**Not having a TV at home.**

My family have never had a TV in the house. The households they came from did have TVs, but they made the conscious decision not to include one in the first house they got together. As a result I’m quite bookish, and reading lots of books has accentuated my imagination. I ended up reading a lot of books when I was young, by such authors as Antony Horovitz, Brian Jacques, Roald Dahl. At school I was better at making up new stories than writing from personal experience, and I have always tried to write music. Writing good computer software also requires a good imagination, because one is more likely to see a more obscure solution.

**When I broke my arm in Primary 3.**

I broke my arm falling off a small wall. The doctor said it was a severe break because I fell with my arm underneath me that broke it. While this was a big incident for my body, it only really affected me in the short term. It was very painful at the time, but once my arm was in a cast, it was quite fun learning to write with my right hand as I broke my left arm which is my writing hand. It gave me an excuse to use the computer at school all the time as well!

Looking back on this experience makes me think I am adaptable, and I enjoy a challenge to learn to write with the other hand. I also trust my body to be pretty resilient most of the time, to the point where I take my health for granted. I do not really consciously exercise or make any allowances in my diet, and while I am definitely on the thin side at the moment, I do worry that this will change as I get older.

**Having a computer in the house for the first time.**

I distinctly remember the moment my parents told me we were getting a computer. Computers to me are not tools to get things done, or wastes of time, or computational machines. They are places to explore.

Getting a computer was the beginning of a long investigation I have made into how humans react to and interactive with computers. I am less excited by a complex algorithm and more interested in why people who do not call themselves programmers can use spreadsheets. I have only recently been aware I am doing this, but my aversion to studying algorithms put me off studying computer science at university.

**Learning to play the saxophone.**

Some of my earliest memories are of playing the saxophone. I work hard, sometimes too hard, and try to move too fast. As a result I am a good sight reader, but I get impatient. For example, I tried to progress through the ABRSM grades, and when I got to university I had to unlearn a lot of bad habits.

Preparing for musical performances seems to come naturally to me. However, outside of music I do not prepare well. I was still one of those at university who was up past four in the morning of the deadline, and I even handed in a few incomplete submissions.

**My first job as a waiter at the Norton House Hotel.**

I really enjoyed my time at the Norton House. It forced me out of my comfort zone, and I am pleased that I rose to the challenge. I had to talk to new customers every day, and put them at their ease by making the first move. Waiting tables was not something I wanted to do for the rest of my life, but I started some savings, and the experience was a good start to my working life.

*Objectives*

Save money

**Leaving home to go to University.**

I was very keen to move away once I had decided to go to university. I wanted to prove I could fend for myself, and I think I wanted a bit more independence as well. I am glad I did, because it has made me more confident in my own independence. I did not go to church while at university, and while I think it would have been wrong to go if I did not want to be there, I feel I missed out on the excellent Christian Union at York.

My self-confidence helped me look after myself for the first time, but I feel that it led me to change too many things too quickly: my faith, my home, the distance from my parents and my responsibilities to look after myself and my home. With all this coming on top of completing a degree, I feel I could have saved myself a lot of pain by taking a slower pace. Now I am living with my parents again, I feel there is a lot I can still learn from them about caring for a house and organising time to do chores.

**Leaving my job at Gear4music.**

I started working for Gear4Music in 2011, through a referral from a friend from York University.

I was pleased that I had managed to get a job straight from University. It was by no means a graduate position, but it was a start, and I really got along with the people there. It is amazing how much having friendly colleagues helps job satisfaction: the job was answering phones, but I did not worry because I made friends.

**My experiences at a call centre in Ipswich.**

In short, a call centre is a terrible place to work. That was my expectation, and that is how it turned out.

Somewhere in the middle though, I did get carried along in the hype created by the recruitment process, and that led me to believe it would be a worthwhile place to meet similarly aged people, and to help customers over the phone. This reminds me I am as susceptible to sales pressure as anyone else, but that I at least joined with the right attitude.

Fortunately I was able leave after six weeks for a job at BT. But so many people cannot. Directline are providing jobs that pay people a reasonable wage, but the atmosphere and environment serve to either repel most people after about a year, or trap them in a job without many prospects.

**Having music as a hobby or a profession.**

When I left home for university I was keen to become a professional musician, because I thought being an amateur was somehow worth less than being a professional. I now know this to not be true: it is an absurd generalisation.

I met musicians who regarded themselves as professionals at university who were not really emotionally invested in their music – it was simply their easiest way to make money.

I have met plenty of amateurs who invest less time in their craft and who are not paid, but yet produce amazing music.