



The American Academy of Pediatrics and AT&T Launch Free Tools to Help Families Determine Child’s Cell Phone Readiness and Create Healthy Media Use Habits

As the future becomes increasingly digital, new tools aim to encourage safe and responsible internet, media and technology use for families

ITASCA, IL (July 20, 2022) – At what age should a child get their own cell phone? And how much screen time is appropriate? These are important questions that many parents and caregivers struggle with as children and teens spend more time online. To help, the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) and [AT&T](#) have teamed up to launch a new, free PhoneReady Questionnaire and a free, enhanced Family Media Plan tool to help parents and caregivers create healthy digital habits for their family.

The [PhoneReady Questionnaire](#) developed by AT&T in collaboration with AAP is a 10-question online tool that helps parents assess whether their child is ready for the responsibilities of a cell phone. Equipped with that insight, parents can also use the AAP’s interactive [Family Media Plan](#) to create individualized strategies for each family member that encourage media balance and set goals and rules about technology use.

[Common Sense Media](#) found that tween and teen media use has accelerated faster in the two years since the pandemic than the four years before, with eight to 12-year-olds spending an average of **five and a half hours** a day on screens and consuming media. That rate climbs to over **eight and a half hours a day** for teens.¹

Average daily screentime rates soared highest among Black and Hispanic/Latino children and those of lower-income families, Common Sense Media finds, with these teens and tweens spending between **six and a half to seven and a half hours a day** on entertainment screens.²

[A majority of parents](#) are concerned their children are spending too much time on screens, and as such, are turning to doctors and medical professionals for advice or information.³ In addition, most parents strongly agree that they would be more open to getting their child a tablet, smartphone or smartwatch if they understood how their children could use those devices safely and effectively.⁴

“After more than 2 years of the pandemic, parents may want to manage their family’s media use, but feel too overwhelmed to know where to start,” **said Jenny Radesky, MD, FAAP, vice chair of the AAP Council on Communications and Media Executive**



Committee. “The Family Media Plan breaks plan ideas down by age and family priorities and includes practical tips that our team has collected over the years. The plan includes conversation ideas, tips for finding positive media that supports exploration and kind connection, and ways to pull the plug and try alternate activities. Like the prior Family Media Plan, it prioritizes sleep, physical activity, relationships, and balance, but also dives into trickier topics like addressing cyberbullying, not using media to escape emotions, and reining in parents’ own media use.”

“Safe and responsible internet and technology usage is a concern for many parents, but especially for those living in the digital divide and newer to technology,” said **Charlene Lake, chief sustainability officer, senior vice president, AT&T corporate responsibility, ESG.** “We are committed to doing all we can to help families develop healthy digital habits from the start. As [AT&T Connected Learning](#) initiatives continue to help bridge the digital divide, we are proud to work with experts like the American Academy of Pediatrics to provide the tools today’s families need to make informed media and technology decisions.”

PhoneReady Questionnaire

The PhoneReady Questionnaire was developed by AT&T in collaboration with AAP pediatricians: Jenny Radesky, MD, FAAP, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Suzy Tomopoulos, MD, New York, N.Y. and Megan Moreno, MD, MEd, MPH, Madison, Wis.

The Questionnaire helps parents determine if their child is ready – and if they’re ready for their child to have a phone – by walking them through 10 evidence-based questions that assess a child’s behaviors, developmental maturity, and their family’s values. Some of the questions include:

- How often does your child need a phone for their safety, such as after school?
- Does your child act responsibly, including finishing things they are assigned at school?
- Are you prepared to take steps to manage your child’s technology use?

Once complete, parents will receive one of three scores: *Ready Zone*, *Almost Ready Zone*, or *Not Yet Ready Zone*. Based on the results, parents will get recommended next steps and for those parents who decide their child is ready, resources to help them activate parental control settings, create a Family Media Plan and access tips to help their child have a safe and positive experience. The Questionnaire is available on [AT&T ScreenReady](#)[®], and physicians can recommend the free digital tool to their patients as well.



Family Media Plan

The Family Media Plan helps parents build a customized media use plan that the whole family agrees to implement. The tool helps parents find ways to balance screen time with other activities, sets boundaries for accessing content, gives suggestions on dealing with cyberbullying and encourages age-appropriate critical thinking and digital literacy.

Launched in 2016 by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the tool has now been enhanced with new features with support from AT&T, including:

- Specific recommendations for younger children
- Reflection activities and practical tips to help families problem-solve around media use
- The ability to select just a few priorities to start and easily return to the plan to add more goals to try later
- Other resources such as “tutorials” on setting up smartphone safety settings

The Family Media Plan tool is available on [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) and via [AT&T ScreenReady®](https://www.att.com/screenready) and physicians can recommend the free digital tool to their patients as well.

The tool is based on recommendations from AAP policy statements, [Media Use in School-Aged Children and Adolescents](#) and [Media and Young Minds](#) and the technical report, [Children and Adolescents and Digital Media](#). Most importantly, the tool provides families with messages around open communication and reflection about individuals’ relationships with media, what rules they are motivated to implement, and what goals they hope to achieve by doing so.

These efforts are the latest developments within the [AT&T Connected Learning initiative](#), which began as part of AT&T’s companywide, \$2 billion commitment from 2021 to 2023 to address the digital divide through investments in digital literacy tools, education resources, broadband technology, low-cost internet service, computers, and more, to help today’s learners succeed inside and outside of the classroom.

About the AAP

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit www.aap.org and follow us on Twitter [@AmerAcadPeds](https://twitter.com/AmerAcadPeds).

About Philanthropy & Social Innovation at AT&T

We’re committed to advancing education, creating opportunities, strengthening communities and improving lives. As part of our companywide \$2 billion commitment



from 2021 to 2023 to address the digital divide, we launched AT&T Connected Learning to invest in digital inclusion, digital literacy and digital learning solutions to help today's students, and those who support them, succeed wherever they learn. Since 2008, we've committed nearly \$950 million to programs that help millions of students across all 50 states and around the world, particularly those in underserved communities.

First Phone Readiness Questionnaire [\[link\]](#)

Family Media Plan [\[link\]](#)

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¹ Common Sense Media. [The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens](#) (2021).

² Common Sense Media. [The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens](#) (2021).

³ Pew Research Center. [Parenting Children in the Age of Screens](#) (2020).

⁴ This random double-opt-in survey of 2,000 American parents of school-age children and their child was commissioned by Cricket Wireless between May 23 and May 27, 2022. It was conducted by market research company OnePoll, whose team members are members of the Market Research Society and have corporate membership to the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) and the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR).