TECH TIP #2: IS YOUR CHILD READY FOR THEIR FIRST DEVICE? WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

Thinking about getting your child their first phone or smart device? Many parents are weighing this decision as kids head back to school and have more independent activities. So how do you know if your child is ready—and what are the best options to start with?

Signs Your Child May Be Ready

- They follow family technology rules without constant reminders
- They communicate well and understand online safety basics

If you've answered "yes", that still doesn't mean they need a pocket-sized computer (smartphone). There are lots of options that let you put safety first and gradually introduce apps like social media later. **Research supports no smartphones until age 14 and no social media before 16.**

Good Starter Devices

- Smartwatches like **Gabb Watch** or **TickTalk** let kids call and text approved contacts, with no internet or social media.
- Kid-safe phones like the **Gabb Phone** or **Pinwheel** offer calling, texting, GPS tracking, and curated app access, without a browser or app store.
- **Bark has a phone and smartwatch** for kids with built-in parental controls and monitoring. You can decide what's allowed and it's scalable over time to include social media.
- You can **re-use an old smartphone and lock it down with parental controls** (Apple Screen Time or Google Family Link are free; Bark is a paid subscription).

Start with what your child actually needs to be able to do.

Before You Hand It Over

- Create a **Family Tech Agreement** to set expectations (when, where, and how it's used - see Tech Tip #1).
- Set up **monitoring tools and parental controls**
- Try **a trial period**: Give device access for a few weeks and revisit the Agreement together.

You're teaching lifelong healthy tech habits.

💬 Family Conversation Starter

"What's one thing you're excited to do with your first phone?"

Or, if they already have one: *"What's one thing you love—and one thing that's tricky—about using your phone?"*

Learn more about smartphone options by clicking the button below.
https://www.waituntil8th.org/devices

Questions or topic suggestions? Email us at info@centerforonlinesafety.com

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