

DELAYING SOCIAL MEDIA



A resource guide for
Marin County Office of Education Parent Ed Series
Nov 2025



*Throughout this packet,
click on images or
underlined text to link!*

 **ScreenSense**
www.screensense.org



SOCIAL MEDIA

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DELAYING ACCESS TO APPS LIKE TIKTOK, SNAPCHAT, & INSTAGRAM

At ScreenSense, we agree with experts that social media is not developmentally appropriate for elementary or middle school students. We recommend waiting until high school (ideally 16+) to introduce social media. Here are our key tips:

- 1 Delay social media as long as possible.** There's no proven "right" age to allow social media, but there's growing agreement on when not to: elementary and middle school are too early. Delaying until high school greatly reduces harm related to mental health, sleep, focus, and physical safety. See [p. 3 + 4](#) for ways to explain your decision to your child.
- 2 Separate the social media decision from the phone decision.** Start with a home phone (check out [Tin Can!](#)). If you need a mobile phone, start with a smartwatch or find simple phone alternatives on [p. 5](#). Learn how to set up a barebones iPhone without social media or other sticky apps on [p. 6](#).
- 3 Build a community to delay with.** It's easier to hold the line together. Parents agreeing to delay social media together reduces social pressure on kids and parents. If none of the 7th graders have Snapchat, no one feels left out. See [p. 7](#) and join the Kids IRL Phone Pact on [p. 10](#).
- 4 While you delay, get your ducks in a row at home.** In particular, make your tech boundaries and device-free zones clear. See [p. 8 + 9](#).

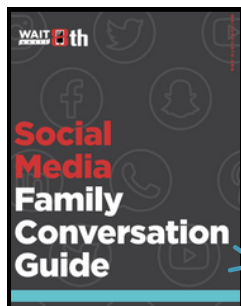
When you do decide to allow social media...

- 5 Take it slowly.** When the time comes, introduce one app at a time. Familiarize yourself with the specific app first - we recommend the step-by-step guides from [Protect Young Eyes](#). Consider a trial run to see how the new app feels for both of you. Never download an app "as is" - set it up properly by reviewing available settings together and explaining choices. Coach healthy habits and reel it in when needed - it's an iterative process!



The Case for “Not Yet”

Resources to help explain to your child WHY you’re saying “not yet” to social media apps like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and Discord.

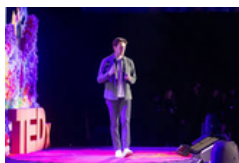


We highly recommend Wait Until 8th’s [Social Media Conversation Guide](#)! Print pages 1-6 to talk through all the reasons you’re delaying social media.



Remember:

Throughout this packet, click on images or underlined text to link!



[Dino Ambrosi’s Ted Talk](#) (11 min, 2023, ages 11+). An empowering message to think carefully about how you spend (waste!) your time on social media. After watching, use this [screen time calculator](#) together.



[10 min video for ages 10-13](#)

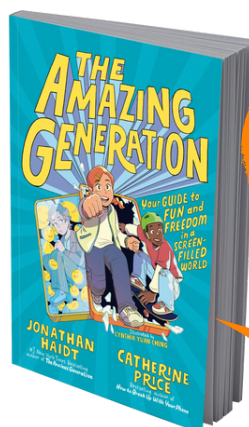
This video is about smartphones, but really it’s about what’s ON smartphones, especially social media, so it’s a great resource to share with your kid.



How should I talk to my child about smartphones? Tips for parents at every stage

[Great talking points by age](#) from Smartphone Free Childhood UK - framed about smartphones but full of great points about social media.

Books to
read together!



NEW for tweens!
by Jonathan Haidt
& Catherine Price
Coming
December 2025

The PSIDES of staying **OFF** SOCIAL MEDIA

Another way to frame this conversation with your child...

More free time.

The average middle schooler spends 35 hours a week on screens now! Tech is sticky by design - imagine what else you could do with that time each week.

Better mental health.

Teens on screens too much are 2x more likely to have anxiety and 3x more likely to have depression. Strong mental health comes from spending time in the real world doing activities, sports, and being with friends.

