

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## JINGLE BELLS (AND LOW BILLS) THIS CHRISTMAS

**Don't get caught out – use your PHONEbrain!**

**As the snowman brings the snow this Christmas, Santa may well be bringing new mobile phones, TVs and computers for the kids. While the excitement of having their first PC or mobile phone may provide mums and dads with some much-needed peace and quiet, if you're not careful, there may also be an unexpected gift in the form of some extra-large bills.**

Downloading wallpaper and ringtones on mobiles, dialling a premium rate number, clicking on web adverts or voting to save a celeb has become easier than ever but can easily land you with a nasty surprise when you receive your next bill.

Because children are faced with phone-paid services as part of their everyday lives, PHONEbrain ([www.phonebrain.org.uk](http://www.phonebrain.org.uk)) was created by PhonepayPlus, the industry regulator, as an online guide that helps kids stay in control of their money when using ringtones, downloads and other services. The idea is to prevent anyone from having a blue Christmas by protecting them against phone-paid scams or big bills for parents.

Recent research\* shows that 60% of 10-year-olds own a mobile phone, seven in ten have access to the internet at home and 65% are likely to have cable or satellite TV at home. With so many ways to be entertained, there are also unfortunately many ways to be caught out by a large bill, or even a scam.

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\* Ofcom Communications Market Report 2007

For the past year, PHONEbrain has helped educate children and their parents to use phone-paid services safely by:

- recognising premium rate/phone-paid services
- appreciating the costs involved
- understanding the issues and potential pitfalls
- being in control and making informed decisions

To help children stay safe and their parents in pocket, PHONEbrain offers a few simple rules to help Christmas stay merry.

## CHILDREN

### **Know what you are paying for**

- Always check the price of a call before you dial. If there is no price or if you're not sure, avoid it. 09 numbers are the most expensive numbers to call but, whatever the number, mobile charges may vary so make sure you know how much it is going to cost you.
- Most forms of entertainment, such as entering a competition, ordering products such as ringtones or casting a vote on a TV show, are known as phone-paid services and usually cost anywhere between 10 pence and £1.50 per minute/text, so watch out!

### **Check with the bill-payer first**

- If you are downloading anything that costs money, whether it is from your mobile, landline or the internet, make sure you ask the bill-payer's permission first.

### **Always read the small print**

- You may be signing up to more than you think. Terms and conditions are there for a reason so make sure you read them and if you do not understand them, ask your parents what they mean. They can be found at the bottom of most advertisements and websites.

### **Making friends**

- Be aware that the people you meet online or on your phone might not necessarily be who they say they are. Never meet your mobile or internet friends without telling your parents first.
- Only send photo messages and give your mobile number to your 'real world' friends, and never give out your personal details such as your address, school name, email address, phone number or bank details.

## PARENTS

### Talk to your children

- About every aspect of phone-paid services, good or bad. Help them understand the problems they might encounter, and how you can help them. Make family rules that they contribute to so they know what they can and can't do.
- Rules can include how much money they can spend on their phone each week and what they can and cannot download.

### Help

- Help your children download a ringtone, wallpaper or another subscription service. Not only will this help you know what type of things they are downloading but it will also ensure they use safe, high quality services.

### Don't get left behind

- With ever-changing gadgets and gizmos, text-speak and technological advantages, it is easy for parents to get left behind. Keep an eye on the newspapers, visit [www.phonebrain.org.uk](http://www.phonebrain.org.uk) and [www.phonepayplus.org.uk](http://www.phonepayplus.org.uk), and ask your children about it. All kids like to show off – they will love talking you through their new toys.

### Watch their behaviour

- The vast majority of mobile phone and internet use is completely safe. However, if your children become secretive or hide their mobile phone use, something may be up. Keep an eye on your kids and, if their behaviour changes, act on it.

### Ends

For further information, screen grabs and PHONEbrain images, please contact the PhonepayPlus Media Office on 020 7940 7415 or at [pressoffice@phonepayplus.org.uk](mailto:pressoffice@phonepayplus.org.uk).

### NOTES

- PhonepayPlus is the organisation (previously known as ICSTIS) that regulates phone-paid services – the goods and services that you can buy by charging the cost to your phone bills and mobile pre-pay accounts. Further details of its work can be found at [www.phonepayplus.org.uk](http://www.phonepayplus.org.uk).
- [www.phonebrain.org.uk](http://www.phonebrain.org.uk) is not intended to encourage children to use phone-paid services. PhonepayPlus has developed the site as a means of informing and educating children about the safe and responsible use of phone-paid services.