



# How Social Media Affects Kids & Teens: Phone Readiness & Boundaries

# What the Research Tells Us



## It's Not About Age Alone

The age a kid first gets a phone does **not** directly predict mental health outcomes – it's about *how* they use it.



## A Sensitive Window

Ages 10–13 are a critical developmental period with significant physical, social, and emotional changes.



## The Reality

The Surgeon General's 2024 advisory found nearly 40% of kids ages 8–12 are already using social media.

# What Readiness Actually Depends On



## Developmental Maturity

Can your child manage impulses, think through consequences, and regulate their emotions?



## Sense of Responsibility

Do they follow through on everyday expectations independently – chores, schoolwork, household rules?



## Parental Readiness

Are *you* ready to monitor, scaffold, set boundaries, and have ongoing conversations about online life?



## Content & Context

What content is your child accessing, and what support do they have at home to process it?



## Gradual Steps

There's a spectrum between no phone and full social media access – many families start with an internet-free device.

# Scaffolding Phone Use: The Parenting Model



## Little Kids (Playdates)

You stayed close during playdates to keep them safe – full supervision.



## Ages 8–9 (More Space)

They could hang out with friends in their room – still in your home, but with more independence.



## Ages 14–15 (Out & About)

They go to the mall or movies without you – but you set the drop-off, pick-up, and curfew.



## Phone: Start Close

Begin with close monitoring and parental controls, then gradually loosen as your child shows responsibility.



## Keep Talking

Ongoing conversations about algorithms, AI, and false portrayals online are essential throughout the process.

## Key Questions to Ask Yourself



### Sleep & Routines

Does your child get to sleep and follow their bedtime routine without your reminders?



### Homework Independence

Do they consistently complete homework on their own each day without prompting?



### Following Rules

Do they follow household and school rules without constant pushback?



### Your Monitoring Plan

Are you prepared to set up parental controls, a family media plan, and enforce real consequences?



### Evidence-Based Conversations

Do you feel informed enough on the research to ground conversations in evidence – not just fear?

# Resources & Tools

- References & Resources: American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), AT&T PhoneReady Quiz, AAP Family Media Plan, U.S. Surgeon General Advisory on Social Media & Youth Mental Health, Ollie Pediatrics Resource Guide.