NEWS LESSON

A First Phone With No Social Media



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What is a phone useful for besides social media?
2. Would you choose a phone that could call and play music but had no feed?
3. Who should help decide a child's first phone rules?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**browser**	☐	A	nice to look at or interesting to you
2	**device**	☐	B	messages that tell you something has happened
3	**independence**	☐	C	a small machine, such as a phone
4	**explore**	☐	D	moving down a screen to see more
5	**scrolling**	☐	E	very small animals with six legs, like ants
6	**alerts**	☐	F	being able to do things without help from others
7	**attractive**	☐	G	a program you use to look at pages on the internet
8	**insects**	☐	H	to go to new places and find out about them

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

An American company has built a phone for children aged seven to thirteen. It calls home, but it will not open the internet.

1 A child asks for a phone. Their parents want to stay in touch, but they worry about social media, strange websites and too much time staring at a screen. It is a familiar problem in many families. An American company has come up with an answer: a colourful phone that lets children call home but does not give them the whole internet.

2 The device is called Freckle. It is designed mainly for children aged seven to thirteen and was announced in 2026. Unlike a normal smartphone, it does not have social media apps, an app store, YouTube or a web browser. Children can call and send messages to contacts approved by their parents. The aim is to give them some independence without opening the door to everything online.

3 Freckle also tries to make the outside world more interesting. Its small, square design includes a camera that can help children recognise plants, birds and insects. Children can collect discoveries in a digital book. The company says it hopes children will go out, explore and learn, rather than spend hours scrolling through videos, but this has not yet been tested. Parents can use an app to manage which features their child can access.

4 The phone is expected to cost $199, with a mobile plan of around $25 a month. Its first deliveries were planned for December 2026, so the promised benefits had not yet been tested by large numbers of families when it was announced. Parents also have the option to check where their child is and set alerts for certain areas. Some may find this reassuring; others may worry about too much tracking.

5 The idea sounds attractive, but there are questions. Will children enjoy a phone that cannot play the same games or use the same apps as their friends? Could they feel left out? And if adults choose everything their children can see, when will young people learn to make safe decisions online by themselves? Keeping children away from danger is important, but learning how to deal with technology matters too.

6 For many parents, the real choice is between safety and freedom. They want children to call for help, meet friends and become more independent. They also want to avoid endless screen time. Freckle offers one possible middle ground, not a perfect answer for every family. Perhaps the most useful part is the conversation it starts: what should a child's first phone actually be for?

Sources: Fast Company. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. With the camera, children can identify plants, birds and insects. T F NG
2. The phone is already on sale in Europe. T F NG
3. Children can message anybody they like on the Freckle phone. T F NG
4. The company has already proved that children go outside more with this phone. T F NG
5. Parents can set alerts for certain areas. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

announced	approved	discovered	familiar	recognise	tempting	tracking

1. The company _____ the phone at a news event in 2026.
2. Children can only message contacts that their parents have _____ .
3. It is a _____ problem, because lots of families worry about the same thing.
4. The camera helps children _____ birds and flowers by name.
5. Some parents like the idea, but others worry about too much _____ .

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. The device _____ Freckle. (CALL)
2. A child _____ for a phone, but the parents worry about social media. (ASK)
3. The phone _____ to cost $199. (EXPECT)
4. Parents can use an app _____ which features their child can access. (MANAGE)
5. The first deliveries _____ for December 2026. (PLAN)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some words go together as a pair. If you know one word, think about which word usually comes next to it.

attention	number	plan	screen	take	tell	touch

1. Parents want to stay in _____ with their children during the day.
2. Children can _____ photos of birds and plants with the camera.
3. Too much _____ time is a worry for many families.
4. Parents should pay _____ to what children do online.
5. The phone has a mobile _____ of around $25 a month.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would make a limited phone feel like freedom rather than punishment?
2. Should phone rules depend more on age or on how someone uses it?
3. What would a phone designed around what children actually need look like?

9 Role-play: a first phone for a ten-year-old

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · a parent

Your daughter is ten and wants a phone. You want a simple one with calls and a camera but no social media. Explain your reasons and ask what your friend thinks.

Student B · a friend

Your son has a full smartphone. You think a limited phone may make a child feel left out. Say what worries you, but listen to your friend's reasons.

Useful phrases

I'd rather she didn't have social media yet.
I'm worried she'll feel left out.
That's a fair point, but safety matters more to me.
What do her friends use?
Couldn't we try it for a few months?
I'd be happy to review the rules when she's older.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the two friends agree, and what was the compromise?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 G · 2 C · 3 F · 4 H · 5 D · 6 B · 7 A · 8 E

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 NG · 3 F · 4 F · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 announced · 2 approved · 3 familiar · 4 recognise · 5 tracking

6 Verb forms

1 is called · 2 asks · 3 is expected · 4 to manage · 5 were planned

7 Language focus

1 touch · 2 take · 3 screen · 4 attention · 5 plan

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