

There are several GPS and smartwatches designed for kids that do not require a smartphone connection to function. These watches often provide location tracking, communication features, and even educational tools without the need for pairing with a cell phone. Here are a few options and categories of devices available:

1. Standalone GPS Watches

These watches typically come with their own SIM card for GPS tracking and basic communication features, allowing parents to monitor their children without the need for the child to have a cell phone.

- **Jiobit Smart Tag**
 - While not a watch, Jiobit is a GPS tracker that attaches to a child's clothing or backpack.
 - It allows parents to track their child's location through a dedicated app.
 - No smartphone required for the child, just the app on the parent's phone.
- **AngelSense GPS Tracker Watch**
 - Designed specifically for children with special needs.
 - Features real-time GPS tracking and two-way voice communication.
 - Parents can monitor their child's location and even listen in on the environment for added safety.
- **TickTalk 4**
 - Combines GPS, two-way video calling, and messaging without requiring the child to have a smartphone.
 - The watch has its own SIM card and works as an independent device.
 - Parents can track the watch's location using the app.

2. Non-Smartphone Wi-Fi or Bluetooth Enabled Watches

These devices don't require a cell phone for GPS or communication but rely on Wi-Fi or Bluetooth for specific features.

- **Garmin Bounce**
 - A kids' smartwatch with GPS, messaging, and fitness features.
 - It doesn't require a smartphone for the child, but parents need the Garmin app for location tracking.
 - Includes safety features like real-time tracking and activity monitoring.
- **Xplora X5 Play**
 - Offers GPS tracking, two-way calls, and step tracking, making it both a fitness and safety watch.
 - It includes a SIM card for connectivity but does not require a smartphone for the child.
 - Parents can track the child's location and communicate through the watch using the Xplora app.

3. Wearable Cellular Watches/ Devices with Limited Calling Features

These devices may offer limited calling or texting features and are aimed at providing basic communication without requiring a full-fledged smartphone. Many cellular service providers offer watches with safety features and limited calling that combines communication, safety, and fitness. It is aimed at younger children who don't need a full smartphone but still require basic communication capabilities and safety features.

Key Features:

- **Two-Way Calling and Messaging**
 - Allows kids to make and receive phone calls from a pre-approved list of contacts (up to a certain number of people). This feature helps parents control who their child can communicate with.
 - The watch also supports text messaging with preset messages or voice notes, enabling simple and controlled communication.
- **GPS Location Tracking**
 - One of the key features is real-time GPS tracking. Parents can see the child's location using an app, and the watch can send location updates throughout the day.
 - Parents can also set up **geofencing** (safe zones) that send notifications if the child leaves a designated area.
- **SOS Button**
 - Most watches include an emergency SOS button that the child can press to quickly contact a parent or other designated guardian in case of emergencies.
- **Fitness and Activity Tracking**
 - Many of these watches also track steps and offer basic fitness tracking to encourage physical activity. Kids can see their progress, and some models offer fun challenges to motivate them to stay active.
- **Water-Resistant Design**
 - The watch is water-resistant, so it can handle splashes and light rain, though it's not meant for swimming or full submersion.
- **Parental Controls**
 - Parents can manage all aspects of the watch using the associated app. This includes setting up contacts, viewing location history, and managing settings like call limits and activity tracking.
- **Network Connection**
 - All of these watches require a **Wireless subscription** (Verizon, Tmobile, AT&T are the most popular) since they work on a cellular network. The child does not need a smartphone, but the watch must have a cellular plan to function for calls, messages, and GPS tracking.

Things to Consider:

- **Battery life:** Make sure to choose a watch with good battery life, especially if using GPS tracking or communication features.
- **Durability:** For kids, a durable and water resistant watch is important to ensure it can withstand daily wear and tear.
- **Subscription Costs:** Many GPS and communication features on standalone devices may require a subscription plan for connectivity, so factor that into your decision.

When to Get a Smartphone:

According to surveys from organizations like Common Sense Media, the average age for children in the U.S. to get their first smartphone is around **10 to 12 years old**.

Many experts suggest waiting until **middle school or later** (around 12-14 years old), when children have developed better self-regulation skills, decision-making abilities, and are more capable of handling social pressures.

Many experts, including those from the AAP and child development specialists, suggest that the **best time** for introducing a smartphone depends on the child's maturity, the family's needs, and a carefully managed approach to digital responsibility. Generally:

- **Before 12 years old:** Limited to no smartphone access unless absolutely necessary.
- **12-14 years old:** Can be introduced with strict parental controls and guidelines.
- **15 and older:** More autonomy can be allowed, but digital literacy and boundaries remain crucial.

In conclusion, while there is no magic number, research consistently shows that **waiting until children are at least in their early teens** (12-14) before giving them a smartphone may offer the best balance of readiness and reduced risks.