



The social experiment

Cross-curricular – Computer science

1 Answer the questions about your use of social networking sites.

- How many texts do you send each day?
.....
- How often do you visit a social networking site?
.....
- What benefits does social networking give you that other forms of communication don't?
.....
- How do you think older generations view these activities?
.....

2 Read the text and write a final line for the text which summarises what the experiment found.

How long could you be without your virtual social life?

As part of a project called 'The Social Experiment', more than 600 students at Shoreline High School gave up texting, email, and networking sites for a week free of social media.

A Cole Sweeten, 17, found that some of his friends are awkward on the phone. 'They don't know what to say!' he said. But he also discovered that he likes getting calls. He said he prefers a real 'Hey, how are you?' to a 'Hello' text with a smiley face.

The idea started with Trent Mitchell, a video-production teacher at the school. He wondered whether his students, who often walked into class heads down, typing away on their phones, could cut themselves off from social media. Mitchell thought his students wouldn't be able to tear themselves away. When he asked them, half the students said they could do it; the other half thought it was the worst idea they'd ever heard. Mitchell and a colleague from another school, Marty Ballew, created The Social Experiment. The theme was 'What was life like in 1995?' Students documented the process through video interviews with students and staff, some of whom also volunteered to cut themselves off.

B Five students handed over their cell phones to Ballew. One girl gave him her Facebook password and asked him to change it for the week to help her avoid temptation.



C If you answered the message, as some students did, you got the response: 'You're out of the Social Experiment!'

Cole Sweeten found it tough. He deleted texts as they came in, but found it hard to remember not to answer text messages. On the second day, he heard the familiar buzz and grabbed his phone, ready to hit the button to read the new text message, when he remembered. 'No!' he shouted, and dropped the phone to the floor.

D It was too much for her parents, who confiscated her phone for a week. This year, she said, she has averaged 20 to 50 a day, until the experiment week, that is. It was 'weird' not checking her email, texts and social network site as soon as she woke. But each day got easier. She got more exercise, for one thing. 'I run with my dogs and do other things because I'm not spending all my time on Facebook,' she said during the experiment.

E He also figured out activities such as practising basketball are better distractions than ones that take 10 or 15 minutes. 'You had to do something that filled time in large segments,' he says.

Final line:

3 Find the underlined words that match the words below.

- worked out
- gave
- get away
- desire for something you shouldn't have
- uncomfortable
- took away and banned from using

4 Where do the missing sentences belong? Match each sentence 1–5 with paragraphs A–E in the text.

- Ed Wytovicz did chores during his free time, an idea that sounds like it came from his parents, but he claims he wanted to do it.
- Under the rules, students could call each other on their phones, which many of them had never done before the experiment began.
- The experiment was based mostly on trust, but secret spies sent text messages to students and instant messages to people breaking the rules.
- Last year, El Zein was sending or receiving 200 texts per day, or about 6,000 per month.
- Some students went to extremes to make sure they didn't break the rules.

5 Which person in the text might have said the following? Write the person's name. You may use a name more than once.

- I prefer speaking to my friends to writing messages to them.
- Before the experiment, I didn't believe anyone would be able to do without texting and social networking online.
- I've been without my mobile for a week before I did this experiment.
- I found ways of passing time that were useful.

6 Answer the questions.

- Would you find the experiment easy to carry out?
- Do you think it was a useful experiment? Why?/Why not?