

# Smartphone readiness

Is your child ready for their first smartphone?



Smartphones are everywhere and it's only a matter of time before your child asks for their very own.

While there is a lot of advice around the "best age" to get a smartphone, you are best placed to assess your child's readiness based on their level of maturity and critical thinking capability.

You should also consider other factors such as your family values, your child's digital safety skills and knowledge, and your own readiness to support your child online.

Check out the slang and emojis throughout this guide to help you understand and chat with your child.



## This guide will help you talk to your child about:

- ✓ Being socially mature enough to get a smartphone
- ✓ Thinking critically when using a smartphone
- ✓ What's next after they get their first smartphone
- ✓ Finding more help if you need it



Complete our Phone Readiness quiz to help decide whether your child might be ready for their own device, and what you can do to support them.



[Phone Readiness](#)  
- Quiz



## How do I know if my child is socially mature enough for a smartphone?

The way your child interacts with others in real life can indicate if they can stay respectful online and be responsible for how they use their first smartphone. Here are some signs that your child may be mature enough for their own smartphone and how you can talk to them about it:

### Ability to read social cues

Noticing and responding to social cues such as tone of voice, body language, facial expressions, feelings, and emotions.

#### Conversation starter

What is the difference between chatting face-to-face versus texting or video calling someone online? How can you tell what their vibe is?



#### Upside-down smiling face

This emoji can indicate sarcasm, sass or frustration

#### Things aren't always the way they seem

When texting, social cues are harder to read. Keep an eye out for things like this upside-down smiley emoji to better pick up tones like sarcasm or frustration in online chats.

# Resilience against criticism or rejection

Accepting, ignoring, or taking action against negative experiences.

## Conversation starter

How would you react if someone disagreed or said 'no' to you online? Would you become pressed or would you keep your cool?



## 'Pressed'

adj.  
Slang for being stressed, upset, or annoyed

## Why be pressed over something excess?

Being annoyed by everything online can be draining. It is sometimes easier to remove from those conversations or just report them.

# Self-control

Stepping away from temptations and controlling wants and emotions.

## Conversation starter

Can you tell me about a time that you lost track of time or missed something because you were playing your favourite game or watching a show for too long?



## Go touch grass

v.  
Slang for going offline

## Go touch some grass... in a good way

Try to get some fresh air after looking at the phone or being online for a while.

# Sense of responsibility

Keeping track of belongings and personal information and storing them safely.

## Conversation starter

How do you think you should keep your smartphone safe? What about your digital personal information like account details, passwords and photos?



## How do I know if my child can think critically about what they see online?

Your child's critical thinking or reasoning is another important phone readiness element to consider. Thinking critically about the interactions and messages they come across online can act as a first line of defence from different online crimes. Here are some indicators that your child has strong critical thinking skills and how you can talk to them about it:

### Understanding of actions and consequences

Being aware and thoughtful around what they do or say and understand that actions may have long-lasting consequences.

#### Conversation starter

Imagine everything you say and do gets recorded today. Would you do things for 'clout'? What would you feel if you look back on your actions and words from this week in 5 years? Would you cringe at it or stand by it?



#### 'Clout chaser'

n.  
Slang for someone following trends for popularity

#### Doing things for clout

Being a 'clout chaser' might seem cool but can easily be cringey in a few years.

### Help-seeking

Feeling comfortable with asking for help and reaching trusted adults for advice and support when they run into online safety issues.

#### Conversation starter

Regardless of what happens and how serious things get online, I will always be here for you and help you sort things out. Who else do you think you can trust to get help from? Is it someone in our family or at school?

# Understanding and maintaining personal boundaries for oneself and others

Speaking up and respecting what you and others are comfortable with.

## Conversation starter

Sometimes someone might say something that 'crosses your line'. How will you establish boundaries online and speak up when someone crosses them? What can you do if someone continues to cross them?



## Vibe check

v.  
Slang for checking in with people

### Check their vibe

Especially when it comes to personal boundaries, they should be clear-cut to avoid misinterpretation.

# Maintaining healthy scepticism

Recognising hackers, scammers, or fake friends and know what to do when exposed to them.

## Conversation starter

What would you do if someone online is acting suss? For example, if they pretend to be someone else and connect with you, try really hard to sell you a 'dupe', or ask you to click on a link that looks weird?



## 'Dupe'

n.  
Slang for duplicate products

### Beware of 'dupes'

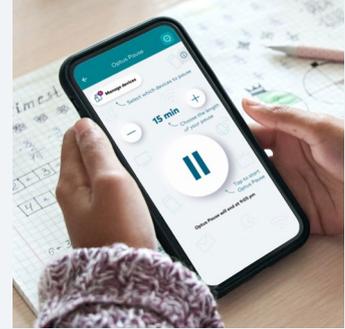
There are a lot of 'dupe' products or accounts online that seem like the real thing but could be a scam.

