Top tips for managing your child's first digital steps

Children are going online earlier than ever. Still, lots of online safety information is aimed at older kids and teens, and it can be confusing for parents of young children to know where to start. Here are our top five tips for managing your child's first digital steps safely.

- **Balance screen time with other activities.**
  The internet offers lots of opportunities for learning and creativity, but for young children limits on screen time are important. Make sure they're balancing it with lots of offline, real-world exploration and play.

- **Be a good digital role model.**
  Young children's early experiences with the digital world are often shaped by the people around them. Think about how they see other members of the family using tech – do you have a hard time disconnecting from your devices at dinner, for instance? Are they in the room while older siblings play violent video games? There's no need to be perfect, of course, but try to stay conscious of the examples they see.

- **Take advantage of technical tools.**
  When young children first start using digital devices, they'll see them as toys – and want to swipe, click and touch everything in sight. Before you hand a phone or tablet over to your child to play, make sure you've disabled in-app purchases and turned on parental controls to avoid unpleasant surprises.

- **Get them thinking.**
  As your children take their first digital steps, it's a good time to start talking to them about some of the important online safety issues they'll face as they grow up. For example, familiarise them with the concept of online privacy by talking to them before posting their picture on social media.

- **Explore together.**
  It's important to give older children the freedom to explore the internet on their own and develop their resilience. But when your kids are just starting out, you might want to help them navigate the online world. If your child is starting to use YouTube, for example, look for fun and appropriate videos together and chat about what you find.