


To call or not to call?

Tech-G@L 

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My daughter got her first cellphone in first grade. This was a big mistake. She was too young and she misplaced it and its charger all the time. She left it places, couldn't find it for 2 weeks, and even today she still lets it go dead. The reason that I gave my daughter her cellphone when I did was because I had a girlfriend on my contract and she wanted to go onto her boyfriend's. So I let her off and to avoid a cancellation fee, I gave it to my daughter for her dad to call her instead of me.

Shortly after that, I had a larger phone bill because she went over in texting. Ironically, you don't have to spell all that great because [texting](#) is more shortcuts and sounding out then actually spelling.

Most of my daughter's friends got them shortly thereafter, and the majority had them all by the end of second grade. That was still to early, and most of them had similar problems to my daughter's and her missing phone.

Consequently, I had 2 friends hold out until their child's fifth grade year (1 boy and 1 girl). That was an excellent time to give a phone. Both children were more mature and did not misplace the phone and/or charger. They were more responsible with it and because they waited so long they seemed to value it that much more.

We don't have many cellphone rules now because she is older. We are with a provider that holds the market where we live and everyone can hear her now and is in our [network](#). So there are no limits. She cannot be on the phone past bedtime of 9:30 on weeknights, but there are no other time restrictions. She may not use it when she has guests (unless they are texting one another), it is not allowed around water or in the bathroom, she may not use it at dinner, nor at other family affairs (unless it's her father), she may not be mean or do hurtful things with it. She must be VERY careful and read what she forwards. She forwarded a curse word once. She must know where the phone and charger are all the time. We have a special spot for it now. If she breaks these rules, the phone is taken away and turned off a week at a time. This grounded from phone punishment can work for other things too.

As for track phones, there is really no benefit and most cell providers now have [GPS](#)/tracking

services which can be paid for additionally on most compatible phones.

Most cell companies now offer a free phone every year or 2, we have taken full advantage of this. I generally upgrade my phone more regularly and then give my "taken care" of phone to my daughter. This way if I must suspend it or she loses it, I will not get a disconnect fee.

I truly believe that the best age to give your child a phone is after their successful 4th grade school year (which is usually age 9 or 10) or [Christmas](#) during their 5th grade year. If you can hold out until Christmas, the cellphone is so cool that you then won't have to spend a whole lot of money on gifts that year!

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