Deeper friendships.

If you don't have a screen acting as a prop or distractor or "middle man," you can connect more deeply and authentically with friends.

A better education.

If off-task screen use is distracting you, you won't be able to concentrate, develop the ability to stay focused, or do well in school.

A better future and job.

Scrolling YouTube or TikTok doesn't prepare you for your future. Knowing how to think critically, focus, and be a creative problem solver do. Those are developed offline or when using tech productively - not from passive scrolling and watching.

Better sleep.

Kids your age need a lot of sleep. Screens disrupt sleep. Those who have their tech in check get longer and deeper sleep, which improves their brain function, emotional regulation, and wellbeing.

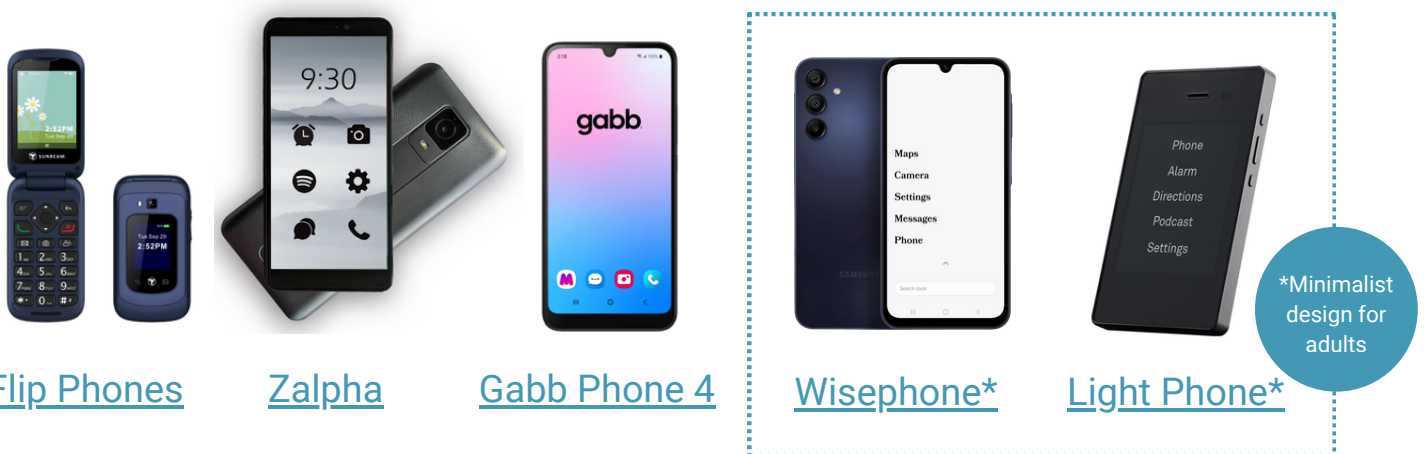
More free will to become YOU.

Because your thoughts and beliefs won't be shaped by social media pressures, algorithms, and influencers who just want your time not your wellbeing.

