

MEDIAWISE[®] NETWORK



Guide to Cell Phones



NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON
MEDIA + THE FAMILY

Media converging in our hands

Looking to the future.

The wired world keeps changing, so don't blink. Twenty years ago the equipment for a mobile telephone had to be lugged around in a suitcase. Now cell phones weigh ounces and fit easily into a pocket. For the first time ever, the number of land phone lines is decreasing while cells keep multiplying. Kids are early adapters to new technology, so it isn't surprising that 77% of American teens now have cell phones.

Media converging in the palm of your hand.

What is media convergence anyway? Media convergence is when the lines separating different forms of media disappear. We already see a lot of this happening – for example, video games are now Internet compatible, cell phones host mini-cameras, and you can watch movies on your iPod. We are going to see media convergence accelerate dramatically in the next few years, creating a world where most forms of media are accessible in a cell phone that can fit in the palm of your hand.

To cell or not to cell?

As with all new technologies, there are benefits. Parents like the idea that their kids can get in touch with them in an emergency or just when they're not in sight. Kids naturally love to be able to chat with friends and keep up with everyone and everything. Despite the benefits, cell phones are also posing new challenges for parents. - high cell phone bills, 'sexting' incidents, TWD (texting while driving) and more. Some kids run up enormous bills, disturb classes with inopportune calls, and use phones to bully other kids. As more forms of media continue to converge in cell phones, perhaps the greatest challenge will be monitoring and keeping track of our kids' media use. Small, hand-held screens make it harder to "watch what your kids watch." That's why it's important to stay ahead of the trends and talk with your kids about what you learned in this guide.

The facts on teens and cell phones

- Cell phones are the #1 form of communication for teens
- 70% of teens talk daily with friends on a cell phone
- 60% of teens send text messages daily
- More than half of kids ages 8 to 12 will have cell phones within the next three years
- Teens with cell phones send 440 texts a week on average, 110 of which are sent in a classroom.

Cell Phone Parent Glossary

Smart Phones

A smart phone is a cell phone with advanced capabilities beyond making phone calls. In many ways it functions as a mini-computer, allowing access to email, Internet, video games, TV, and more.

MP3:

MP3s are essentially compressed electronic music files. You can download MP3 files online using programs like iTunes or Napster. You can also listen to these music files on MP3 players like iPods.

Bluetooth®:

Bluetooth devices allow you to connect and exchange information online via a secure, short-range frequency. Many cell phones have Bluetooth devices, enabling users to send e-mails and interact online with other people within short range. Bluetooth also enables control of and communication between a cell phone and a hands-free headset.

Ring tones:

A ring tone is a customizable sound to indicate incoming calls on cell phones. Modern ring tones range from a standard “phone bell” to full-length songs downloaded from the Internet. Getting the newest popular song in a ring tone can be very important to kids.

Text messaging

Term referring to the exchange of short written messages between cell phones. The word has been extended to include not only written text but video, photos, and sound.

Cyberbullying:

Cyberbullying is similar to bullying, except it’s conducted online. It can mean sending derogatory insults or threats in messages or circulating humiliating information or pictures of a kid among peers. Sometimes it involves demeaning postings on Web sites.

DWT:

Short for “Driving While Texting.”

Sexting:

A text containing a nude or semi-nude photo or other sexually explicit content. Because texting allows for the transmission of images, teens under the age of 18 who ‘sext’ may face a number of legal consequences.

Apps

Apps is an abbreviation for application. An app is a piece of software that you can run on the Internet, on your computer, or on your cell phone.

