



Children, youth and smartphone readiness

About 50% of children carry a smartphone by [age 11](#), but is that too young?

Many parents and health professionals think so.

Do kids 'need' a smartphone?

By middle school, children may start asking for their own smartphone. Among other reasons, they probably want to stay connected with friends. Without a smartphone, they may worry about being excluded.

Because phones are portable, they tend to be used frequently. They provide access to websites, social media, apps, and much more. Using a phone safely and responsibly is a learning process, which will be easier for older, more mature children or youth.

Your decision as a parent also depends on whether your child needs a phone for safety or medical reasons. For example, some children and youth with diabetes use their phones to receive information [about their blood sugar](#).

Some schools, school boards, and provinces or territories now have policies in place about when or whether students can use their phones at school.

Assessing smartphone readiness

While experts don't agree on the best age to get a smartphone, later is usually better.

[Consider](#) these questions to help determine if your child is ready for a smartphone:

- How do they react when you set limits on their behaviours (for example, if they are playing a video game, can you agree on time limits)? If they struggle with limits on other devices, controlling smartphone use will be difficult.
- Do they know what can cause hurt or harm online, and aware that such behaviour can be a crime?
- Are they impulsive, or do they take time to make decisions?
- Do they understand that once something is on the internet, it is almost impossible to remove?
- Are they skilled at reading social cues? Or do they struggle socially?
- Are they easily distracted? Are they careful with their belongings or lose track of them quickly?

[Unplugged Canada](#), encourages parents to wait until children are at least 14 before they get their first smartphone. There are similar parent organizations in the U.S. and England.

TIP: [Create a plan](#) with your child or teen before they get their first phone. Taking this step will prepare them for the responsibility of owning a smartphone and help them use their phone more safely and purposefully.



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