



## **Using GPS technology to keep an extra eye on kids**

Technology has taken another step forward to help parents know *exactly* where their children are at all times. Using GPS to keep track of your children can provide real-time data about where your child is, what direction they are traveling and in some cases even how fast they are going.

There is a GPS solution for nearly everyone and for all age groups. From wrist watches and clip on teddy bears to vehicle trackers and cell phones, many products are available for parents to choose from. In this article I'm going to outline some of the non-invasive GPS products and discuss many of their capabilities.

### **Babies and Toddlers**

For smaller children there are GPS units that can be purchased and placed inside of clothing, a stroller, diaper bag or anything else to track where they are. These units usually work best in a sweater or jacket and the largest expense is the GPS transmitter. As the child grows, new compatible clothing can be purchased and the GPS transmitter reused. The device works indoors and out and costs approximately \$400.00.

For toddlers there are several GPS watches available that having working clocks in them as well as a GPS chip. Many of them "lock" on your child's wrist using an electronic lock that can only be opened by pressing a combination of buttons on the watch or using a key fob. Parents can log into the Internet and view where their child is in real-time using this device. The cost is approximately \$180.00.

### **Elementary School Age**

One of the most versatile products for this age is called the AmberAlertGPS. It is a GPS unit that can be placed into clothing or a backpack or clipped on a shoe, belt, or something similar. The AmberAlertGPS allows parents to receive text messages when the GPS unit has traveled into or out of predetermined locations and parents can receive maps to their mobile phone of exactly where their child is.

This unit also notifies parents if the GPS unit is going over a predetermined speed limit, if temperatures are too hot or too cold, and allows the child to press an SOS button on the device that will call up to five phone numbers. The unit also has a microphone built in so parents can access the device to listen to audio surrounding the child. By logging into a computer parents can see a historical breadcrumb view of where the child has been over a specified amount of time.

This device costs around \$250.00 and also requires a monthly plan for monitoring as well that is around \$18.00 per month and up depending on features.

## **Middle School and High School Age**

Kids this age want their own cell phone and now you have the perfect reason to give them one – GPS! Several cell phone providers offer services to help parents keep track of kids. I will detail some of the most popular choices; however this is not an all-inclusive list.

Verizon – They offer a program called Chaperone that is compatible with multiple phone styles. This program allows parents to login and see where the phone is and setup phone alerts if your child leaves or enters geographical locations setup by you. There is an additional charge for this service above the typical phone service fees.

AT&T – They offer a program called Smart Limits that can be setup to limit who your child can call or receive calls from, as well as number of minutes available, time of day the phone can be used, etc. They also have Media Net that is a parental control feature to make sure children doesn't access inappropriate material from their phone that contains mature content. Media Net is a free add-on while the Smart Limits costs an additional \$4.99 per month per line.

Sprint – They offer a Family Locator plan, which allows the user to track the location of phones via the Internet or another Sprint cell phone. Sprint also offers a "Safety Check" service that allows the user to setup notifications of when children arrive or leave predetermined locations.

## **Phones**

There are some great cell phones on the market today designed for children as young as five years old. Many of these phones don't have a keypad for dialing numbers, but just a handful of preprogrammed numbers that kids can press and it dials whatever your program such as home, parents work, parent's cell phone, etc. I have listed the two best models available that I could find:

1. LG Migo
2. AT&T Firefly

This information is provided to make parents aware of technology options available and give some examples of specific vendors. As previously stated this is not an all-inclusive list of products and the Southern Oregon High-Tech Crimes Task Force does not endorse or recommend any single item discussed in this article.

References:

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<https://sfl.sprintpcs.com/finder-sprint-family/signIn.htm>

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