

Living without the Internet

In the same week that three people lost their jobs for misusing the Internet at work, a BBC journalist tried to work for three days without going online. How important is the Internet for life in the 21st century?

1 How many hours do you spend online each day? Tick one of the boxes. Compare your answer with a partner.

Under 1 hour 1–2 hours 2–4 hours Over 4 hours

2 Guess the correct figures in the following statistics. Scan the last paragraph of the article to check your answers.

- (a) **Half / two-thirds / three quarters** of homes in the UK have access to the Internet.
 (b) The British spend about **15 / 25 / 35** hours online per month.

Living offline

Rory Cellan Jones is a technology writer for the BBC. He decided to see if he could spend 72 hours without going online and still do his job. So, he stopped using the Internet at work and at home; he stopped playing online games with his friends; he could still jog, but he couldn't jog and listen to the latest podcasts on his MP3 player. Nor could he sit on the train or in the bar and send e-mails using his Blackberry.

Rory is a journalist. Before the experiment began, his boss believed it would be impossible to do his job without the Internet. Rory has written a humorous report of his experience. At the end of three days, he had 165 e-mails waiting. Many of these e-mails he knew he could delete without reading. Rory reported that without dealing with his e-mails and without surfing the web, he achieved a lot of work. He concludes that the Internet can be a 'magnificent way to waste time.'

In the same week as Rory's experiment, three council workers lost their jobs for spending two hours a day on e-bay, the Internet auction site. One of the workers was sacked; the other two resigned. Some people criticised the decision of their employer, saying that nowadays the Internet is part of our working lives. Others think that wasting two hours a day is wrong. One suggestion has been for companies to limit Internet access to the lunch break.

Our private and professional lives have certainly been changed forever by technology. Two-thirds of homes in the UK have access to the Internet. The British spend more time online than people in any other European country, about 35 hours month. How essential is the Internet for people at work? Could they do their jobs without it? Maybe, like Rory Cellan Jones, you could actually be more productive.

3 Read the whole article. Why did three workers lose their jobs? What did the journalist conclude?

4 Find one word in each line that does collocate with the word at the end.

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|---|------------|-------------|------------|------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1 | (a) send | (b) achieve | (c) ignore | (d) delete | (e) deal with | (f) reply to |
| 2 | (a) misuse | (b) surf | (c) browse | (d) spend | (e) use | (f) access |

e-mails
the Internet

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report your ideas to the class.

- (a) If you didn't use the Internet for 72 hours, how many unwanted mails would you receive?
 (b) Can you do your job without using the Internet?
 (c) Should companies allow employees unlimited access to the Internet at work?