

Put Baby Yoda on your wrist with Vodafone and Disney's Neo smartwatch

European mobile carrier Vodafone has partnered with Disney to launch a new wearable for kids called the Neo. Vodafone says the Neo combines its technological capabilities with Disney's entertainment chops to offer a wearable that gives kids a sense of independence while letting parents stay in contact.

The Neo's most notable feature is its Disney branding. The Yves Béhar-designed watch lets kids choose from a collection of "Sidekicks" that will hang out on the main clock screen, including The Child / Baby Yoda / Grogu from *The Mandalorian*, Buzz Lightyear from *Toy Story*, and Minnie Mouse. Vodafone says the Sidekicks will animate throughout the day, and the company plans to add more characters over time at no additional cost.

An example of the Neo smartwatch with the Vodafone Smart app for controlling privacy settings.

Image: Vodafone

Besides the injection of Disney charm, the Neo is mostly focused on keeping parents in touch with their kids, with a few added smartwatch features (though all of this requires a Vodafone subscription). With the watch, parents can call, text, and get updates on their kid's location from the companion Vodafone Smart app. Parents can use the same app to create a "circle" of trusted contacts for texting and calling and limit screen time with Quiet Mode. To boost kid's "independence," the Neo can also receive calendar updates, check the weather, track activity, and take photos with a built-in 5-megapixel camera.

Wearables for kids are not a new category, and plenty of other mobile carriers like T-Mobile and Verizon offer takes on the idea. Even Apple has gotten into the game with Family Setup in watchOS 7, which we looked at earlier this year. The problems with smartwatches for kids are twofold: parents have to decide how much of their child's privacy they're willing to sacrifice to keep them safe, and usually, these watches aren't very great in the first place.

Vodafone says the Neo won't be released in Europe until early 2021, where it should retail for £99 with £7-a-month subscription. If the Neo's specific Disney wrapper piques your family's interest, you can sign up for the waitlist today.

<https://www.theverge.com/2020/12/2/22056770/disney-vodafone-neo-smartwatch-children-yves-behar-star-wars-baby-yoda>