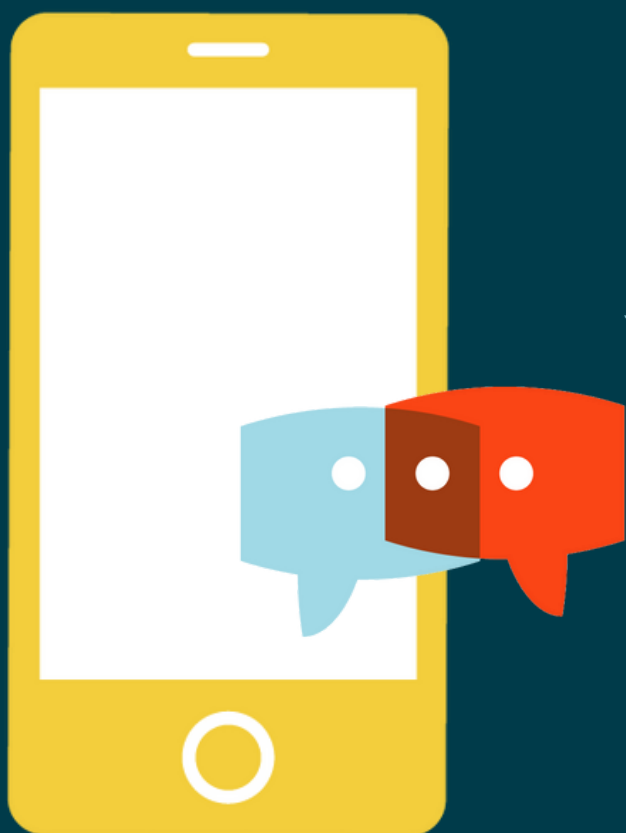# FIRST DEVICE GUIDE

Spark & Stitch Institute

At what age should children get their first device?

Despite strong opinions on all sides, there isn't hidden research somewhere that tells us exactly when to introduce personal devices to our kids. Most experts are reluctant to pinpoint a specific age. That's because each young person and family system has unique needs, strengths, and vulnerabilities.

That said, there are plenty of compelling reasons to avoid handing a fully loaded smartphone to kids and wishing them luck. Design features created for adults are at odds with the developmental needs and sensitivities of kids and younger teens. This is especially true when phones become a portal to social media. We do have evidence that delaying social media is likely beneficial to your child's mental health.

Thinking of getting your child a device?
Make a PLAN.

This framework helps us move away from the idea that allowing any amount of technology is somehow "failing" as a parent. It also helps us slow down and think twice before delivering more technology than is healthy or needed.

Using this framework, you might talk with your kids' close friends to create ways for them to stay connected using family devices. You might decide that a simple watch or basic phone is "just enough" technology to meet our kids' need for independence. You might try a phone with parental controls.
As your kid grows, their needs will change. Yours will too. Revisit this guide over time as you re-make your PLAN.

Purpose
Low tech
Anticipate / Agreements
Navigate

What is the PURPOSE of the device?

For example, to call caregivers, act as a "land line," connect with friends, etc...

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Has this need PERSISTED over time?

Is this a passing desire/request or a persistent and agreed-upon need?

_____

PURPOSE

What is the LOWEST tech way to fulfill this purpose for now?

Think in terms of specific features, and consider moving away from all-or-nothing bundles when it comes to personal devices. Start slow and you can always expand over time. Mark the least number of features that meet your purpose.

- [ ] Parents' device or family device
- [ ] Personal device with:
    - [ ] Emergency calling
    - [ ] Texting approved contacts
    - [ ] Texting anyone
    - [ ] Games
    - [ ] Maps/GPS
    - [ ] Music
    - [ ] Photos
    - [ ] Apps
    - [ ] Internet
    - [ ] Social Media
    - [ ] Other _____

LOW TECH

Are we prepared?

What have I observed in my child that convinces me that they are ready for these features?

For example, they are tracking their belongings and demonstrating empathy with friends.

_____

Does this device have any features that are going to set my kid up to struggle?

For example, apps that encourage constant use or stranger contact.

_____

_____

How will I manage these challenges technically?

For example, "I will use parental controls and privacy settings."

_____

_____

How will I help my child build skills to handle these challenges?

For example, "We will talk about the complicated social dynamics in group chats."

_____

_____

ANTICIPATE

Is my family willing to create media agreements?

Every new device is an opportunity to communicate about (click on links for more resources):

Family Media Agreements

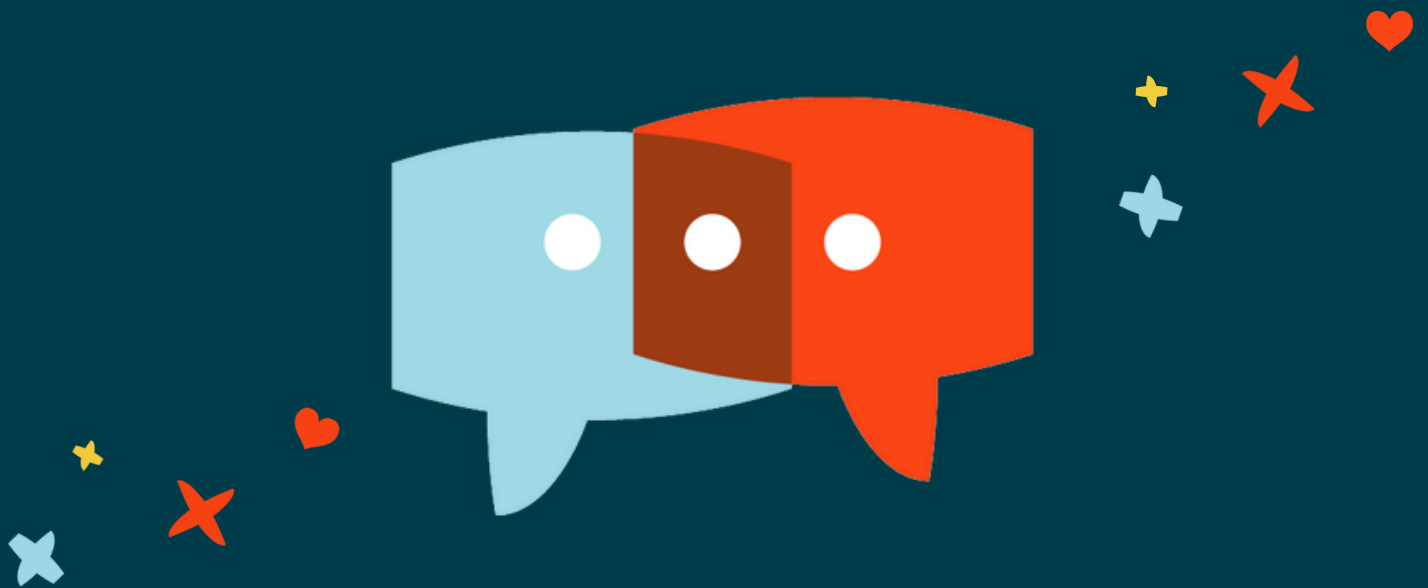**Digital Dilemmas**

Harmful Content

Modeling

Digital Strengths

Monitoring

AGREEMENTS

Are we ready to navigate this new terrain together?

New devices don't just change our kids' lives. They change our lives too. Each of these choices invite new conversations, new parenting skills, and new mindsets. No matter what choices we make, our kids will rely on our modeling and coaching as their digital worlds expand. They can't navigate this alone. We can all agree on that.

NAVIGATE