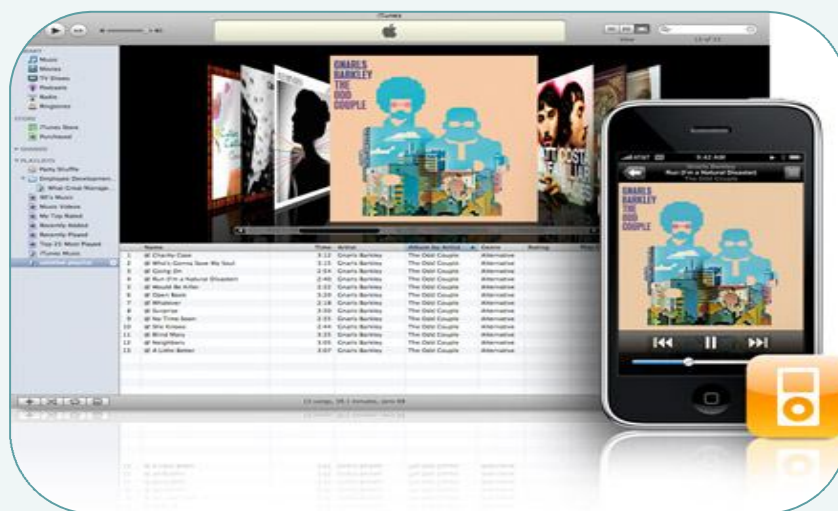
Social networking sites:

Online social networking Web sites like MySpace, Facebook or Xanga are online spaces where kids can create their own profile, add pictures and music, chat with friends, join online groups, and contribute to blogs. Many kids trust their online friends, and post personal information on their social networking pages.

Top 12 Tips for Cell Phones and Kids

1. Choose a cell phone plan with reasonable limits and make sure your child has consequences, financial or otherwise, if limits are exceeded.
2. Review the cell phone bill with your child - making sure the expenses are what you had both planned on.
3. Find out about your child's school policy on cell phone use and support it!
4. Talk about cyber bullying. Ask your kids to let you know if they get harassing text, pictures or phone calls. And, tell them that bullying will not be tolerated.
5. If you choose to subscribe to mobile television, make sure you set limits on screen time just like you would with your family television, and also monitor content.
6. Make sure kids understand no texting or talking while driving - no matter what!
7. Tell your kids not to share their cell phone number online, especially to people they don't know, even if they have been talking with them for a while in a chat room or Instant Messaging.
8. Talk to your kids about 'sexting' and make sure they understand that sexually inappropriate language or pictures are not allowed.
9. Keep cell phone use in balance. Try creating 'cell phone free' zones - perhaps dropping cell phones into a basket before dinner time.
10. Talk to your kids about cell phone manners. While cell phones are great connectors for 'out of sight' people, kids need to learn not to be rude to people sitting right next to them!
11. Set a good example! Parents can be just as absorbed in their blackberries and iPhones as kids can. Model balanced, respectful cell phone use.
12. Make sure that you set meaningful consequences for violations of your family's cell phone rules and that you follow through on them.

Music for your mobile



Many phone companies are launching features where your favorite songs are stored right alongside your contacts. Motorola has even teamed up with the popular iTunes to offer customers access to their tunes through their phones. You can listen through headphones or out loud on the phone's speakers. Right now, most phones can only store up to 100 songs, far less than most MP3 players, and the feature is still expensive. However, we can expect phones to continue to offer more memory for less money – making it easier for kids to plug in to their music on the go.

What to watch out for:

- Buying music online can be expensive – help your kids create a music budget.
- It is easier to “impulse buy” when you can buy music online straight from your cell phone. Talk to your kids about how and when to buy music.
- Ask your kids what they are listening to on their phones. Try to listen to it as well when you can!

Smart Phones and ‘Apps’

Surfing the Web, on your phone

Accessing the Internet has never been easier. Most new generation ‘smart phones’ function as mini-computers, allowing you to access the Internet anytime, anywhere. This means that kids can now access their social networking profiles like Facebook, send e-mails, upload pictures to YouTube and surf the Web from their phones. While it can still be expensive, sometimes slower than traditional Internet access, and difficult to surf the Web on small screen, every year the service is faster, cheaper, and better.

37% of U.S. teen mobile users ages 13-17 access the Internet on their phone.

Source: The Nielson Company

Apps

Apps (short for applications) are wildly popular among smart phone users. Apple introduced its popular App store in 2008 with both free and fee applications - offering a new way to deliver apps directly to the iPhone or iPod touch. The store offers more than 30,000 apps, ranging from tools to help you pick out a great spot for dinner to an application that helps students keep track of homework assignments and projects.

