

Best Practices for Smartphone-Role Modeling as an Adult

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As a parent, your smartphone habits set the tone for your household. If you want your kids to wait until they're 16 for their first phone, **leading by example** is one of the most powerful things you can do. These tips will help you build a **healthy, balanced relationship with technology**, showing your children that **phones are tools, not distractions**.

1. Silence the Noise

Smartphones are designed to grab our attention with constant **dings, flashes, and badges**. Take control by **turning off non-essential notifications**—this signals to your kids that being present matters more than reacting to every alert. Go to **Settings > Notifications** and disable banners, badges, and pop-ups for everything except **calls and essential messages**.

2. Go Grayscale

Research shows that **removing color from your phone makes it less addictive**. By switching your screen to grayscale, you make it visually less appealing—something your kids will notice. Try it for a week: **Settings > Accessibility > Display & Text Size > Color Filters > Grayscale**.

3. Keep It Minimal

The fewer apps on your phone, the easier it is to stay intentional. **Delete non-essential apps** like social media, news, and games. Keep only what you truly need and move everything else **off your home screen**. Show your kids that a phone **isn't for mindless scrolling**—it's a tool for important tasks.

4. Unplug Together for 24 Hours

A full day **without screens** creates space for deeper connection. Make a **weekly tech-free day** a family tradition—whether it's a **game night, a hike, or just relaxed time together**. Your kids will see that life offline is just as fun, if not more so.

5. Make Screen Time Shared Time

With screens everywhere, it's tempting for everyone to watch their own shows or play separate games. Instead, **prioritize shared experiences—a weekly family movie night** or playing a video game together fosters connection. Use **Common Sense Media** to find discussion prompts after watching something together.

6. Use a Phone as a Last Resort

Be mindful of **how often you reach for your phone**. Instead of using it as a clock, invest in a **watch and an alarm clock**. Read **physical books** instead of e-books, and subscribe to print newspapers or magazines. Your habits shape your child's perspective on what's truly essential.

7. Encourage Real-World Learning

It's easy to **Google everything**, but learning is more memorable when it comes from deeper exploration. Encourage your kids to **look up facts in books, research projects offline, and engage in discussions**. Consider getting an **encyclopedia set**—it's a great way to make learning a shared, screen-free activity.

8. Remove Screens from the Everyday

Phones don't have to be a constant presence in **waiting rooms, car rides, or grocery stores**. Instead of handing over a screen, engage your kids—**ask for their help in the store, encourage them to watch their sibling's game, or let them experience boredom** (which fuels creativity).

9. Create a Culture of Creativity

Encourage **creation over consumption**. Have **art supplies, board games, books, puzzles, and musical instruments** easily accessible at home. When kids see you **choosing hands-on activities over endless scrolling**, they'll follow your lead.

10. Keep Tech Out of Sight

Phones are **less tempting when they're not in view**. **Designate a drawer or charging station** where everyone—including you—puts devices away when not in use. Set a

bedtime tech curfew for the whole household (e.g., 9 p.m. – 7 a.m.), and keep **phones out of bedrooms**.

11. Make Mealtimes Device-Free

Dinner time is for **conversation, not screens**. Studies show that **even the presence of a phone reduces the quality of interactions**. Lead by example—keep your phone **off the table** and **enforce device-free meals at home and in restaurants**.

12. Turn Car Rides into Connection Time

Car rides are **built-in moments for conversation**, but phones can easily take over. Make your car a **phone-free zone**—for both you and your kids. This simple rule fosters **more meaningful discussions** and prevents mindless scrolling from becoming a habit.

By practicing **mindful phone use**, you're not just setting rules—you're **modeling the behavior** you want your kids to adopt. The goal isn't to eliminate technology but to **show your children how to use it intentionally, with balance and purpose**.

Start small, stay consistent, and create a home where screens serve you—not the other way around.