

# ■ Senior Phone Setup Checklist

A printable step-by-step guide to setting up any phone for an elderly parent. By Pragmatic Sysadmin.

## 1. Before you start (10 min)

- Phone is charged above 50%
- You know their carrier (or the new one if switching)
- You have their account PIN / last 4 of SSN ready
- Apple ID or Google account credentials ready
- Quiet space with no distractions (no TV, no other people)

## 2. First 30 minutes — basics

- Language set to their preferred language
- Time zone set correctly
- WiFi connected (so they don't burn mobile data on updates)
- Screen brightness bumped up
- Text size bumped up to the largest tolerable setting
- Bold text enabled (Settings > Accessibility > Display)
- Volume boosted (Settings > Sounds)

## 3. Contacts (most important step)

- Add top 5 contacts as FAVORITES (not just in contact list)
- Add photos to those 5 contacts (so they see faces, not names)
- Set emergency contacts: you, siblings, doctor, neighbor
- Make sure YOUR number is in the favorites
- Delete any unknown contacts from the recent call list

## 4. Safety features (critical)

- Medical ID filled out (iPhone: Health app → Medical ID)
- Emergency SOS test (iPhone: hold side button + volume)
- Show Medical ID when locked — turned ON
- Silence Unknown Callers — turned ON
- Spam text filtering — turned ON
- Find My iPhone / Find My Device — turned ON

## 5. Helpful apps to install

- Buddy (free companion app — one-tap calls, scam checker)
- WhatsApp or FaceTime (for video calls with family)
- Google Maps or Apple Maps (with home address saved)
- Their banking app (or write it down — don't write the password on phone)
- Medication reminder app (Buddy or Medisafe)
- Photos app — pre-load 20-30 family photos so it feels like home

## 6. Teaching plan (don't dump everything)

- Day 1: Show them how to ANSWER a call (most important)
- Day 3: Show them how to call YOU (one button, one name)
- Day 7: Show them how to read a text message
- Day 14: Show them how to take and view a photo
- Day 30: Check in — what's working, what's still hard
- DON'T teach everything at once. One thing per visit.

## 7. What to avoid

- Don't load 30 apps on day one — overwhelm causes abandonment
- Don't enable every notification — most should be off
- Don't set a password they can't remember
- Don't enable fingerprint if they have arthritis (may fail)
- Don't blame them for not getting it — the phone is too complex

## Notes:

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Full guide: [pragmaticsysadmin.help/posts/best-phones-for-seniors-2026/](https://pragmaticsysadmin.help/posts/best-phones-for-seniors-2026/)

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