

Mobile phone and children

[Technology](#), [Mobile Phone](#)



Should children be allowed to own and use mobile phones? Mobile phones keep children safe. Mobile phones keep children safer, as it is easier for parents to stay in touch with their children and for children to contact someone in an emergency. Through calls and texts, parents can know where their child is and be reassured that he or she is safe; all the while their children know they are never more than a phone call away from help. As Leslie Sharpe argues, 'I wanted to ensure that they had a way of contacting me in an emergency'.

It is, however, true that some children carrying the most sophisticated or 'Smart' phones are more susceptible to being robbed, but thieves are always after something new. Phones now are both much more widespread and security coded, so the benefits to thieves are no longer as great or immediate. Traffic accidents that are the result of children being distracted by their phones while walking across roads should be blamed on bad safety education rather than on the actual phones.

Ultimately, mobile phones provide parents and young people with peace of mind and children with a safety net in emergencies, whether calling parents or the emergency services. Children should be comfortable with modern technology. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is now a normal part of modern life, used by everyone from toddlers to pensioners. So children need to grow up making use of technology such as mobile phones if they are to be able to fully participate in contemporary society. The average age at which children get their first mobile phone is eight according to a recent study.

To prevent a child from having a mobile phone at that age is to put them at a clear social disadvantage compared with their peers. Mobile phone use develops skills for the modern workplace with its need for tech-savvy employees with communication skills and the ability to work flexibly. In any case, children often have better phone manners than adults - they are less likely to shout into the phone, more likely to text discreetly, and more aware of text and phone etiquette. Such manners are the direct consequence of familiarity with the device and an understanding of appropriate use in certain contexts.

Mobile phones encourage the development of independence and interpersonal skills. Education is as much about the growth in character and dealing with risks as it is the accumulation of knowledge; mobile phones provide for children a means to converse with peers, develop friendships and resolve disputes, all within minutes of each other, night and day. For them, 'getting a cell phone is a step towards independence and a status symbol among their friends'. The confidence and self-esteem derived from having a mobile phone cannot be underappreciated, as proven by the corresponding negative impact of losing one's phone.

An Independent study in 2004 found that 55 per cent of people cited 'keeping in touch with friends or family as the main reason for being wedded to their handsets'. Furthermore, the increasing potential of smart phones facilitates the accessing of information in real-time and on the move; a determined child with a grasp of the potential of their mobile phone can illuminate themselves on matters like directions to destinations, opening times for activities and immediate weather forecasts.

With such information, children can begin to reason with each other and make decisions without resort to more mature advice. Schools can implement programs to encourage responsible and considerate mobile phone use. All technological platforms have the potential to be abused or act as a negative medium, what is important is that children are taught to use their mobile phones responsibly. Schools should introduce programs and classes that teach children not only how important the devices are to their personal safety, but also how to exploit the advantages of the software.

All children with sufficiently smart mobile phones should know how to find out where they are at any given time using map functions, and how to use the internet to find information on the go but to be wary of revealing their location to others and possible commercial exploitation of certain location based services. This advice should be taught alongside warnings about the limits of mobile phone technology, ensuring that the children don't trust them blindly but use them as verification tools or means of starting enquiries.

What should emerge is an environment where phones can be used as teaching tools and facilitating social cohesion rather than simply being a distraction in class. There are long-term health risks to mobile phone use. Mobile phones are medically safe for children to use - we should ignore scare stories in the media. The latest research has not proved that mobile phones damage brain cells. Ed Yong, head of health information at Cancer Research UK, has been quoted as saying 'the risk of brain cancer is similar in people who use mobile phones compared to those who don't, and rates of this cancer (glioma) have not gone up in recent years despite a dramatic rise in phone

use during the 1980s'. Furthermore, the European Union's public health body concluded in 2008 that 'mobile phone use for less than ten years is not associated with cancer incidence. Regarding longer use, it was deemed difficult to make an estimate'. Even those earlier studies that suggested there might be a problem thought that people would have to use a cell phone for hours a day for there to be an effect.

It is true that there is no 100% proof that mobile phones are safe to use, but that is true of any scientific study. Further investigation should be encouraged, but without conclusive proof, the benefits of mobile phone use will continue to far outweigh the costs. Mobile phones are too expensive for children. Mobile phones are not too expensive for children - children use pocket money to buy credit and often inherit 'hand-me-down' handsets initially. As noted by the opposition, basic models are cheap and the subscription itself is at the mercy of the buyer. Parents can always say "no" or set limits on what the children can spend.

With modern payment plans children can be given a set amount of credit for calls and texts. Learning to work within financial limits is an important part of growing up. In any case, many young people have part-time jobs so they are spending their own money, not their parents and learning to control use and financially managing phone use is a very good skill to learn. Nevertheless, even if it were the case that mobile phones are too expensive, that does not render their ability to keep children safe negligible, for one cannot place a price on a child's safety. Mobile phones are inappropriate distractions in school

Mobile phones are now a valuable part of student life. They can be used for 'creating short movies, setting homework reminders, recording a teacher reading a poem and timing science experiments'. Moreover, because parents feel their children are safer carrying a phone, they are more likely to allow them to travel to school on their own rather than driving them. This promotes greater independence for the children, while taking traffic off the roads which is environmentally-friendly. Like many other things, mobiles can be distracting in class but this doesn't mean they should be banned. Many schools allow - some actively encourage - phones to be carried providing they are turned off in lesson. Mobile phones are open to abuse. Anything can be abused or used to harm other person, including pencils and paper. New technology carries some risks but we should not be rushed into panic measures. Children got hold of pornography, gambled and bullied each other long before mobile phones were invented. The relationship between childhood and new mobile technologies is complex. These problems won't go away if we ban phone use - they can only be dealt with through good parenting and moral education.

In the meantime, parents can get phones which block inappropriate content, and ensure that their children do not have credit cards to pay for it. They should make sure that children know how to report abuse or what to do if they receive inappropriate material on the phone. An American company Disney Mobile is also one of an increasing number of phone makers who 'provides families with mobile phones specifically designed for tweens, young teens and parents who want to keep an eye on them'. The potential for the

abuse of mobile phones is low if parents are informed and vigilant and ensure they buy their children the right phone and right plan.