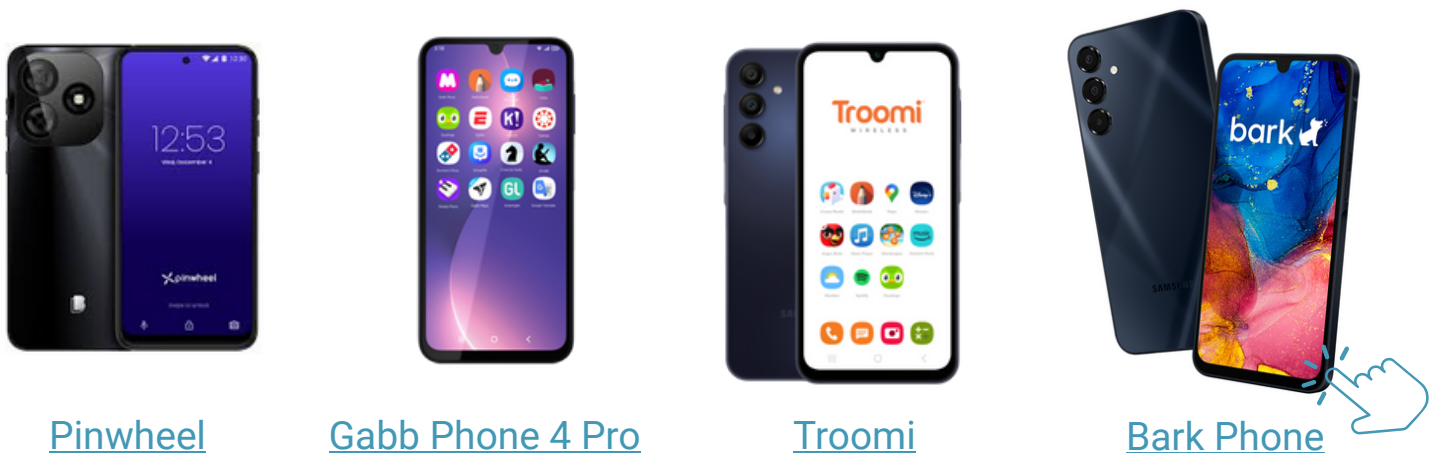
Mobile Phone Alternatives

with no social media option

Mobile phones with minimal features (no social media option): Less features = less distraction. May not include any parental controls.



Smartphones *designed for kids*: More expansive than above with vetted apps to roll out over time. No social media (except Bark Phone).

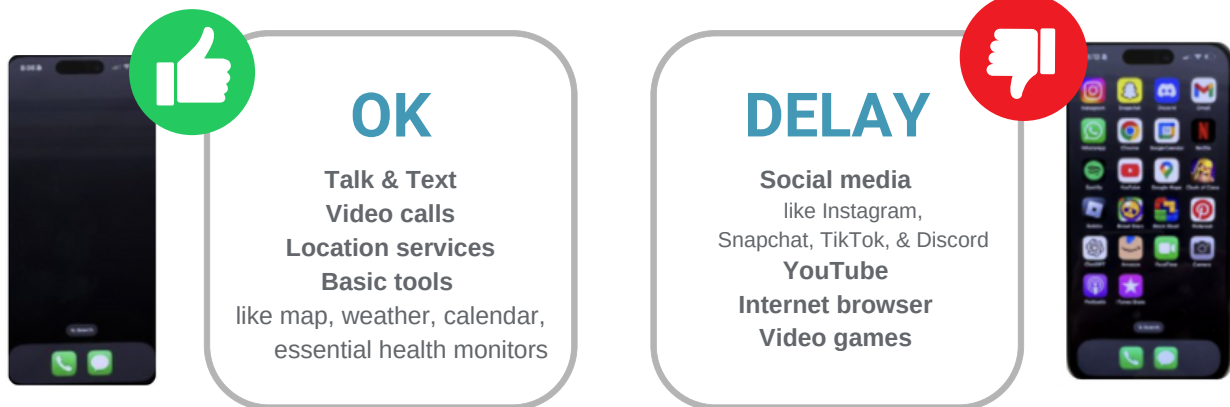


To find more brands of flip phones and simple phones, check out [Dumb Phone Finder](#). Find additional guidance on **first phone** decisions [here](#).

iPHONES

Set them up without social media!

If you are setting up an iPhone for a child, use our [Keep it Simple](#) video tutorial to set up a basic iPhone for talk and text only - this keeps the upsides of mobile communication while delaying the downsides of problematic apps like social media. **How you set up an iPhone makes all the difference!**



You can remove the App Store and Internet browser from an iPhone, and you can hold off on adding more distracting content like social media, YouTube, and video games. **The iPhone by default is set up with needless features that a parent can strip off for youth use.** Take your time adding more features very slowly and intentionally over time. Use our [Keep it Simple](#) video tutorial to set up a basic iPhone with minimal features.

If your child already has an iPhone with features you want to remove - like social media - watch our [Reel it in](#) tutorial.

