



Cell Phone Safety Tips from ConnectSafely.org

Mobile safety in general. Just as in chat rooms and social sites, kids need to think about who they text and talk with. They should never text/talk about sex with strangers. Phones should only be used to communicate with people they know in the real world.

Bullying by phone. Since young people's social lives increasingly fold in cell phones as well as the Web, cyberbullying and harassment have gone mobile too. Talk with your kids about how the same manners and ethics you've always taught them apply on phones and the Web as in "real life."

Mobile social networking. Many social sites have a feature that allows users to check their profiles and post comments from their phones. That means some teens can do social networking literally anywhere, in which case any filter you may have installed on a home computer does nothing to block social networking. Talk with your teens about where they're accessing their profiles or blogs from and whether they're using the same good sense about how they're social networking on their phones.

Social mapping. More and more cell phones have GPS technology installed, which means teens who have these phones can pinpoint their friends' physical location - or be pinpointed by their friends. Talk with your kids about using such technology and advise them to use it only with friends they know in person.

Media-sharing by phone. Most mobile phones we use today have cameras, some videocams - and teens love to share media with friends on all types of mobile devices. There is both a personal-reputation and -safety aspect to this. Talk with your teens about never letting other people photograph or film them in embarrassing or inappropriate situations (and vice versa). They need to understand their own and others' privacy rights in sharing photos and videos via cell phones.

'Smart phones.' We've already been over many smart- or 3G-phone features above, but remember they usually include the Web. That means more and more people can access all that the Web offers, appropriate or not, on their phones as well as computers. Mobile carriers are beginning to offer filtering for the content available on their services, but they have no control over what's on the Web. Parents of younger kids might want to consider turning off Web access and turning on filtering if they're concerned about access to adult content.

Text messaging costs. On some mobile services, a single text message can cost 15 cents to send and a couple of cents to receive. Check to see if your carrier has flat-rate texting that can be included in your child's or family's service plan; otherwise your teens could be using up their entire college fund.