Over 6,000 games are available for download for iPhones and iPod Touch Games, presenting a challenge for parents who want to monitor their kids’ game playing. The content in video game applications are not presently rated by iTunes, making it more important than ever to talk with your kids about what games they are downloading from the Internet.

What to watch out for:

- It can still be very expensive to access the Internet and buy apps – resulting in cell phone bills kids and parents weren’t planning on. If you do allow Internet access on phones, set limits to online time and online purchasing.
- The content in video game applications are not presently rated by iTunes. Make sure to check app content before allowing your kids to download them.
- Constant access to the Internet can be very distracting. Set limits and expectations about use and support your child’s school’s cell phone policy.
- Shared family time has fallen nearly 30% since 2006 and a recent report indicates that there has been a 40% increase in family members feeling ignored because of other family members’ Internet use. Apps and smartphones can be fun, but be sure that real-life relationships and activities are a family priority.

Watching TV and video on the go

TV anywhere, anytime

Leaders in the industry, including Sprint TV and MobiTV, are bringing music videos, news, weather, and sitcoms to a phone near you. For a monthly subscription fee, mobile users get access to around 30 channels depending upon your phone. The service is not too expensive, ringing in around ten dollars a month, but without a high speed connection some users still experience dropped signals, long buffering time, or highly pixilated pictures. We can expect to see clear, live TV shows a standard feature on cell phones within a few years.

Mobile video

Teens today are increasingly watching video on their phones. Until recently, mobile video was only available through costly phones and premium plans. Not anymore. Mobile video is increasingly available on a broad range of phones and plans, so teens are tuning in.

18% of U.S. teens with mobile phones watch some sort of video content on their phones.

Source: The Nielson Company

What to watch out for:

- We know that too much screen time isn't good for kids. Being able to access TV and video anywhere, anytime only increases the number of possible hours kids can be glued to screens instead of plugged into school, family, or friends.
- It's harder to monitor the shows and videos kids watch when they are tuning in to small, personal hand-held devices.
- Television and video can be very distracting – it's hard for teachers to compete with football games broadcast live or the latest music video.



The most popular video content for teens is "music." 54% of teen mobile video users watch music videos on their phones.

Source: The Nielson Company

Texting & ‘Sexting’

A text messaging generation.

What do the words PAW or LOL mean to you? If you know that the first translates to “Parents Are Watching” and the second to “Laughing Our Loud,” you probably have a text messaging kid. Texting is probably one of the most mainstream cell phone activities among young people and more than 73 percent of teens use it regularly. For many kids, text messaging is their main way to make and connect with friends. They use it to chat, gossip, make plans, get help on homework, tell jokes, complain, make dates, and break up.



Recently, a 14-year old girl with a 500 text messages a day texting habit won \$50,000 at a texting competition spearheaded by cell phone company L.G. While most kids won't win a prize like this for their thumb dexterity, texting is certainly a major mode of communication for kids today.

More than half of teen mobile subscribers say they prefer texting to calling.

Source: The Nielson Company

‘Sexting’

Sending a text containing a nude or sexually explicit photo (sexting) is a surprisingly common practice among young people. It's important for young people to know that these texts could be sent around the world in a minute, causing real harm and possibly even breaking the law. Recent data shows that 1 in 5 youth ‘sext’ despite the risks. While some argue that ‘sexting’ is a modern day variation of “spin the bottle or doctor,” it is important to recognize that in a media-saturated world where the lines between public and private are blurred, ‘sexting’ can have serious long term consequences for teens.

Five tips for parents about teens and ‘sexting’

1. Make sure your teen understands that she/he loses all control of messages or photos once they hit the send button.
2. Remind your teen that potential employers or college admissions officers could end up seeing sexting messages or photos.
3. Be clear with your teen that your ground rules for Internet behavior do not permit out sexting.
4. Be clear that there are consequence for sexting - possibly loss of cellphone for a period of time.
5. Use cell phone incidents as an opportunity to communicate with your teen about healthy sexuality and relationships.

Driving While Texting

Is your teen guilty of DWT?