TOP TIP! Set overnight Downtime, App Limits, and turn on "Content & Privacy Restrictions" in *Settings > Screen Time*

Let's delay TOGETHER!

We know you want Snapchat but we are saying **not yet**.

All the 6th grade parents are saying **not yet** to Snapchat.

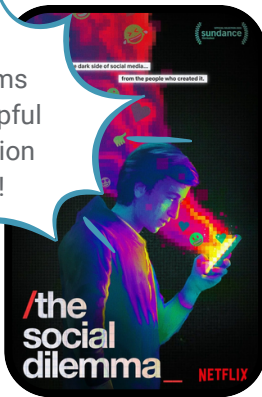
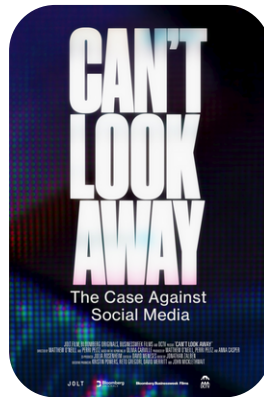
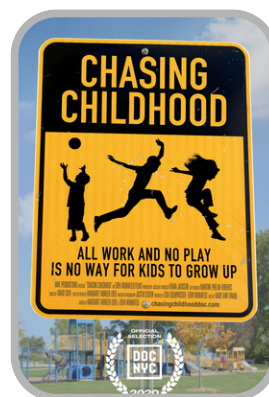


vs



It can feel tricky to start conversations with other parents **but building community around delaying social media is key!** We need to normalize talking about tech with empathy, curiosity and openness.

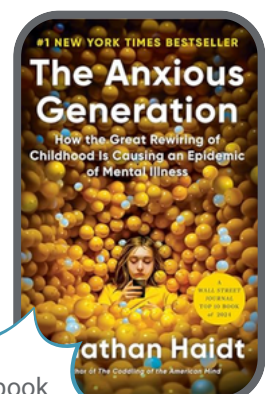
These films can be helpful conversation starters!



Watch Jonathan Haidt explain his book & then discuss!



Host a book club!



While you are delaying...

Get your ducks in a row - to get prepared for social media and other more complicated types of tech that will come your way.

Let them be untethered!

Let them be bored!

Prioritize IRL (in real life) goodness



Create your family tech boundaries. Use our printable signs to make device-free zones at home!

Your tech habits matter.

What **example** are you setting for social media and screen use?



Embrace a **coaching mindset** when it comes to tech - healthy tech use has to be taught and practiced!



IRL Social Interaction



Being Active



Focused Study



Sleep



Contributing & Helping



Being Outdoors



Sense of Self



Reading & Learning



Free Play & hands-on activities



Navigating Feelings

Don't let **social media** disrupt these childhood essentials!

Printable signs

Label a container or charging station & make your tech boundaries clear



STAY CONNECTED WITH US!



Join the [Kids IRL Phone Pact](#)!

Get connected to other parents at your child's school who are delaying social media and smartphones! Signing the pact also loops you in to progress updates in Marin.



Join us in the Kids IRL [Parent Chat](#) on WhatsApp.

It's a supportive place for parents in Marin to exchange ideas on how to slow down tech and expand in-real-life activities.



Come to our [new series](#) of monthly virtual tech talks!

Our Lunch & Learn casual sessions will cover specific topics about parenting tech. Short presentations with lots of time for Q&A! Don't miss Nov 13 - All things iPhone!



Connect with us [in person](#)!

Bring our parent ed events to your school or local community! Or connect with ScreenSense for 1:1 home tech consulting.

ABOUT SCREENSENSE AND KIDS IRL

At ScreenSense, we help parents and schools implement and manage the guardrails needed to keep digital tech in check. Our Parent Education events and consulting services support **introducing tech slowly** so tech doesn't crowd out essential childhood activities. [Kids IRL](#) is our hyper-local collective action initiative in Marin County to help parent and school communities commit to doing this work together. **Click on the icons or links below.**



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[Parenting Social Media Playlist](#)
on our YouTube Channel



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