# What next?

To ensure that your child stays safe and has a positive experience after getting their first phone, you can do the following:

## Have conversations about rules and boundaries

Maintaining an open and regular conversation with your child around things like time online, when they can have their own social media accounts, or who pays if the device is damaged or lost can develop trust and understanding before anything goes wrong. Network controls, such as [Optus Pause](#),<sup>1</sup> can also help with balancing their screentime by allowing you to pause connectivity on mobile devices and WIFI.



## Use technology to help keep your child safe

Different social media and gaming platforms have internal safeguards to keep your child safe online. There are also other tools and technology you can install to fend off cyber criminals. You can learn more about them by reading the [Passphrases, passwords and MFA for your child](#) guide or the [Safeguard your child's privacy on popular apps and games](#) guide. Parental controls are also a great way to keep kids safe online with features such as monitoring device activity and blocking certain websites or apps.

## Explore the safety features of a smartphone

Smartphones are a great tool to ensure the safety of your child. You can explore the different ways a smartphone can be used for emergencies with the activities below.



## Consider other options

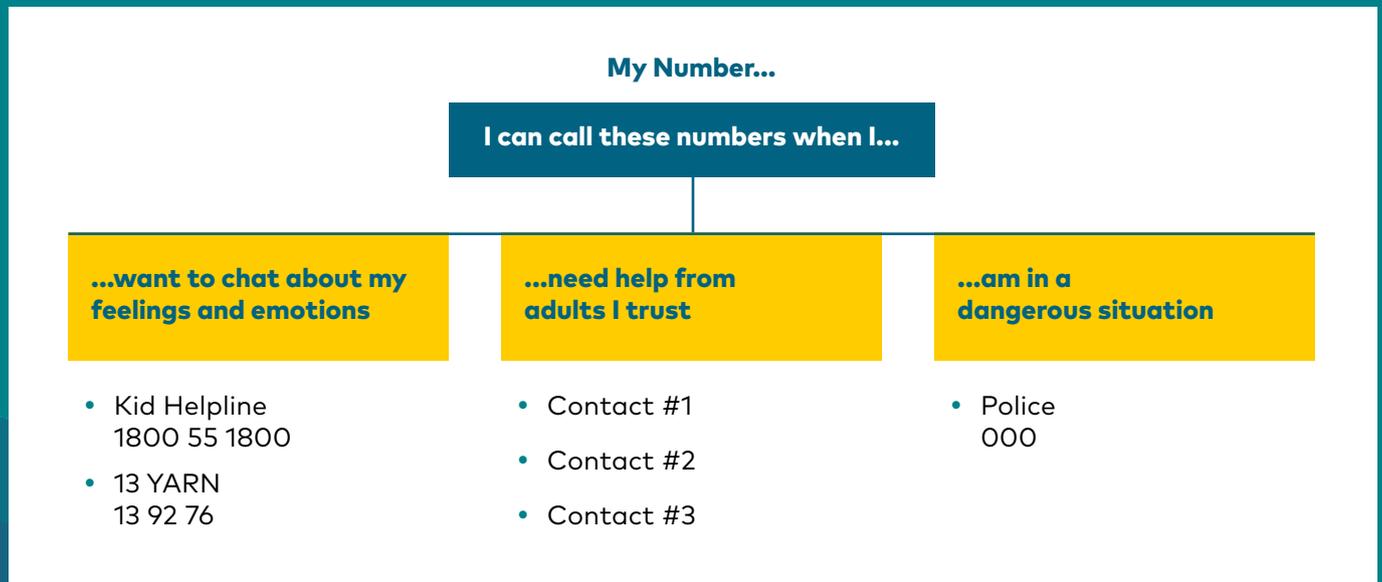
Even if your child is not yet ready for a smartphone, there are great alternatives that your child can benefit from. Examples include restricted Wi-Fi-enabled tablets, smartwatches without online connectivity, or a mobile phone without internet access. Using these alternatives also gives you and your child more time to develop their maturity and critical thinking before you decide later again.

<sup>1</sup>Available to eligible Optus customers with an eligible mobile, home internet and/or nbn service. T&Cs apply.



## Activity: Create a phone tree of who to contact during an emergency

Phone trees<sup>2</sup> are typically for community-based emergencies, but you and your child can also decide on a list of trusted people they can call in different situations. Print it out for them to stick in their room and support your child to add the contacts into their smartphone.



## Activity: Learn how to trigger an emergency SOS call

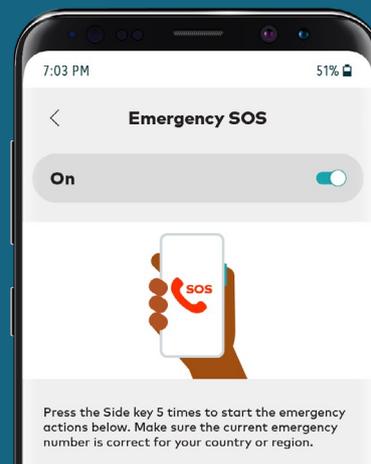
Each phone will have a different method, so make sure you check the guidance specific to your child's smartphone.

