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## Know! To Interact with Tact-Smartphone Tips!

Is your son or daughter among the many youth begging for a smartphone this holiday season? And are you among the many parents considering the buy?

Smartphones certainly have their advantages. The number one reason parents cite for purchasing their child's first cell phone is that it provides location tracking and makes it easier to communicate with their son or daughter. Children however typically want a smartphone for the ability to connect with friends, download their favorite music and apps, and access social media sites.

While there is no magic age in which children are ready for their first smartphone, 73% of teens either "own" one or have access to one. Therefore, ready or not, it's a good idea to talk about what is acceptable and unacceptable smartphone behavior.

Youth are impulsive by nature, and that can get them into trouble when it comes to sending messages or using social media on their always-handy cell phones. Children must fully understand that once they send a text or post something online, it is out there for all to see, and they cannot take it back. Even if a message or photo is intended for one person only, they must assume others may see it. And those "others" may include someone's parent, grandparent, a teacher or coach – which can lead to extreme embarrassment, hurt or even school or team repercussions.

Children must be taught to think before reaching into their back pocket to haphazardly text, tweet, snap, post or partake in whatever new tech craze pops up. In general, if a comment is not ok to say to a person face-to-face, then is it not ok to type it behind the "security" of their handheld computer screen.

While such information may seem very basic and simple common sense, you shouldn't assume your child has heard it before, unless they've heard it from you. Plus, they can only benefit from hearing it again.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) shares the following tips to help children **Interact with Tact**:

**Politeness Counts:** Quick comments or texts can lead to misunderstandings. Before sending a message out, read it a second time and think about how it may be interpreted.

**Digital Body Language Matters:** How you type it can be just as important as what you type. ALL CAPS, **bolded fonts** and multiple exclamation points are all viewed as shouting!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

**Send Group Messages with Care:** Think about who really needs to see your message before including every "friend" you know. When replying to a group chat, consider the feelings of all who will be seeing your response. And if you choose to reply to just one person, double-check that you're not in fact replying to the whole group.

**Do NOT Impersonate:** Creating fake accounts in order to send anonymous messages or making it look as if a comment or post has come from someone else is wrong and can be extremely hurtful.

**Do NOT Bully or Stand for Other People Bulling:** This goes for on and offline. Treat others the way you want to be treated – with kindness and understanding. If online bullying occurs and your efforts of blocking them or telling them to stop doesn't end it, save the evidence and ask for help from a trusted adult.

A cell phone can be both helpful for you and fun for your child when used appropriately and in a positive manner. However, this technology has disadvantages too. In the New Year we will take a look at some of the ways smartphone use can lead to hurt, harm and potentially risky-behaviors, and what you, as a parent, can do to set a positive example and keep life online in check for your child.

*Interested in having your child sign a cell phone agreement for appropriate behavior? [Click here.](#)*

Sources: [Federal Trade Commission \(FTC\): Living Life Online 2014.](#) [Pew Research Center: Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2015.](#)

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