

# Tech Gifts for Children and Young People

## A Guide for Parents and Educators



**At festive times, or whenever a gift is being considered one of the most frequent questions asked by parents and educators is:**

***“Should I give my child a mobile phone, tablet, console or computer?”***

We live in a world where technology is woven into school life, social life and leisure. Digital devices can be extraordinary tools: they allow young people to learn, create, communicate, explore, play and develop important cognitive skills.

But they can also bring risks when introduced too early, without preparation, or without adequate supervision.

That is why, before deciding to buy the first smartphone, the newest console or a more advanced tablet, it is worth pausing to reflect — not only us, the adults, but them too.

**This resource draws on research in psychology, digital health and child development to help parents/educators make informed and balanced choices.**

### **1) Before the gift: the most important step is conversation**

The decision to give a device should not be automatic, nor based on social pressure (“everyone in the class has one”).

What truly matters is understanding whether the young person is ready — emotionally, socially and in terms of responsibility.

A very effective way to begin is by asking your child to complete the **“Practical Guide to Tech Gifts”**, available for download.

## Discussing this Guide together involves five essential questions:

### Why do I want this device?

— Is it for gaming? Talking to friends? Learning? Creating? Fitting in?

### What positives does this device bring me?

— Skills development, autonomy, creativity, social connection...

### What should I be aware of or protect myself from?

— Screen time, school distractions, online safety, in-app purchases, privacy.

### What rules and limits are important?

— Schedules, places where it can and cannot be used, priority activities, balance with offline life.

### How, when and where can I use the device?

— In the living room, not in the bedroom, only after homework, no devices at the table.

This small exercise opens space for an honest, calm and collaborative conversation.

It shows that technology is not an “automatic gift”: it is a **shared responsibility**.

## 2) Technology must be age-appropriate

The balance between age, maturity, parental guidance and family context is essential.

Some key points highlighted by research:

- **Before the age of 12**, most children are still developing emotional and cognitive self-regulation. This means that personal devices with unrestricted internet access may be overstimulating and difficult to manage independently.

Entering middle school is often when peer pressure increases (“everyone has a phone”). Even so, owning a smartphone does not mean a young person is mature enough to:

- resist social comparison
- manage conflicts on social media
- handle inappropriate messages and content
- regulate impulses linked to usage

Young people often use their mobile phone for **emotional regulation**, to reduce anxiety, loneliness or stress. This is understandable but can create emotional dependence on technology, which can be harmful to their development and everyday functioning.

**This is why parental involvement is fundamental.**

### 3) What should accompany any tech gift

#### Guidance

Young people benefit from adults who teach them how to navigate the online world, explain risks, help handle situations and encourage critical thinking.

#### Clear and consistent rules

***Set before the purchase and revised as the child grows:***

- daily usage limits
- where the device may be used
- switching off at night (no devices in the bedroom)
- using it only after responsibilities
- supervision of installed apps

#### Digital privacy and safety

***Teach them to:***

- never share personal data
- avoid strangers online
- recognise grooming, bullying and emotional manipulation
- question requests for photos, suspicious links or risky challenges
- understand that screenshots and sharing are irreversible

#### Family agreements

Create a Technology Agreement together, with commitments on both sides.

When young people help define the rules, they tend to respect them more.

## 4) How do I know if it's the right time?

### ***Ask yourself:***

Can my child follow simple rules?

Do they manage frustration well or become easily dysregulated?

Do they know how to ask for help when something difficult happens online?

Do they have a level of autonomy appropriate for their age?

Can they balance digital life with offline activities (sports, friends, family, schoolwork)?

Am I available to guide, support and supervise?

If several answers are “no”, it may not be the right moment.

**Remember: what works for other families may not work for yours.**

## 5) If you decide to go ahead: how to give the device responsibly

### **Be involved from day one**

Install apps together. Discuss content. Configure safety settings.

### **Model the behaviour you expect**

It's not fair to ask for focus if the adult is always on their phone. Your behaviour shapes theirs.

### **Review the rules regularly**

What is appropriate at age 12 is not appropriate at age 9.

### **Focus on the relationship, not surveillance**

Supervision is not control: it is care, proximity, education and, above all, connection.

## 6) Conclusion:

**Technology is possible — but with adult presence, limits and open dialogue**

Giving a tech gift is not merely a consumer decision.

It is an **educational, emotional and relational** decision.

Children and young people do not need more screens.

They need **guidance, clear boundaries and attentive adults** who stay one step ahead — not to police them, but to support them.

Technology can be an extraordinary tool for growth, creativity and learning.

But only when used at the right time, with maturity and within a safe framework.



**Before buying, talk.**

**After giving, stay involved.**

**And throughout the process, keep the conversation open.**

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