



**Media converging in
the palm of your hand**

**A MediaWise[®] Parent Guide—
Cell Phones and Your Kids**

**Are cell phones the new media of this generation?
Find out what's around the bend and what to watch out for.**



MediaWise[®] Parent Guide



Looking to the future.

Dr. David Walsh, president and founder of the National Institute on Media and the Family, just returned from Seoul, South Korea where he attended an international summit on Internet safety. He came back to the Institute with plenty to report — especially since South Korea is about two years ahead of the U.S., technologically speaking. What did he see a lot of in South Korea? Cell phones, cell phones, cell phones!

Do cell phones still make phone calls?

What is media convergence anyway? Media convergence is when the lines separating different forms of media disappear. We already see a lot of this happening – for example, video games are now Internet compatible, cell phones host mini-cameras, and you can watch movies on your iPod. However, if the experiences of South Korean youth tell us anything, we are going to see media convergence accelerate dramatically. This will create a world where most forms of media are accessible in a cell phone that can fit in the palm of your hand.

MediaWise Parent Guide.

In the next pages, you'll find information about new trends in cell phone technology, how this affects our kids, and what to watch out for as a parent.



Look for a special MediaWise cell phone tip on every page!

Cell Phone Parent Glossary

MP3:

MP3s are essentially compressed electronic music files. You can download MP3 files online using programs like iTunes or Napster. You can also listen to these music files on MP3 players like iPods.

Bluetooth®:

Bluetooth devices allow you to connect and exchange information online via a secure, short-range frequency. Many cell phones have Bluetooth devices, enabling users to send e-mails and interact online with other people within short range. Bluetooth also enables control of and communication between a cell phone and a hands-free headset.

Ring tones:

A ring tone is a customizable sound to indicate incoming calls on cell phones. Modern ring tones range from a standard "phone bell" to full-length songs downloaded from the Internet. Getting the newest popular song in a ring tone can be very important to kids.

Text messaging / IMing:

Internet-based group conversation. Users organize groups of friends into "buddy lists," with everyone choosing a unique screen name. You simply send a message and instantly join in the online conversation.

Cyber bullying:

Cyber bullying is similar to bullying, except it's conducted online. It can mean sending derogatory insults or threats in messages or circulating humiliating information or pictures of a kid among peers. Sometimes it involves demeaning postings on Web sites.

YouTube.com:

YouTube is a popular video-sharing site, allowing users to post, upload or comment on short online video clips. YouTube is the fastest-growing video-sharing site on the Web and is wildly popular among teens.

MySpace.com:

MySpace is an online social networking Web site where kids can create their own profile, add pictures and music, chat with friends, join online groups, and contribute to blogs. Many kids trust their online friends, and post personal information on their MySpace pages.

Cell phone = MP3 Player



Music for your mobile

www.apple.com/itunes/mobile/

Many phone companies are launching features where your favorite songs are stored right alongside your contacts. Motorola has even teamed up with the popular iTunes to offer customers access to their tunes through their phones. You can listen through headphones or out loud on the phone's speakers. Right now, most phones can only store up to 100 songs, far less than most MP3 players, and the feature is still expensive. However, we can expect phones to continue to offer more memory for less money – making it easier for kids to plug in to their music on the go.

What to watch out for:

- Buying music online can be expensive – help your kids create a music budget.
- It is easier to “impulse buy” when you can buy music online straight from your cell phone. Talk to your kids about how and when to buy music.
- Ask your kids what they are listening to on their phones. Try to listen to it as well when you can!

Featured
MediaWise
tip!

Choose a cell phone plan with reasonable limits and make sure your child has consequences, financial or otherwise, if limits are exceeded.

Cell phone = Internet



Surfing the Web, on your phone

Accessing the World Wide Web has never been easier. Most new generation phones allow you to access the Internet right from your phone. Kids can now access their MySpace profiles, send e-mails, upload pictures to YouTube and surf the Web from their phones. While it is still expensive, sometimes slower than traditional Internet access, and sometimes hard to surf the Web on small screen, every year the service is faster and cheaper.

What to watch out for:

- It can still be very expensive to access the Internet – resulting in cell phone bills kids and parents weren't planning on. If you do allow Internet access on phones, set limits to online time.
- Kids can download inappropriate messages or pictures off the Internet and send them to their friends. Talk about cell phone "netiquette."
- Although not common, teachers report a growing trend of Internet-enabled cell phones being used to cheat on tests using the Internet.
- Constant access to the Internet can be very distracting.

**Featured
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tip!**

Review the cell phone bill with your child – making sure the expenses are what you had both planned on.

Cell phone = Text Messenger



A text messaging generation.