According to the Centers for Disease Control, motor vehicle crashes are responsible for more than one in three teen deaths, the leading cause of death for teens in the U.S. In 2005, they recorded 12 teens died every day from injuries sustained in an accident. Teens also have the lowest rate of seat belt use.

While speeding and alcohol are clearly lead factors, it's difficult to ignore the role that cell phone use plays in driving safety. In a recent survey, 60% of young people age 16-19 reported driving while text messaging. There is a growing body of research that shows that texting while driving causes serious distraction — not just because it can take the hands off the wheel and eyes off the road, but also because drivers are not focusing on the task at hand. Importantly, it is not only texting that is dangerous while driving, recent research shows that even when using hands-free devices drivers are four times more likely to get in a crash than those not engaged in virtual conversation.

Mixing cell phones and driving can become dangerous or even deadly very quickly. Seven states now have laws on the books prohibiting any person from sending text messages while operating a vehicle. Talk with your teen and lay clear ground rules for cell phone use. At the top of the list should be: No talking or texting on a cell phone while driving. Make sure your teen knows the consequence - If they break the rule: No cellphone and no car. It's your teen's life at stake.

Five tips for parents about teens and DWT

1. Make sure your teen understands your family's rules about driving and cell phone use.
2. If you call your child and they pick up while they are driving. Ask them to either pull over to talk to you or end the call.
3. Find out the laws in your state regarding teenage driving and cell phone use.
4. Be clear that there are consequence for DWT - possibly loss of cell phone or car privileges for a period of time.
5. Talk with you kids about why DWT is not okay. Nurturing a culture shift where DWT is viewed as un-cool and dangerous will go a long way towards creating safer roads.

Cell Phone Ethics

Do cell phones facilitate cheating?

According to a recent survey by Common Sense Media, more than 1/3 of teens with cell phones admit to cheating at least once with them. Half of teens admitted to some sort of cheating involving the Internet. For example, searching online for a quiz answer or plagiarizing from papers online. What's perhaps even more worrisome, is that many teens did not consider this a serious offense, suggesting that teens have normalized electronic cheating as something that 'isn't a big deal.'

More than 1/3 of teens with cell phones admit to cheating at least once with them.

Source: Common Sense Media

Parents aren't in the loop

This same survey shows that while parents acknowledge that cheating is a widespread problem in schools, few believe that *their* child would commit such an act. It's time for parents to confront the reality that if nearly half of all kids admit to cheating using the Internet - we need to get serious about ensuring that kids understand the consequences of this behavior. Kids today live in a world where all sorts of information is at their fingertips and content is created, shared, and downloaded in ways that were unimaginable a decade ago. However, ensuring that kids have the capacity to navigate this digital world fairly and responsibly is critical to their academic and success.

Five tips for talking with kids about digital cheating

1. Familiarize yourself with the media your kids are using.
2. Don't assume that your kids understand how to use the Internet responsibly for their school work. Help them understand the difference between cheating and good, responsible Internet research.
3. Create opportunities for screen-free study sessions, so that kids can practice studying and recalling information without electronic aides.
4. Figure out your child's school policy on cell phone use and support it.
5. Make sure your kids understand that there is zero tolerance for academic misconduct like cheating.

Other FREE MediaWise Resources



[Read Dr. Dave's Op-Ed on 'sexting'](#)

Dr. Dave responds to the national panic on 'sexting.' [Op-ed.](#)

[Having trouble reducing TV time? Try these tips.](#)

Start bringing media use back into balance with these twelve quick tips to tame the tube [Twelve Tips.](#)

[Combat the summer surge in screen time!](#)

There are tons of great summer activities for kids. But there are also many more hours in the day to fill up - and too many kids turn towards electronic screens for entertainment. Keep media use in balance this summer with the MediaWise Summer Guide. [Guide.](#)

[Head off issues like 'cyberbullying' or 'sexting' with an Internet Respect Plan!](#)

The Internet can be a great source of information and entertainment but be sure to get off to a good start by establishing rules and expectations. [Respect Plan.](#)

[Do you have a blackberry? Read Dr. Dave's blog](#)

A few months ago I bought my newest tech toy, a Blackberry... [Read full blog.](#)