

**The Post Rock Connection**  
**Post Rock Extension District #1 Family and Consumer Sciences Column**  
**Month of January 2026**  
**By Jamie Rathbun, Family and Community Wellness Agent**

**Your Kid's First Phone**

The Christmas holiday has come and gone, and if, like me, you have pre-teen at home, the #1 item on their wish list was likely their very own cell phone. Did their wish come true? It did at our home. My third child will be turning 13 this month, and in following with tradition of his older siblings, he now has his own cell phone. I've been through this before and like to think that my husband and I set some pretty good ground rules for our teens and phones. It can be stressful giving your child access to the world at their fingertips, but it doesn't have to be. The Federal Communications Commission has some tips (some of which I am adding to kid #3's list of "new cell phone user" rules).

*Don't Go Overboard*

Kids will be kids, and they will likely break or lose whatever phone they get. The main purpose for getting them a phone is to stay connected. Focus on a device that keeps you connected and is capable of running an operating system that receives security updates. You might even consider a screen-free phone as your child's first device.

*Do Your Homework*

There is no shortage of "Best First Phones for Kids" list available via a simple web search. Do some online research, keeping your priorities in mind. Talk with other parents and compare notes.

Additional resources for first-phone decisions are available at the non-profit [ConnectSafely.org](http://ConnectSafely.org). Check out their Family Tech webpage for the latest information.

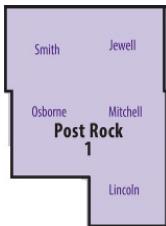
*Responsible Ownership*

While shopping for the right phone, spend some time discussing protection – your child’s and their device’s.

- Compile a list of phone numbers belonging to family members, friends, your child’s school, and other contacts you can rely on. Share the list with your son or daughter and advise them **not to** answer their phone unless a call is from a known “safe” contact.
- Explore your phone company’s options for call blocking and teach your child about robocalls, robotexts, and spoofing scams.
- Discuss scam warning signs such as voice recordings, or strangers asking for information. Advise against providing information to people you don’t know or pushing buttons if prompted to do so. Tell them if they receive a robocall, they should simply hang up.
- Consider rules about downloading apps, such as requiring parental permission.
- Talk about when and where the phone can be used and look into settings or apps that manage screentime.
- Discuss how to protect your child’s phone from theft and what to do if a phone is lost or stolen.
- Consider purchasing a protective case for your phone model. Choose one with a drop-tested durable shell, and don’t forget a screen protector to help avoid scratches and cracks.
- Remind your kids that having their own cell phone is not only a privilege but a big responsibility. And let them know you’re counting on them to be trustworthy and safe.

There comes a time when every parent must face the rite of passage that is their child’s first cell phone. For kids, it is a time for accepting new responsibilities, adopting new safety habits, and learning new technologies.

*The Post Rock District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith Counties. Contact Jamie Rathbun at [jrathbun@ksu.edu](mailto:jrathbun@ksu.edu) or by calling 785-524-4432. Stay connected with “Post Rock Extension” on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Our website is [www.postrock.ksu.edu](http://www.postrock.ksu.edu).*



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