your high-schooler develop healthy habits, check out <http://PhaseGuides.com>.



High School

# TECHNOLOGY

## PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

Is every kid ready for total privacy online just because they’re in high school? Of course not—just like every 16 year old isn’t automatically mature enough for a driver’s license. But at this age, expect your child to push back on the concept of shared passwords and shared social media accounts. If over the years they’ve earned your trust and are ready for more freedom, consider giving it to them. If they haven’t, discuss what they can do to move toward that. In a few short years they’re going to jump out into the world. Give them space to practice that freedom now in the safety of your home. Remember your role in this phase is to help them . . .

**EXPAND**  
Their potential



So your child will . . .  
**ESTABLISH PERSONAL BOUNDARIES  
& LEVERAGE ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES**

This guide is designed to help you meet your high schooler where they are now, giving you some words to say as you navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind:

### **TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success.**

## TO HIGH SCHOOLERS, SAY THINGS LIKE . . .

"How do you use Spotify®?" *(Know what apps they have and how they use them.)*

**"Can you set up a playlist for me?"**

"Who's your favorite person to follow?" *(Discover who they listen to online.)*

**"What are some freedoms I have online that you don't have yet?"** *(Discuss plans for increasing freedom and responsibility over the next four years.)*

"What you post is public, even if it feels private. And it can be permanent." *(Help them recognize potential risks related to the words, images, and videos they create.)*

**"You cannot use your phone to text or call while driving."** *(Have clear expectations for cell phones and driving.)*

"Let's split the bill 80/20." *(Consider sharing the bill.)*

"I'm so impressed with your Etsy shop."

"It would help me to share our calendars so we can coordinate meals."

**"Did you know we could write letters to our Compassion® child online?"** *(Find ways to use technology to connect to a global mission.)*

"Can I see what you've been creating lately?" *(Show interest in everything from art to engineering to design to fan websites.)*

**"What's the best way for me to talk to you during the day?"** *(This will be more efficient as well as help you learn how they communicate)*

"Look where I am today. I'm thinking about you!" *(Share pictures with each other.)*

"I'm so proud of you. Would it be okay if I post a picture to share your accomplishment?" *(Model online respect.)*

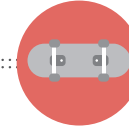
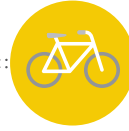
## JUST REMEMBER

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The high school years are the years to mobilize their potential. Your teenager is approaching adulthood with freedom on the horizon. The conversations you have today will help prepare them to make wise choices concerning technology for the rest of their lives. Stay informed. Stay involved. And keep the conversation going.



# TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success



**ENJOY**  
the advantages



So they will . . .  
**EXPERIENCE BOUNDARIES  
& HAVE POSITIVE EXPOSURE**

**EXPLORE**  
the possibilities



So they will . . .  
**UNDERSTAND CORE VALUES  
& BUILD ONLINE SKILLS**

**COLLABORATE**  
a plan

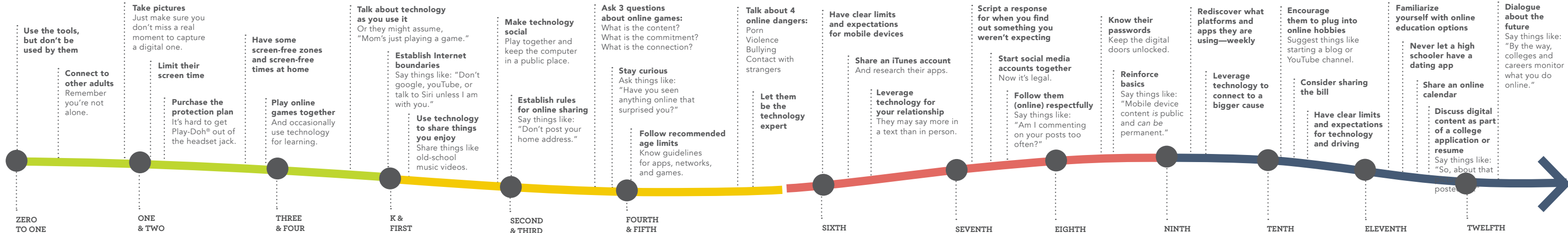


So they will . . .  
**RESPECT LIMITS  
& STRENGTHEN SOCIAL ABILITIES**

**EXPAND**  
their potential



So they will . . .  
**ESTABLISH PERSONAL BOUNDARIES  
& LEVERAGE ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES**



