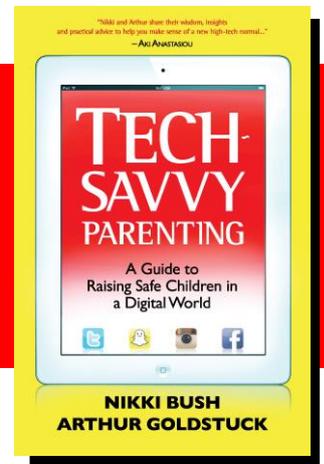


Mobile phones for kids



In our printed book *Tech-Savvy Parenting* (Bookstorm 2014) we couldn't include advice that would date too quickly such as which phones are suitable for which age group. So, as this is closely allied to the common question we get asked about when is the right time to give a child a cellphone, we thought this would be the perfect place to provide this information for you. It is an extension of Arthur's [Goldstuck on Gadgets](#) column and we hope you find it useful. We will endeavour to update it every six months as new devices and models come onto the market. Prices quoted are approximate and are correct at the time of writing (July 2015).

Before we give you some advice, let's just clarify the following terminology:

The difference between a basic phone, feature phone and smart phone

A basic phone is one that only has voice and text functionality with additional features such as FM radio, a torch and talking clock. It has no internet connectivity and has a good battery life.

A feature phone, as the name suggests, is loaded with additional features, like limited Internet access, basic web browser, camera, and basic apps (e.g. Mxit, Facebook Messenger, Google Search). Some allow additional apps to be installed on a limited scale.

A smartphone has an operating system that can be upgraded, allows a wide variety of apps to be installed – limited mainly by the storage capacity of the phone – and gives access to app stores like Google Play, the Apple App Store, BlackBerry World, and the Windows Store.

The difference between the app stores

Android devices can download apps from the Google Playstore where you will find more than a million free apps. These phones are often cheaper because the operating system is provided by Google at no cost to the manufacturer, and because a wide variety of free templates – called reference designs – are available to factories that build Android phones to order. The majority of smartphones in South Africa are Android so, while there are several versions of Android, there is a fair amount of compatibility in the market and you will be able to find help easily. There are also more Android tablets on the market than iPads, although the gap is small.

The smartphone with the second biggest penetration in South Africa, BlackBerry, gives access to more than 200 000 apps in the BlackBerry World store. However, older phones using the BlackBerry 7 operating system or earlier have more limited options than the newer ones running on BlackBerry 10 or later. BlackBerry penetration is dropping fast in South Africa, mainly giving up customers to Android – and most of those are, at this stage, Samsung devices.

Windows Phone is the fastest growing operating system in South Africa, but coming off a very low base, so still well behind Android and BlackBerry. Most Windows phones are Nokia Lumia devices, which must access the Windows Store – offering more than 200 000 apps – to download apps.

iOS comes on all Apple devices, but the devices themselves come at a high cost – hence it is the smallest of all operating systems in terms of smartphone penetration in South Africa. The communication apps like WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter are compatible with other devices. If your children have iPads, this may be a good excuse to get them iPhones, which allow them to sync apps across devices and match up apps. However, any current iPhone is among the most expensive on the market, so if you want to go this route, consider an older model. It will usually run on the same operating system, but will be much cheaper than the latest one. The Apple app store also has more than a million free apps.

PURCHASING ADVICE

There is now such a wide range of entry level phones available at between R550 and R750 and a lot of intermediate phones between R999 and R2 999.00 that the approach needs to be to decide on a budget and then go looking for a smartphone to match it, but one that you also find aesthetically pleasing and comfortable in your hand.

the list below should be regarded as an introduction to a starting point and is by no means a comprehensive guide.

Under 10 years of age, basic phone

Nokia 105

R200

This is the phone with the longest battery life of any handset on sale in South Africa: up to 35 days. Aside from voice, SMS and calendar, it also has a torch, a talking clock, FM radio and is dust- and splash-resistant. No apps can be loaded.

10 – 12 Years

We recommend:

Alcatel Tribe

R280

- basic access but not broadband, meaning you can't stream video and music through the phone's data connection, but chat apps will work on the device
- a phone that looks like a Blackberry and has a QWERTY keyboard but at a tenth of the price
- WhatsApp facilities so that your child can communicate with their social or extramural groups
- basic social apps such as Twitter and Facebook
- other apps for basic communication such as WhatsApp
- camera
- music with a store and play facility
- is able to record audio
- games
- allows use of a memory card which enables you to download more stuff such as apps, games and photo's
- has a good battery life
- looks like a Blackberry

12 - 15 years

At this stage many children will receive a hand me down from a parent that is likely to be a smartphone. However, if you are making a purchase and you have limited budget, here are some suggestions for entry level smartphones. They are Android phones with all the basic features needed for communication and app use, without a high cost.

Vodacom Kicka R549

Alcatel Pixi R550

Huawei Ascend Y220 R550

Samsung Galaxy Star R599

However, lots of kids in this age group are not happy with entry level phones and parents are indulging their happiness. Here are some suggestions for cost-effective mid-range phones that feel like high-end, but at half to a quarter of the price (sometimes it helps to shop around for the best price):

Nokia Lumia 430 R1150

Sony Xperia E1 (aka the Music Phone) R1800

Huawei Ascend G510 R1999

Sony Xperia V R3 500 - R5 000

16 years+

At this age the smartphone becomes a fashion statement. Teens now see themselves as adults. You may have a war on your hands to give them a cellphone to match the budget as well as their self-image. Unless you are well-off, you are unlikely to be able to afford what they want. You can actually get beautiful looking high-end phones at mid-range prices. Here are some suggestions:

Hawei Ascend P7 R6 999.00

The superior choice in this price range. You get a 5-inch screen, a 13 Megapixel rear camera and an 8 Megapixel front camera designed for selfies – the most powerful front camera on any major brand phone in the world, and the thinnest widely-available smartphone.

Alcatel One Touch Idol Alpha R5 999.00

A great-looking phone with 4.7-inch display and translucent strips at top and bottom, which light up when a call is received. A real head-turner.

Samsung Galaxy S4 Mini R3 800-R5 900

A solid smartphone with solid features, like 4.3-inch display, 8 Megapixel rear camera, 1.9 Megapixel front camera and HD video recording.

HTC Desire 816 R4 999.00

With a 5.5-inch display, this is a big-screen phone, also known as a phablet, which would usually cost twice as much when it carries a big-name brand like HTC

Blackberry Z3 R2 999.00

This is the best value full-featured 5-inch smartphone in South Africa, with the best that BlackBerry has to offer, including longer better life than most rival phones.

We have not included photographs as these can be readily accessed on the following sites which also carry the full specs for each device:

<http://www.gsmarena.com/>

<http://www.phonearena.com/>

SOME GENERAL ADVICE:

Insure the phone if it costs over R1000

Have a cheaper phone for your kids to take to parties and they can leave the expensive one at home

Buy a cover for the phone

Make sure your children understand the terms of use

Click [here](#) to download a cellphone contract you can use with your child so that everyone understands the ground rules.

Activate parental controls or install third party on-device software such as [Virtuenet](#), [NetNanny](#) or [Mobiflock](#).

We hope you have found this information useful.

Kind regards

NIKKI BUSH & ARTHUR GOLDSTUCK

July 2015

If you are interested in further online parenting resources, please click [here](#).