What do the words POS or LOL mean to you? If you know that the first translates to “Parent Over Shoulder” and the second to “Laughing Our Loud,” you probably have a text messaging kid. Texting is probably one of the most mainstream cell phone activities among young people and more than 73 percent of teens use it regularly. For many kids, text messaging, or IMing, is their main way to make and connect with friends. They use it to chat, gossip, make plans, get help on homework, tell jokes, complain, make dates, and break up.

What to watch out for:

- Text messaging can be very disruptive during class. Set rules and limits about when text messaging is appropriate and inappropriate.
- Text messaging can be very expensive and take up lots of time. Set limits and encourage your kids to communicate with their friends in other ways too.
- Some kids use their phones to spread mean messages or to intimidate other kids. Talk to your kids about cyber bullying.
- Text messages can become pretty lewd and inappropriate because the medium has fewer social constraints. Talk to kids about text etiquette and manners.

Featured
MediaWise
tip!

Find out about your child's school policy on cell phone use and support it!

Cell phone = Camera



Smile for the phone!

It's hard to buy a cell phone without a built-in camera anymore. Kids all over see pictures of their friends' faces appear on screen when they receive their call, snap photos of friends and post them on MySpace, and are even taking video on their phones. Most cell phones now only offer low-quality cameras that produce relatively poor-quality photos. However, Samsung is already selling a 10 megapixel phone (higher quality than many stand alone digital cameras sold in the U.S.) in South Korea, and such high-resolution models are bound to come to the U.S. soon.

What to watch out for:

- Personal privacy is harder to find when people can snap pictures quickly and easily on their phones. Talk to your kids about appropriate and inappropriate camera use.
- Talk to your kids about the consequences of putting incriminating or inappropriate pictures and videos on public sites like YouTube or MySpace.
- Make sure your kids know to not send personal photographs online to people they don't know.

**Featured
MediaWise
tip!**

Talk about cyber bullying. Ask your kids to let you know if they get harassing text, pictures or phone calls. And, tell them that bullying will not be tolerated.

Cell phone = Television



TV anywhere, anytime

Leaders in the industry, including Sprint TV and MobiTV, are bringing music videos, news, weather, and sitcoms to a phone near you. For a monthly subscription fee, mobile users get access to around 30 channels depending upon your phone. The service is not too expensive, ringing in around ten dollars a month, but without a high speed connection some users still experience dropped signals, long buffering time, or highly pixilated pictures. We can expect to see clear, live TV shows a standard feature on cell phones within a few years.

What to watch out for:

- We know that too much screen time isn't good for kids. Being able to access TV anywhere, anytime only increases the number of possible hours kids can be glued to screens instead of plugged into school, family, or friends.
- It's harder to monitor the shows kids watch when they are tuning in to small, personal hand-held devices.
- Television can be very distracting – it's hard for teachers to compete with football games broadcast live.

**Featured
MediaWise
Tip**

If you choose to subscribe to mobile television, make sure you set limits on screen time just like you would with your family television, and also monitor content.

Looking out for our kids



To cell or not to cell?

Today something like 200 million people own cell phones in the United States. Almost three-quarters of American households have at least one, and many have three to five. About half of teens aged 13 to 16 have one. It's pretty clear that cell phones aren't going anywhere. So what does this mean for our kids?

Cell phones have never been more popular with school-aged children. Having the coolest phone is a priority for many kids across the country. Parents also appreciate being able to get in touch with and keep track of their kids – it's never been easier to communicate with our kids while on the run.

Despite the benefits, cell phones are also posing new challenges for parents. Some kids run up enormous bills, disturb classes with inopportune calls, and use phones to bully other kids. As more forms of media continue to converge in cell phones, perhaps the greatest challenge will be monitoring and keeping track of our kids' media use. Small, hand-held screens make it harder to "watch what your kids watch." That's why it's important to stay ahead of the trends and talk with your kids about what you learned in this guide.

**MediaWise
Tip**

Tell your kids not to share their cell phone number online, especially to people they don't know, even if they have been talking with them for a while in a chat room or Instant Messaging.

Take advantage of other **FREE** MediaWise Network resources!

MediaWise Back to School Guide

Get help answering these questions and more: Will computers help my kids succeed in school? How do I encourage my kids to read? What's the deal with multitasking?

Learn more about media ratings

Confused by TV, video game and movie ratings? Download the MediaWise ratings guide to learn more.

Download MediaWise Internet Respect Plans

The Internet can be a great resource and source of entertainment but be sure to get off to a good, healthy start by establishing rules and expectations.

Spread the MediaWise message!

Request a MediaWise Awareness Kit and we'll send you what you need to talk to your family, friends and colleagues about MediaWise.

Tell your friends about the Network

Connect with others, get access to FREE tools, resources, and ideas. Create positive change for your family and community!

Make a gift to the Institute

A tax-deductible gift to the National Institute of Media and the Family will help us bring tools and resources to more families who need them.