

Activity 4: Jill and Ted's excellent adventures

Jill and Ted were 9 years old. They were in the same class at school and they weren't absolute besties, but they got on perfectly well.

They shared a love of football. Both had a games console and both loved FIFA. Sometimes, in the evenings they'd log on and have a cheeky game or two. Or nineteen.

Then Miss Cleverclogs gave the class some homework. 'This week,' she announced, 'I want you all to log how many hours of screen time you do. No fibs. No ifs. No buts. No cheating. Every time you sit in front of a screen, you count the minutes and write them down.'

'All screens?' grumbled Bella, 'like TV, iPad, laptop and everything.'

'All screens,' nodded Mrs C.

'Is a phone a screen?' asked Ravi.

'A phone does indeed have a screen Ravi,' assured the class teacher.

Jill packed her bag at 3.30 not knowing that this homework would change her life.

One week later, the results were in. Miss Cleverclogs drew a graph on the board and plotted everyone's hours on it.

Ted was top. His weekends were spent almost entirely on FIFA, plus about 2 hours each school day, so he averaged out at 4 hours and 13 minutes screen time per day. Ted had never been top of anything before so he swaggered around thinking he was cool.

Which got Jill wondering. Her average daily screen time of 3 hours and 2 minutes per day bugged her. She wondered if it would actually be better to be at the bottom of the screen time league table. And then she wondered an even bigger wonder - what if she replaced her screen time of 3 hours and 2 minutes of imaginary football with 3 hours and 2 minutes of actual real football.

She got her calculator out and did some numbers.

3 hours and 2 minutes = 182 minutes. That's how many minutes of screen time I do in a day.

She then calculated her screen minutes per year, and then between now and age 20. She then converted that massive number into hours, then days.....

Jill stared at the number; 461 (and a bit) days!

Between now and age 20 she was going to spend way more than an entire year staring at a screen.

Except, obviously, she wasn't. Because while Ted ploughed on with his screen time, Jill decided she'd spend 3 hours and 2 minutes, every single day, playing or watching actual football. She started with some kickabouts with her dad. Then she roped a few mates in and they played in the park with jumpers as goal posts. Then she joined a team and went training twice a week, playing in a league on Saturdays and Sundays.

She got fitter and stronger and better. Sometimes it rained and nobody else fancied it so Jill played on her own, hammering a football against a wall - left foot, right foot - time after time, after time, after time, after time...

... ..after time.

While Ted was sitting in his bedroom getting really good at pretend football, Jill was out in the fresh air getting really good at the real thing.

Day after day, after day, after day, Ted played on his console. Day after day, after day, after day, Jill played for real. For 461 (and a bit) days.

Ted was super-excited for his 21st birthday. The delivery van pulled up outside and the young man went to help unload the super massive widescreen surround sound 5D 10G holographic TV. They lugged it upstairs to Ted's tiny bedroom and plugged it in.

'You little beauty,' he said as he logged on and downloaded the brand new game: FIFA35.

His expert thumbs did all the work. To be fair, although he'd developed a bit of a pizza belly and a biscuit double chin, his thumbs were super fit. Yes, Ted definitely had the best thumbs in the neighbourhood.

Ted was going to pick the best team. He scrolled. Keeper, tick. Defenders, tick. Midfielders, tick.

There was a forward he absolutely had to have. A young player who was a regular at Man United and on the verge of playing for England. Great stats. Good goal scorer. Tidy tackler. Superb with both feet.

Jill's face appeared on the screen. Ted clicked. 'Gotcha, old buddy,' he said.

Sum it up

Calculate your weekly screen time. All screens! No fibs, ifs, buts or maybes. What's your screen time per year?

What's your screen time over 10 years?

What's your screen time over the next 80 years?

If you halved it, what else could you learn or do in that time?

How might that learning or doing help you?