

Tech Matters for parents

Cellphone Contract

Dear _____

While you don't need a licence to operate a cellphone, you do need to take responsibility for using it wisely because this very powerful device can be used as a tool for good or a weapon for harming both yourself and others. You are about to set off on the information superhighway and, like on any road, certain rules apply. The contract below sets out both your responsibilities and ours, as your parents, to ensure that you keep yourself and others safe while upholding your reputation (and ours), which is important both now and for your future.

Our wish for you is that you ...

- enjoy all the functionality of your phone without compromising your own integrity
- maintain your high standard of manners and etiquette online as you do offline
- continue to value face-to-face communication more than on-screen communication – keep it real
- check yourself before you wreck yourself whenever you text or post anything – if you wouldn't want us to see it, then don't send it
- are an 'upstander' and not a bystander – help others in the online world as you would do in the real world, by letting an adult know that they are in trouble
- take responsibility for the choices and consequences that come with using a cellphone – everything boils down to what you choose to do
- know who you are and that your phone is not you – it is just a tool you use to connect with your world
- will always come to us first if you are in trouble or if you spot trouble – we would rather hear it from you than from someone else, and we can only help you if we know what's going on
- realise that we are on your team, no matter what, even if you mess up – mistakes are a chance to learn and then do it all over again, but differently
- remember that we love you and want the best for you, always.



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Your responsibilities

- I will keep my phone charged at all times.
- I will not bring my cellphone to the family dinner table.
- I will stick to the airtime, voice and data limits that we have agreed on.
- I understand that I may be responsible for paying any additional charges and that I may lose my cellphone privileges if I go over the limits.
- I understand that I am responsible for knowing where my phone is at all times, and for keeping it in good condition, and that I will be liable for repair or replacement costs if I am irresponsible with it.
- I understand that my cellphone is a privilege and may be taken away if I talk back to my parents, or fail to do my chores, my homework or maintain my marks.
- I will respect others in public places such as restaurants, movie theatres or places of worship by making sure my phone is turned off or on silent.
- I will make eye contact with others, especially adults, when they are talking to me, instead of keeping my eyes glued to my cellphone.
- I will not text or make phone calls after 9 pm at night.
- I will obey the school's cellphone policy.
- I will alert my parents when I receive suspicious or alarming phone calls or text messages from people I don't know.
- I will alert my parents if I am being harassed by someone via my cellphone.
- I will 'unfriend' or block anyone who harasses me rather than respond to them.
- I will not delete the conversations because they are a paper trail that may be needed to stop a bully or stalker, for example.
- I will not use my cellphone to bully another person by sending threatening or mean texts.
- I will not send embarrassing photos of my family or friends to others. In addition, I will not use my phone's camera to take embarrassing photos of others.
- I will not send naked pictures of myself to others regardless of the pressure my friends may put me under.



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Your responsibilities continued...

- If I hijack another person's phone and send mean or embarrassing messages or photographs on their behalf, I understand that I will have my phone taken away.
- I will not play tricks on people online.
- I will be an 'upstander' and not a bystander, and will alert an adult if I know of someone who is being cyber-bullied.
- I will not send messages or photographs that I wouldn't be happy for you to see.
- I will keep you informed of password changes.
- I will try not to do anything on my phone that could harm my mind, my body or my reputation.
- I will not overdose on gaming on my phone and will respect the time limits we agree on, including in-app purchases – for which I need to ask specific permission.
- I understand that having a cellphone is a privilege, and that if I fail to adhere to this contract, this privilege may be revoked.

Our responsibilities

- I/we will make myself/ourselves available to answer any questions, or hear any suggestions you may have about owning a cellphone and using it responsibly.
- I/we will support you should you alert me/us about alarming messages or texts that you may have received.
- I/we will alert you should the details of your cellphone plan change in any way that impacts on the amount of airtime, voice or data allocation that you have.
- I/we will have a discussion before revoking any privileges relating to owning or using a cellphone should you disregard any of your responsibilities listed above.

Signed _____
(on behalf of the tween/teen)

Signed _____
(on behalf of the parents)

Date _____