**EMBRACE** their physical needs

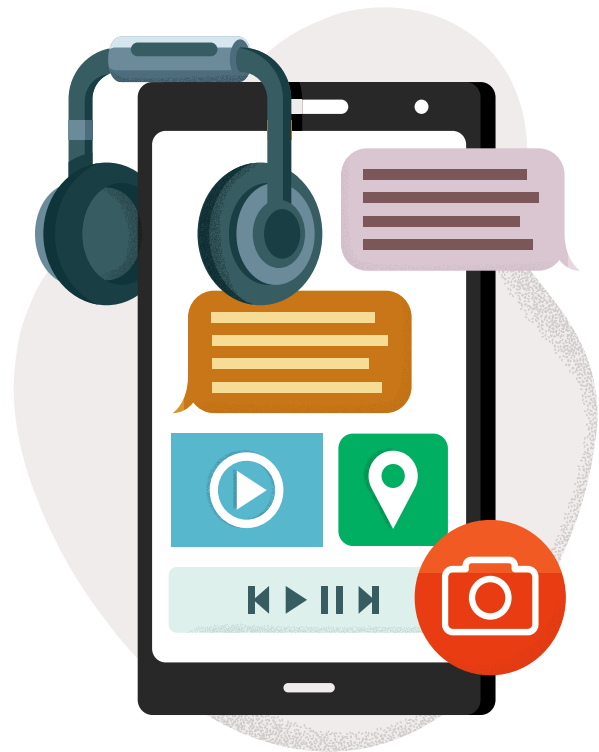
**ENGAGE** their interests

**AFFIRM** their personal journey

**MOBILIZE** their potential

# A Letter to Parents

You're about to take a big step with your kid. Sure, they've been telling you for months that everyone has their own phone—so it shouldn't be that big of a deal, right? **Only, it is.**



A phone can mean so many things...

- Freedom
- Privacy
- Entertainment
- Access
- Connection

Most of us are attached to our phones more than we'd like to admit. Sometimes, we even call people with them! One important thing to remember is that a personal phone is a tool. A powerful tool that can be used for good, and one that can also be used for harm. That's why we believe that giving your child a smartphone 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 will have more leverage than you would otherwise.

Regardless, we suggest sitting down with your kid before they get their phone

to discuss 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 not too late to take a few steps back to re-evaluate and adjust.

In this cell phone agreement, there are expectations for both parent and kid. So, go through it together, and talk about it along the way.

And promise us this—don't let this be the last time you talk about technology. Hold each other accountable for the things you initialed. As technology changes—and technology will—talk about how each of you can use it in healthy ways. And remember, how you use your technology also becomes a model for how your kid will use it, too.

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 funny meme.

And welcome to a whole new world of parenting!

# Cell Phone Agreement

## For Kids

Getting a cell 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 harm to others. So, to keep you safe, let's agree on some smart guidelines for how and when you will use it.

Read through the following list and initial next to each item to show agreement with each point.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that having a personal phone comes with great responsibility. I realize that 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 (Location:) \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_ When I start to drive, I will **never** text and drive. Not only is it dangerous, but it's illegal.

\_\_\_\_\_ 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 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.

\_\_\_\_\_ 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.

Signature

Date

# Cell Phone Agreement

## For Parents

Parents, you aren't off the hook on this one. It's your turn to agree to a few guidelines, too.

Read through the following list and initial next to each item to show agreement with each point.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that when my kid gets a smart-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 personal phone is a model for how my kid 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 kid 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 kid 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.

Signature

Date