### For iPhones

Read [Use Emergency SOS on your iPhone - Apple Support](#).

### For Android phones

Read [Get help during an emergency with your Android phone - Android Help \(google.com\)](#).



<sup>2</sup> Start an emergency phone tree | Australian Red Cross

# Keep learning

Check out these Digital Thumbprint resources online to help get you and your family ready for your child's first smartphone. You can also head over to the quizzes to test and see how your child scores on their cyber safety knowledge and digital readiness.



## Digital Identity

When it comes to your digital presence, you should be in control. To learn more about protecting your online identity...



[Safeguard your child's privacy on popular apps and games](#)  
- Family guide



[Protecting personal information](#)  
- Quiz



## Passphrases, passwords and MFA

Strong security skills are the first step to protecting your information online. For support to help keep your child safe online...



[Passphrases, passwords and MFA for your child](#)  
- Family guide



[Passphrases, passwords and MFA](#)  
- Quiz



[Passphrases, passwords and MFA](#)  
- Tween guide



## Blocking unwanted contact

Positive connection can quickly become unwanted contact. To help your child stay safe from malicious strangers online...



[Blocking unwanted contact for your child](#)  
- Family guide



[Blocking unwanted contact](#)  
- Tween guide



## Hackers, scammers and fake friends

Not everyone is who they claim to be online.  
For digital defence moves to teach your child...



[Recognising hackers, scammers and fake friends](#)  
- Family guide



[Scammers and fake friends](#)  
- Quiz



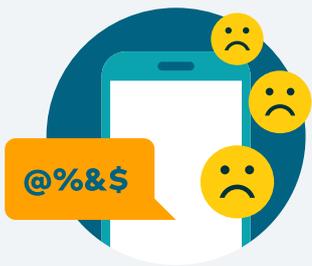
[Hackers, scammers and fake friends](#)  
- Tween guide



[Fake friends and fake profiles](#)  
- Quiz



[Stay ahead of scams through family discussions](#)  
- Family guide



## Cyberbullying

Empower your child to be an upstander when it comes to cyberbullying. To help your child understand what is considered cyberbullying and what to do about it...



[Cyberbullying: What to say when things go wrong](#)  
- Family guide



[Cyberbullying](#)  
- Quiz



[Cyberbullying: What to do when things go wrong](#)  
- Tween guide



## Digital Balance

Plan your family's screen time with purpose. For tips and tricks on how to set your child up with healthy digital habits...



[Balancing time online: How can I talk about healthy screen habits](#)  
- Family guide



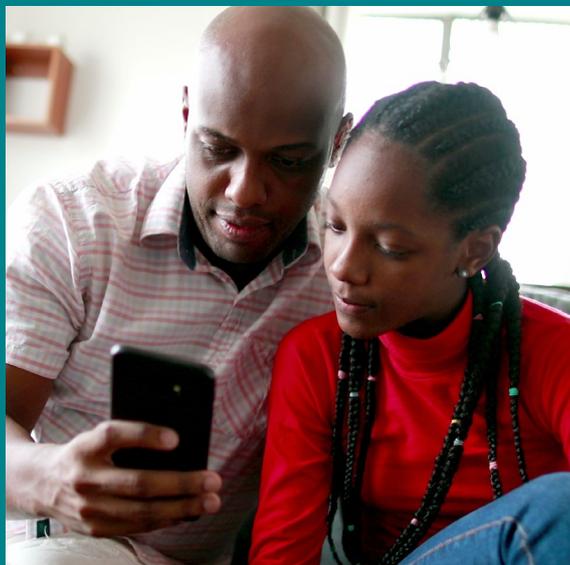
[Digital Balance](#)  
- Quiz



[Lifehacks for a balanced time online](#)  
- Tween guide

## What to do if your child needs more help

After you and your child get their first smartphone, you might need to find additional help and support, or talk to someone about their feelings or worries.



### For help and support, check out:

- [eSafety Commissioner](#)  
to report cyberbullying, image-based abuse, and illegal and restricted content
- [Australian Cyber Security Centre](#)  
to report cybercrime, including online threats and abuse, scams and hacks, data breaches, identity theft and fraud
- [Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation](#)  
to report child exploitation material
- [Scamwatch](#)  
to report scams
- [IDCARE](#)  
to get identity theft, data breach, scam and cyber security support

### If your child needs to talk to someone about their feelings or worries, they can contact:

- [Kids Helpline](#)  
on 1800 55 1800 for free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling services
- [13YARN](#)  
on 13 92 76 for a free, private and confidential talk 24/7 with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter



## About Optus Digital Thumbprint

Optus Digital Thumbprint supports digital safety and wellbeing for young people and families. Find out more at [www.digitalthumbprint.com.au](http://www.digitalthumbprint.com.au)

