Unlocking their First Smartphone or Watch

How can we prepare ourselves and our children?

At what **age** should I give my child their first smartphone or watch?

Based on MOH's Guidance on Screen use in Children, parents should not give children mobile devices with unrestricted access to internet and applications. Parents can **delay the provision of smartphone and smartwatches** to their children.

Consider these questions:

Are they ready?	Can your child: • keep track of their belongings independently? • handle their own responsibilities without constant reminders? • obey rules and guidelines set in place? • differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate content?
Are you and your family ready?	Can you be a good role model for your child, and establish and enforce rules with your child's smartphone usage, including monitoring apps, screen time and internet use?

If you answer 'no' to any of these questions, it is wise to wait until your child is older – **ideally when your child is in secondary school**. Children who are already facing challenges (such as low self-esteem, poor self-control, bullying, or high stress) are more vulnerable to problematic screen use.

go.gov.sg/pfw-screen-use-guidance

#18 **Resources** from MOH – Guidance on Screen Use in Children are available at the end of the presentation.

[Source: Adapted from Parenting for Wellness Website – Module 3A (i)]

How do I **prepare** my child for their first smartphone or watch?

If you determine that you and your child are ready...

Tips	Conversation starters
Reflect on safe and responsible smartphone use	"How will you show me you will use your smartphone responsibly, respectfully, and safely?"
Co-create a family screen use plan	"Let's come up with a set of family rules on how we should use our smartphones." "Let's think about what should happen if anyone breaks any of the rules."
Include the setting of Parental Controls in your conversations	"The online space can be dangerous, and we would like to keep you safe. These parental controls that we put in will help to protect you. Let's set a date in 6 months' time to see if we should adjust the controls."

If you think you and your child might not be ready yet,

here are some alternatives:
- Basic phones/Smartwatches offering calling and texting functions without internet access or apps (please check school's policies on usage in schools)
- Set a date/age to review your child's readiness for a smartphone/watch.

How do I **monitor** my child's online activities and keep them safe?

#8 **Resources** on <u>considerations for giving your child their first smartphone, parental controls, and in-app safety features</u> are available at the end of the presentation.

[Source: Adapted from Positive Use Guide]

When you decide that your child is ready to own a phone, it's important to **provide structure and support** and not simply hand over the device. Experts recommend that parents:

- build on having a warm relationship with their child,
- set and communicate limits regarding phone use,
- pair rules with active supervision, and
- have regular conversations about your child's phone use.

In addition to these strategies, **take time to set up parental controls** on your child's device. Most phones allow you to:

Limit usage times	Control what time of the day and for how long the phone can be used.
Restrict content	Block access to content that is not age appropriate.
Manage activities	Allow only certain games or apps to be used, decide who can be added as friends, and determine whether private messaging is allowed.
Safeguard against unwanted spending	Restrict app store and in-app purchases.

It's important that you **actively monitor and discuss these controls** — especially at the beginning.

How do I **prepare** my child for their first smartphone or watch?

Your child's smart use of their phone starts with you

#9 **Watch** this video to discover how to have conversations with your child about their first smartphone/watch.
Their First Phone: A Big Call for Parents

Link to video: https://go.gov.sg/video-firstphone