



Ten rules for your family on mobile phones

No phones at the dinner table

Meal times are not only enjoyable but they can provide us with some lovely learning opportunities about respect, values and what is important to us. They can bring a family together and also provide an opportunity to go over what has been happening in the day.... Not if you are on your phone though, children are acutely aware if parents are checking their phones. When it's equal, it not only sets a good example but makes it easier to enforce the rule.

Don't start your digital day until you and the children have left for school or work

A school day morning is short and frantic and your children benefit emotionally from your attention to ensure a smooth morning.

Be realistic, not obsessive

If you need to check your emails first thing then be disciplined and brief. Equally for teens whose phone checking habits are ingrained, a full morning ban is not always helpful, a slow 'detox' is better.

Talk to them about what they are posting

Parents often wash their hands of what teens do online. Safety of course, is an issue but there are other concerns if you insist. On good manners face to face, ensure your children apply good manners digitally. Ask your children to ask themselves the question, would I want Grandma/or other friends and relatives to see this photo of me before posting it.



Put your own phone down

Of all the rules, this is the most important. When you interact with your children concentrate on them and give them your full attention.

Set time limits

You realise that two hours later your child is still on their phone or tablet. Be clear from the start, agree how long they have got then remind and re-remind them as the time is drawing to an end. That way there are no surprises and no tantrums.

No devices after 7.00/8.00/9.00pm depending on your child's age.

Have some screen free times, if you have younger children do not read the bedtime stories with a phone in your hand. Have some time when no phones are buzzing and it's a chance to talk or to just enjoy time together.

No phones in the bedroom

This rule is essential especially at night. Also once teenagers have a phone beside their beds the temptation to check it is hard to resist.

Be in your child's social networks

Just as we wouldn't routinely leave the house when our children invite their friends around we should not be absent from their cyberspace.

It's the same as us pottering round at home it is reassuring for children to know we are around.

Don't take so many photos

We've acquired the reflex habit of automatically recording everything on our phones. Sometimes it is good to sit back and feel pride in our children.

