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VERY EARLY ADOPTERS: ATTACK OF THE ‘TECH-TOTS’

- **Almost a third of UK kids aged 1-5 own a smartphone, tablet or laptop**
- **Kids mimic parents at a very young age to swipe, tap and pinch**
- **Last year, UK parents spent £848 million on electronics damaged by kids**

We’ve all heard of the phrase ‘early adopters’ but new data shows that almost a third (31%) of 1-5 year olds own sophisticated gadgets – smartphones, tablets and laptops. UK toddlers and those under 5 are far more wedded to tech than some of our European counterparts such as France (20%) or Germany, where tech ownership for under 5’s is just 11%.

Toddlers are trying to use the touchscreen gestures that are required to work these devices, with varying levels of success. Claims submitted to SquareTrade, a protection plan provider, show that last year, swiping-related breakages and drops accounted for 50% of claims. A further 10% of devices were knocked off tables. Last year, 1 in 3 families reported a damaged gadget at the hands of a child - an estimated bill of £848 million.

Heavy-handed ‘taps’, ‘pinches’ and kids who take a ‘working lunch’ have also brought about the demise of many expensive – and often uninsured – gadgets. The toilet, the rocking chair and the kitchen floor – just three of the methods young children have found to destroy smartphones and tablets UK parents have told SquareTrade.

Parents reported the number of strange ways in which children have managed to destroy their tech. One child was sitting on a rocking chair playing on a smartphone when the phone slipped out of his fingers and he rocked over it. Squabbling siblings caused the demise of another smartphone when a brother and sister fought over whose turn it was next and dropped the phone on the kitchen floor. One parent told how he had to fish his tablet out of the toilet after his son dropped it.

Teething toddlers are often drawn to smartphones and tablets as something to chew on. One parent commented that his son is often attracted by his BlackBerry: “It goes straight in his mouth and I get a soggy keyboard for his efforts.”

While older children may be trusted not to start chewing on their tech, increasingly they are taking tablets and smartphones into schools where they often get damaged. One in three schoolchildren now take smartphones, tablets and other devices into schools with a total cost of £1.5bn of tech being taken into British schools every day. Only half of this technology is insured, meaning every day in the UK, children are carrying around £750m of uninsured devices.

A recent YouTube video with almost 5 million views shows a baby using swiping gestures on a magazine, demonstrating the speed with which children are learning to use the new hand movements.

Kevin Gillan, European managing director for SquareTrade said: “With smartphones and tablets becoming increasingly common in UK schools, accidents are bound to happen. Half of the devices in our schools are currently uninsured which can lead to misery and inconvenience should disaster strike.”

SquareTrade protects mobile devices, laptops and tablets, and other consumer electronics and appliances from malfunctions, accidental damage and life’s frequent mishaps. Unlike old-fashioned warranties, SquareTrade is designed for today’s consumer and uses innovative technology to deliver a zero hassle claims process. You can find SquareTrade at Tesco stores, or for more information, go to www.squaretrade.co.uk.

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About SquareTrade

SquareTrade is the top-rated protection plan trusted by millions of happy customers for its fast and exceptional service. SquareTrade protects mobile devices, laptops and tablets, and other consumer electronics and appliances from malfunctions, accidental damage and life's frequent mishaps. Unlike old-fashioned warranties, SquareTrade is designed for today's consumer and uses innovative technology to deliver a zero hassle claims process. SquareTrade has more than 200,000 fans on Facebook, consistently wins industry awards and receives thousands of 5-star reviews for its legendary customer service. Top retailers around the world offer SquareTrade, achieving significant sales growth and happier customers. Privately held, SquareTrade's investors include Bain Capital and Bain Capital Ventures. SquareTrade is headquartered in San Francisco and London. For more information, go to www.squaretrade.com.