

[included with parent letter]



Cell phone Safety Tips

Cellphones are increasingly full-blown handheld computers, and everything that can be done on the Web via computer – photo-sharing, Web browsing, game playing, tune-swapping, real-time text chat, and (oh yeah) talking – can be done on a phone. Here are some basic ideas for keeping mobile phone use safe and constructive:

Smart socializing. Use the same good sense about what you post from your phone as from a computer. Once they're posted, text, photos, and video are tough to take back, can be copied and pasted elsewhere, and are up there pretty much forever. Think about the people in them (including you!). Reputations are at stake – even more so if racy photos are involved. Just best not to go there.

Phones are personal. Letting other people use your phone when you're not around is like letting them have the password to your social network profile. They can impersonate you. Which means they can play tricks on you that could really become a problem. It's a very good idea to lock your phone when you're not using it.

Bullying by phone. Because people socialize on cellphones as much as online, cyberbullying can be mobile too. Treat people on phones and the Web the way you would in person, and the risk of being bullied goes down. Be aware, too, of people randomly taking pictures at parties, in locker rooms, etc. – you may not want to be tagged in their social-network photo albums!

Sexting: The vast majority of kids – [99%](#) – are smart and don't take, send, or post or even store nude photos of themselves or peers on their phones. People who do so can be charged with production, distribution, or possession of child pornography, a serious crime. They can also be subjected to jokes, bullying, blackmail, expulsion from school, loss of a job, etc. and the images can circulate forever. Just don't go there.

The value of “presence.” If you do a lot of texting, consider the impact that being “elsewhere” might be having on the people around you. Your presence during meals, at parties, in the car, etc. is not only polite, it’s a sign of respect and appreciated.

Down time is good. Constant texting and talking can affect sleep, concentration, school, and other things that deserve your thought and focus. You need your sleep and *real* friends understand there are times you just need to turn off the phone – harassment can happen between midnight and morning too.

Social mapping. Most cellphones now have GPS technology and there are a growing number of services that allow friends to pinpoint each other’s physical location. If you use such a service, do so only with friends you know in person, and get to know the service’s privacy features!

No texting while driving! Research shows that texting while driving can *significantly* increase the risk of a crash or near-crash situation. Silence your phone in the car, pull over if you need to use it, and of course follow Illinois’ law which permits only hands-free cell phones while driving, and prohibits texting while driving.

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Top 10 Safety Tips for Video-Sharing

- 1. Tough to take back.** Whatever you post is basically permanent. Even if you later delete it, there is a chance that it has been copied, forwarded or reposted. And there are Web archives that hang on to content even after it has been taken down.
- 2. What the background reveals.** Think about what's in the scene you're recording: posters on your wall, photos on a shelf, school or team t-shirts people are wearing, address signs in front of a house or car license-plate numbers all can reveal your identity or location. What you say during recording can too.
- 3. 'You are what you wear.'** It's an old maxim with new meaning in online video. Think about what your appearance "says" about you. Would you feel comfortable showing this video to your boss or potential employer, a relative or your future mother- or father-in-law?
- 4. Respecting others' privacy.** Be respectful of the privacy rights of people in your video. If taping in a public place, be sure to ask permission before including bystanders, and never take video of children without their parents' permission.
- 5. Everybody's a videographer.** Don't think someone needs a videocam to record video. Most cell phones and still cameras are also now video recorders. Be aware that when people take out a cell phone, they could be using it as a camera or camcorder.
- 6. Be a good citizen.** It's your right to express your point of view and even make fun of public officials or policies, but don't be mean or nasty, especially when it comes to people who aren't in the public eye. You can be held legally responsible if you slander, libel or defame someone.
- 7. Respect terms of use.** Most video sites have terms of service that you must adhere to. Most of them prohibit sexually explicit content, gratuitous violence, and videos that are harassing,

defamatory, obscene, libelous, hateful, or violating other people's privacy. Most responsible sites report videos depicting child exploitation and threatening or illegal acts.

8. Respect copyrights. All reputable video-sharing sites prohibit the unauthorized use of copyrighted material. Of course that means that you can't rip-off segments from TV shows or movies. But it also means: Think about the music tracks you use in videos.

9. Talk with kids about video bullying. Creating a video that makes fun of or ridicules another person can be extremely hurtful. This and other forms of cyberbullying are a growing problem on the Internet which affects many children and teens.

10. Kids' Web video viewing. As with all media, parental discretion is not only advised - it's a necessary part of parenting. Even though most of the major sites prohibit pornography and gratuitous violence, there are videos that are not suitable for younger children and there are some sites that do permit video that may be inappropriate for children or teens.

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