NEWS LESSON

# What Should a Child's First Phone Leave Out?



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 | **approved** | ☐ | A | not probably going to happen |
| 2 | **unfair** | ☐ | B | to end an argument by finding an answer |
| 3 | **gradually** | ☐ | C | the right to keep your life and information to yourself |
| 4 | **privacy** | ☐ | D | slowly, a little at a time |
| 5 | **notifications** | ☐ | E | an exciting or unusual experience |
| 6 | **unlikely** | ☐ | F | not treating people in an equal or reasonable way |
| 7 | **adventure** | ☐ | G | officially accepted as allowed |
| 8 | **settle** | ☐ | H | short messages from an app on your phone |

## 3 Read

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

**Freckle has no browser, no app store and a camera that identifies birds and plants. It also lets parents see where their child is.**

1 The request sounds simple: 'Can I have a phone?' For a parent, it is really a decision. A normal smartphone lets a child contact home, but it also opens the door to much more. In 2026, an American company introduced a possible compromise: a phone designed to connect children to their families without pulling them into the wider internet.

2 The Freckle phone is aimed primarily at children aged seven to thirteen. It has no general web browser, app store, social media or YouTube. Children can call and message contacts that their parents have approved, while adults manage features through a separate app. The device runs the company's own ClayOS software and uses colourful hardware with a small, square screen. According to its creators, the goal is to give children greater freedom while protecting them from online environments they may not yet be ready to navigate.

3 Rather than relying entirely on entertainment, Freckle encourages children to explore the world around them. Its discovery camera is designed to identify birds, plants and insects, adding the results to a digital collection. A walk in the park could therefore turn into a small adventure. Parents can also check a child's location and receive alerts linked to selected areas. Those tools could offer reassurance when children begin going out without an adult, although they also raise questions about privacy and constant supervision.

4 The company announced a price of $199, with a wireless plan costing around $25 a month, and expected its first deliveries in December 2026. At the time of the announcement, the phone was still a new product rather than a proven solution. Promotional claims about making children more adventurous or reducing screen time should therefore be treated cautiously. Families will need to see how the device works in everyday life and whether its restrictions remain useful as children grow older.

5 There is another difficulty: children do not use technology in isolation. A child whose friends communicate through popular apps may feel left out when their own phone cannot access them. On the other hand, many parents believe it is unfair to expect a ten-year-old to manage the pressures of social media alone. Removing some options may make family rules easier to follow, at least for a few years. The challenge is finding a balance between protection and learning responsibility.

6 Freckle is unlikely to settle the debate about childhood and smartphones. Some families will prefer a basic phone, while others will introduce internet access gradually and discuss the risks openly. The important question is not whether children should use technology at all, but what we want technology to help them do. If a device makes it easier to keep in touch, go outside and build independence, perhaps it is serving a more useful purpose than a screen filled with endless notifications.

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. The device had been tested by large numbers of families before launch. T F NG
2. Teachers have welcomed the phone in schools. T F NG
3. Parents manage the phone's features through a separate app. T F NG
4. The location tools could help parents but also cause worries about constant watching. T F NG
5. The writer says claims about the phone should be believed at once. T F NG

## 5 Vocabulary

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

**cautiously** **exposure** **incentive** **promotional** **proven** **reassurance** **restrictions** **supervision**

1. A regular call home gave the worried parents some _____ while their son was away.
2. The method sounds clever, but it has not been _____ to work with large groups.
3. Claims made by companies should be treated _____ until independent tests are published.
4. Strict _____ on screen time can make the rules easier to follow.
5. Under eights are not allowed to swim without adult _____ .
6. A _____ video made the product look better than it really was.

## 6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time the family bought the phone, their daughter _____ for one many times. (ASK)
2. The rules for the phone _____ by the whole family last weekend. (AGREE)
3. If the phone _____ cheaper, more families would buy one. (BE)
4. The shop said that the new phones _____ in December. (ARRIVE)
5. By next summer, the family _____ the phone for a year. (USE)

## 7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Collocations are words that naturally go together. Check the verb and noun partnership, not only the meaning.

| balance | carry | hold | make | protect | raise | set |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. The new features _____ serious questions about privacy.
2. The challenge is finding the right _____ between protection and learning.
3. Parents often _____ clear boundaries about screen time.
4. Every family must _____ a decision about when to buy a first phone.
5. Parents want to _____ their children from online dangers.

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

**4 True, false or not given**

1 F · 2 NG · 3 T · 4 T · 5 F

**5 Vocabulary**

1 reassurance · 2 proven · 3 cautiously · 4 restrictions · 5 supervision · 6 promotional

**6 Verb forms**

1 had asked · 2 were agreed · 3 were or was · 4 would arrive or were going to arrive or were to arrive · 5 will have used or will have been using

**7 Language focus**

1 raise · 2 balance · 3 set · 4 make · 5 protect

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