

Phone Usage Toolkit

M O U N T A I N V A L L E Y D I S T R I C T



Being a unit leader is a big job. You are responsible for guiding youth to leadership greatness, being a good role model, and following the Scouting method, not to mention monitoring safety. When inappropriate cell phone usage crops up in your unit activities, it can feel like too much. Mountain Valley District is here to support you in developing a cell phone policy that works for your unit, knowing that each unit will have a different method and set of rules that works for them.

Consider these facts:

- **Kids need sleep.** Research indicates that teenagers need about 8 - 10 hours of sleep per night. When youth are allowed to have their cell phones in their tents at night, their sleep is most likely negatively impacted, including that of their tent mate. No one wants a cranky Scout the next day.
- **Kids spend too much time on their phones anyway.** Common Sense Media says teens use their cell phone a median of 4 hours per day. That's right - 4 hours! Asking a teen to relinquish their phone during a troop meeting or outing isn't asking too much.
- **But I can't take pictures!** Yep, this is a valid complaint. No one uses digital cameras anymore. Here's a crazy idea. Suggest that the youth enjoy the experience without photo documenting it and see if they have a better time (they will!). And offer that adults will take photos and post them to the unit's designated photo storage location for all to enjoy. Consider Google Photos or Band.
- **It creates cliques...or isolates youth.** When one youth has their phone out, watching videos or checking Instagram, a crowd can gather around to see what's happening. Inevitably some youth won't be in the group that gets to view the funny cat video. On the flip side, a youth on their phone can be sitting away from the group, scrolling away, missing important social opportunities. Neither of these scenarios are good.
- **Safety is a priority in Scouting.** You keep your youth safe on outings in many other ways, and digital safety also counts. All sorts of unsafe things can happen when youth are left unsupervised on their phones. This is no different than other scenarios for which you are responsible.

Consider these suggestions:

- Designate one adult other than the Scoutmaster to be the "Phonemaster". This adult's job is to enforce your unit's policy.
- Bring a bin or bag to collect phones. Perhaps your policy is that youth may not sleep with their phones. Have the Phonemaster collect all phones in the bin and store in their vehicle overnight.
- Ask the youth what they think about phone usage. Chances are good they may not like it, but it can be hard for youth to police that themselves. Along those lines, enforcing phone policy is a better job for an adult than a youth.
- Stay strong! You will likely encounter a youth or adult who is not a fan of the unit's policy. It is okay to be firm! It is not your responsibility to accommodate everyone's wishes or rationale regarding cell phone usage. Use the data above to support your stance.
- Contact Mountain Valley District leadership for help. We have your back and are always happy to talk through the pros and cons of your unit's phone policy.

FOR HELP, CONTACT MVD AT
MVDMT315@GMAIL.COM