There are a lot of things that I'd like to share, but these are the most important ones. With a phone or tablet comes responsibility. The more that we can do to help our kids navigate it safely, the better. But it is extremely important to introduce guidelines and rules and to stick to them.

Quite often parents will hand over a phone with rules in place but lower those restrictions because the interactions or requests from their child become too frequent, so they give up out of annoyance.

By sticking to strict guidelines;
1. Your child will build a culture of appropriate use much earlier and will be less likely to make large scale errors as they get older.

2. The implementation of a reward system from a parent perspective will be much easier, because the child is doing what is asked. This will allow gradual restriction minimisation, because the child is building trust.

The following points are a must when introducing a child to their first personal mobile device.

1. **Privilege v Right.**
   The first conversation must be around a simple fact; "This is not YOUR phone, this is A FAMILY phone, which we are allowing you to use.

   Conversation should be about the phone being provided as a tool to assist you as parents, whilst giving your child a chance to develop their use of technology appropriately. Let the child know rules and modifications are not being put in place because of a lack of trust, but simply because the risks of the online world are difficult to avoid without them.

   It is also important to emphasise, such rules and controls will not last forever, and they will always remain dependant on your responsible use of the device and adherence to the rules. As time goes by and you reflect an appropriate culture of use, the rules will be lifted.

2. **Google Family Link or Apple Family Sharing**
   This is going to be your key to managing and monitoring use. Depending on whether you purchase an iPhone or Android, both control networks are good and will offer tools to help control use of apps and keeping tabs on their screen time.

   When your child wants an app, you get the notification, asking you to approve or deny. It gives you an age suggestion and reviews for apps, so you can make the best decision.

   Might I also suggest you download and refer to the following environments for comprehensive advice on apps;
   The eSafety Commission website – www.esafety.gov.au
   Beacon Cyber Safety App from The Telethon Kids Institute – https://beacon.telethonkids.org.au

   Beacon offers a coalface approach to the most popular environments for kids, but also outlines the risks involved as well as other trends being experienced by your childs' age demographic. I have been working directly with TKI over the past 4 years to help develop Beacon, which is free.

   In addition to device manufacturer control options, you can also download other paid services which will assist in blocking and monitoring;
   The Family Zone
   Qustodio
   OurPact
   The Circle
   Family Time
   are all doing some good work in this field.

3. Downloading Apps & Reasoning

It is important to be as informed as possible. Remember, this world is normal to our kids and the use of apps (within reason) can assist them in building developmental skills, knowledge and experience. As such, it is important to consider the request for each app on its merits and with an open mind.

The response from a child "But all my friends are on it!" Must not be their sole argument. It is important to have a clear discussion surrounding why they want it and what benefits they might gain from its use.

Key factors which must be taken into consideration;
1. The age limit on the app.
   This should always be a line in the sand. If your child is not old enough under T's & C's to use the app, then it must be clear you will not allow them to have it.

2. What does the child like about the app and what benefits will it provide?
   This conversation is important as it allows the child to offer their side of the story, as well as them hearing yours.
   - Get them to explain the app to you and show you what it is.
   - Navigate the settings with them and ensure both of you are aware of what the settings provide in terms of safety – Only 33% of children under the age of 14 will actively investigate and alter settings. The rest will only make alteration after something goes wrong or if they have had a bad experience.
   - Outline that every app will be on a trial basis for the first month. As parents you will be checking regularly and if the app is being used inappropriately, outside of permitted times or for too long (time restrictions), then the app will be removed, or the child will lose phone privileges.

4. Setting Content Restrictions and Limitations

I would not suggest a child under the age of 13 have access to Social Networking Services (SNS). This of course is your choice, but I would try avoiding it where possible. If a child wishes to navigate an SNS, then this can be done a parent's device under strict conditions.

In the past, most SNS's could only be accessed via their app, however most of them are also using browser-based access. As such, your child can access, Instagram, Snapchat and others by using Google or Firefox browsers.

Blocking apps, sites and general access rules can be done via screen time and parental controls on Family Sharing or Family Link and via the paid services above.

It is important you do not share the restriction pass code with the child. It is also important not to let your child watch you as you enter the passcode. It is amazing how quickly kids can follow a finger on a keypad. It is also important to change the passcode as regularly as possible, just in case they have spied it without you knowing.

If your child is using Google Chrome to search, you should set up Google Safe Search on the browser;
https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/510?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop
This can be done on an Android and Apple device.

5. Checking History and Activity Reports

Google does a good job of showing you how much time is being spent on the phone, on apps, or the type of sites visited all in their activity reports. This is a fantastic way to introduce your child to the world of technology and make healthy decisions about what they do on their device.

You should go over their history together, so if you see something that you do not approve, you can discuss it immediately. You should offer a clear explanation why that website isn't age-appropriate and allow the child to offer their explanation without too harsh of judgement.

6. **Setting a Phone Schedule and Contract**
   Family Link and Family Sharing both offer options to set a time schedule on the device and on apps. It is important to set strict schedules for use and adhere to them. If your child does not adhere to schedules or is being deceptive regarding use, then phone privileges should be removed.

   It is very important to remember that when we discuss punishment or removal of privileges, we must also offer reward for appropriate behaviour and use. This is something so many cyber educators neglect to mention. Quite often I am discussing this with the creators of parental control apps. They are all about stopping this and stopping that, but they overlook a reward feature in their designs.

   So, if the child is doing well and adhering to the rules, rewards should be offered where possible. Eg, an extra hour on an app. A new app or purchase or the lifting of a certain restriction for a trial period.

   It is also a great idea to sit down with the child before handing over the phone and getting them to sign a contract. This sets a line in the sand regarding use and provides a discussion point when they make an error or breech a rule; "Hold on, you signed the contract remember!"

   I have attached a sample contract for you.

7. **Set a Charging Place**
   The charging place should be in a high traffic area which is always visible. When the phone is in the charging place, the child is not allowed to use or view it.

   It is also a great opportunity to offer learned behaviour experiences for the child, especially if they are young. What I mean by that is if you are charging your own phone. Don't go near it! Keep it in the charging place and ignore it.

   If you get a message then you can cheat a little 😊 by sending the child to do a quick errand in the house or making sure they are not around, while you check it. The overall goal is to give the child an understanding that a phone is not part of every day life and that it can be put down and ignored.

   Addiction is one of the hardest things you will deal with as parents regarding a mobile device, so offering these simple non-physical chances at learning will help significantly into the future as your child starts to develop their own phone mobile identity and culture of use.

8. **Finally – Have Conversations**
   As often as you can, sit down and discuss current trends and what is happening. The online world is ever evolving, so it is important to stay on top of it as often as you can. Our kids are an amazing resource for learning because they are often on top of current trends before their parents. It is important to schedule discussion times as often as possible.