

(You can download this as a Word document and edit as you see fit! File -> Download -> then choose your format. If these instructions are useful, consider supporting us by ordering Chris' debut book, [5 Habits of the Tech-Ready Family](#). Thank you!)

One mom's brilliant smartphone instructions to her daughter.

Dear _____, here's a phone. And a few thoughts.

1. **You are my amazing child.** I can't even express in words how important, valuable, and significant you are to me. My love for you is limitless! And now I'm putting millions of people and places into your life, which makes me nervous. *Not because I don't trust you*, but because I don't trust any of them. Let's take this journey together. Because I'd be a horrible parent if I didn't ☺
2. **It's a supercomputer. And it belongs to me.** You deserve *some* privacy, but nothing is secret in the digital age, and so we will be involved. That means we'll use monitoring software, I'm going to pick up the phone, ask you about it, and I may look around. This phone is an amazing privilege, not a right, and we have purchased it for you to use.
3. **We will always know the passcode.** Never change it without permission, or the phone goes away. No secrets. One-on-one with technology, whether you're 14 or 40, the Internet eventually wins. *(If older, you might try this)* This is why you, your dad, and I all use the *same* passcode. There's nothing to hide.

4. **If we call you, answer it!** Remember, it's a phone, and we are calling for a reason. You should probably always pick up for Grandma, too.
5. **Bedtime and sleep are so important.** Remember, at night, everyone makes slightly worse decisions. Turn the phone into us at _____ on school nights. And at _____ on the weekends. You can have it back in the morning. I'll make sure it's charged and ready.
6. **Our thoughts about school:** it may go to school with you, but it stays off bell-to-bell and is put away in your bag or locker. Talking face-to-face is a valuable life skill. It will serve you well now and in the future.
7. **If it breaks or disappears,** you are at least partially responsible for the replacement costs or repairs.
8. **Do not use this technology to hurt, harm, or harass another human being.** Avoid conversations that are unkind to others. If you wouldn't say it to their face, then never say it with your thumbs. And for tough situations, just come to us. We will *always* listen. We won't freak out. We are your biggest fan.
9. **Your body is precious and private.** People might ask for photos. And you might feel like sending them (that's your "feeling brain" wanting to be noticed). Don't, don't, don't. Keep your body precious and private. Once sent, it is never erased. You are priceless. (*note - this is where you might insert words about [sextortion](#)*)
10. **Good friends are essential.** Always try to talk to them in person. But yes, you can exchange numbers with them. For friends without a device, keep them in the loop as much as possible.
11. **No porn, violence, or harmful images or videos.** But, if you see something and have questions, let us know. This stuff is everywhere and it's like a drug. You know this because we've talked to you about it for years.

12. **Social media:** not yet. Let's keep talking about it. And you know the reasons why:
 1. It's the wild west. Zero accountability.
 2. The companies that created it care more about money than you.
13. **Family code:** if you're EVER in trouble ANYWHERE and ANYTIME, text me _____ and we'll be there immediately.
14. **Family first:** whether it's the parents or the kids, nothing gets in the way of our family's balance, safety, and well-being. You have permission to call us out if we're out of balance, too! Just like we'll do that for you.

If you're unsure how to choose a first phone for your family, we've written a global guide for making this important decision ([here](#)).