

New Device Checklist



Are you planning to give your child a new smartphone, tablet, game console, or other device? Follow this checklist to help you and your child use the new gadget safely from day one.

1. Determine if your child is ready for a new device.

This decision is often less about your child's age and more about their maturity and ability to use technology responsibly.

- Ask yourself, how does my child interact with the technology they already have?
 - Do they:
 - Demonstrate a reasonable amount of self-control when using the device?
 - Know when to put it away to focus on other tasks?
 - Come to me if they experience a problem or a conflict so we can work it out together?
- Also consider how your child follows other household rules—tech-related or not.
 - Do they:
 - Follow these rules?
 - Show responsibility when handling the tasks they've been given?

2. Identify where the device came from.

Is this a brand-new device or a hand-me-down from someone in the family?

- If it's a hand-me-down, be sure to reset it to factory settings. This ensures your child won't have access to content, apps, or platforms that may be inappropriate for their age or maturity level.

3. Learn about the device.

Maybe you're giving your child a device you're already familiar with—like a smartphone. Or perhaps it's a new device neither of you has used before.

- If this device is unfamiliar to both you and your child, take the time to learn what the device can do and how your child might use it.
 - Even if you have prior experience with the device, remember that a child's experience will be different from an adult's.
- Perhaps your child has a newer or older version of the device than you do. If that's the case, look into the key differences and how those might affect their experience.

4. Set up parental controls.

Most devices have parental controls that can help manage screen time, communication limits, and activity monitoring.

- Review the parental control options available and enable the ones that align with your family's needs and your child's maturity level.
- As your child grows and matures, reassess the controls you've set and make changes that reflect your child's needs.

5. Establish household rules

Before handing over the device, sit down with your child to discuss expectations. This sets a foundation for healthy digital habits.

- We recommend setting rules such as:
 - No devices in the bedroom
 - Ask before downloading a new app

6. Sign an online safety agreement.

One of the most important steps in giving your child a new device is making sure you're both aligned on the rules and expectations.

- Talk with your child—not at them, and come to a mutual agreement about how the device will be used.
- Examples of online safety agreement statements are:
 - “I agree not to use the device between __:__ AM and __:__ PM,”
 - “I agree to be kind and respectful to anyone I interact with online.”
 - Check out FOSI’s online safety agreement for teens and for children 13 and under, which are open-end and customizable to fit your family’s needs.

7. Talk about online safety often.

Your job isn’t done once your child has the device in hand.

- Talk about online safety often. Your job isn’t done once your child has the device in hand.
 - Continue having regular conversations about how they use the device.
 - Make it clear that you are a resource and a supportive space for them if something happens that makes them feel uncomfortable.
 - If you’ve gifted your kid a device that comes with access to social media or public content of any kind, talk with them about building a responsible digital footprint. FOSI’s resources can help:
 - **Digital Reputation Checklist** – gives helpful guidance on how to establish a positive online presence
 - **Cyberethics Checklist** - provides kids and families with an online code of conduct.

Want to dive deeper into kids’ and parents’ understanding of online safety? Check out our Online Safety Survey white paper to learn more about the research that inspired this resource.