

# Pointers For Parents

## Making The Right Call On A Phone For Your Teen

(NAPSA)—If you have a teen in your family, chances are you've already had "the talk." Not about the birds and the bees, but about buying your teen a mobile phone. Nearly 70 percent of teens who ask for a mobile phone are between 13 and 15, and they are getting younger all the time.

While many parents are hesitant to take the wireless leap, there are a number of reasons why they might want their teen to have a mobile phone. Topping the list for parents today are safety and peace of mind.

Yet sorting through the wide array of features, costs and contracts available can be a real challenge.

To help parents and teens make the right connections, here are a few tips to consider before buying:

Don't be swayed by bells and whistles. Robin Raskin, an expert on technology and kids known as "The Internet Mom," advises parents to look for the "sweet spot" when choosing a handset for their teen. That means compromising on a good quality mobile phone with some of the core features they want and need (such as voicemail and text messaging), without breaking the bank on the most advanced features.

Know what you're paying for. Wireless "family plans" make it easy to add a teen to an existing wireless account. But make sure your plan is really family friendly before signing up your child. Many include easy to overlook costs and restrictions such as added fees, taxes, roaming and overage charges. Recent studies show it's not uncommon for consumers with family plans to pay 34 percent more per month than the advertised cost of their service.

Learn the alternatives. Raskin notes that many parents today are opting to give their teens a prepaid, or Pay As You Go, mobile phone from providers like Virgin Mobile. These plans require no long-term contracts and let teens pay for only the minutes they use. "This is a real win-win for parents



**To a teen, a wireless telephone has many advantages parents may not be aware of.**

and kids, as it helps teens learn the money value of a minute while also giving them the independence they crave," said Raskin.

Encourage teens to mind their phone manners. Money matters are only one dimension of the wireless world. Parents should set ground rules for responsible wireless use before handing over that handset:

- Practice basic politeness. Keep conversations low in public places.

- Show teens how to use the "silence" or "vibrate" feature instead of a ring tone. Or have them set the ring tone volume at a lower level.

- Set rules about using the phone while driving. Many states require the use of a hands-free headset while driving. Better yet, encourage teens to not use their phone at all while on the road.

- Teach them to be discreet. Tell your teen not to discuss personal information, such as their address or phone number, while in a public place.

To learn more, request a copy of "Buying Your Teen A Mobile Phone—A Parent's Guide," by emailing [parentguide@virginmobileusa.com](mailto:parentguide@virginmobileusa.com).