

MySocialLife:

SMARTPHONE AGREEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This agreement is designed as a partnership between teens and parents to create a healthy, safe, and balanced approach to smartphone use. By collaborating on guidelines and responsibilities, we aim to foster mutual understanding and respect around technology use.

This agreement is not a strict set of rules but rather a flexible framework that encourages open communication, trust, and gradual adjustments as needed. Our shared goal is to ensure that smartphone use enhances, rather than detracts from, our family life and well-being.

Important Considerations

- **Child's Potential and Risk Level:** Gauge their maturity and adaptability.
- **Goal:** Prioritise safety and smart usage over simply reducing screen time.
- **Set an Example:** Kids notice parental overuse too.



A few points before you start:

1. Understanding your child's potential – and their risk level – with regards to technology, is key.
2. Primary goal is to make them **safe and smart** first, before anything.
3. Know that they expect you to behave as a good influence online too.
4. Will you review this or is it just a document that will end up in a drawer?
5. Will this document (a more condensed version) be visible, like some key bullet points on the fridge?
6. Are you willing to provide good alternatives to screen time, because the escape route of a smartphone is very fun and entertaining?
7. It takes time to turn things around. Can you exercise patience and stay the course?
8. Rewards are deserved because it's very hard to break habits.

Step 1: The Board Meeting

1. Sit down with your child and have the discussion – perhaps at a table. Ideally frame it as an agreement, and not a contract – an agreement is something that evolves.
2. Be calm and kind. They have been using these devices because we gave them to them, and there were no rules for almost anyone out there since the smartphone landed in 2007.
3. The single objective is that you guide them to a place where they co-create the agreement, and explain why certain boundaries are better for them. They may experience fear or withdrawal of being excluded – **belonging is critically important in a group of friends or at school, or you can lose the friends you have – really try to grasp this single point.**

Go here: www.mysociallife.com and here on social: [@MySocialLifeSA](https://www.instagram.com/MySocialLifeSA)



Step 2: Discovery

The Pros: Ask them what they like about being online? Where's the joy and thrill?

The Cons: What don't they like – any worries or concerns?

Paint a balanced picture. Take the opportunity to explain that technology companies want kids to stay online and spend money – that's the hidden driver of the internet.

Step 3: Boundaries

Below is a list of ideas only – choose which work for you, your child and family.

1. I understand that my parents expect full transparency regarding the content on my phone. My parents can access my phone.
2. I agree to be honest and truthful around this and understand that if I make a mistake, I have the opportunity to fix it.

Reach

3. I may have _____ many social media apps? (Is it 'open season' or a 'slow release valve'.
4. These apps / games / websites are off-limits? _____
5. There is / isn't a limit on the number of friends I may have in my followers? _____
6. I do / do not need to know everyone in my friend lists _____

Creating and sharing content

7. I will not use my cell phone to bully another – if someone is being mean to me, I will discuss this with my parents.
8. I will not send embarrassing photos of my family or teachers or friends to others. I will not use my phone's camera to take embarrassing photos of others.
9. I will not use my cell phone to take pictures or video of nudity, violence or other inappropriate or unlawful activity, understanding the legal issue of distributing child pornography, even if it is a friend / boy/girlfriend.
10. I will not use my cell phone to call or text anyone for malicious or inappropriate purposes. I will remember that what I text becomes permanent and that I should never text something I wouldn't feel comfortable saying directly to a person's face.

Screen time

11. The following we see as acceptable and prohibited hours for phone use _____
12. I will receive X hours each day of "social screen time." Social screen time includes: Cell phone use (texting, apps, games, etc.), Non-homework related computer time, Email, YouTube, Chat, etc. If I am working on a project for fun, such as a video, more screen time will be allowed? Yes/no?
13. My screen time will / will not be reviewed (using the "Screen time app?") _____
14. I will respect "device free time".

Parental access

15. The following parental password and fingerprint scanning access is agreed _____
(Suggest full access until at least 15 or 16, but it's your choice – extent of freedom is very personal thing in a family)
16. My cell phone must be turned off by X each night and must be left with my parents to recharge.
17. I will pick up the phone if one of my parents calls me no matter what I am doing or where I am.

Contribution and consequence

18. I may / may not be required to contribute to the cost of my cell phone if there is a breakage, or if I use too much data, or spend on apps that I may not spend on.
19. I will obey any rules my school has regarding cell phones, such as leaving them in my locker.
20. I will abide by these rules and understand if they are not followed there will be consequences/ loss of my cell phone.
21. I agree that if I demonstrate untrustworthy behaviour, the use of my cell phone can be taken away from me. This can happen even if I have contributed to the cost of the cell phone plan.

Next review date? 3 months / 6 months / Next birthday?

Teen: _____ Parent: _____