

## About Us

We thought we'd do an experiment and both introduce conkerexchange to you:

### Introduction One:

How did it all start? For years ideas had been swirling around in the heads of Elli and Lorena, before they'd even met. Actually, technically they still haven't met, they talk only by email. That's become part of the idea behind conkerexchange, how to work together at a distance. When they started chatting about their lives, they found out they both wanted similar things: to work for themselves, to own a property where they could grow much of their own food, and to use the internet as a tool for keeping in touch but also to enhance their lives. They each have friends in other countries (Lorena lives in the UK and Elli in Switzerland) and were interested in the ways other countries did things. Other ideas they each had would fit around this central theme - an international support community. The name conker, by the way, came from an idea for a wooden toy store, as it was autumn at the time!

The idea of exchange is to use something other than money to pay for skills that can be used via the internet, therefore exchanging conkers rather than money. When they started pooling ideas to see if they matched, they also produced personal histories and self portraits - a fascinating experience! Why don't you have a go? You can leave the personal history for when you're more familiar with other members, but do try the self-portrait - it's a great way to find out how you see yourself, and how you want other people to see you! click through for Elli and Lorena's self-portraits. Meeting on the internet is a very different experience to meeting in real life. After all, you can say what you like on the internet, and edit your messages until they really do say what you mean. Elli and Lorena have learned how to not offend each other or tread on each other's toes - working together on a project that was originally two separate, personal, ideas was not easy to start with. But as soon as they were honest about how they interpreted each others messages they soon fell into step. They're keen to help anyone else intending to work together this way - for a short term goal, or a longer business relationship. But more than that, they're keen to get people talking to and supporting each other. Becoming mums can be isolating, and if you're intending to work for yourself, then you don't have an environment away from home to get involved in. And advice can be gained from all sorts of people, the wider a circle the better, so an online meeting place is ideal and Elli and Lorena invite you to enjoy their conkerexchange site, and to participate in its growth as much as you are willing and able to.

Introduction Too: Conker Exchange is an idea thought up by Lorena and Elli. They thought of it independently, an idea about women, the internet, asking questions, staying in touch, babies, work, child loss, relationships and all those other facets of life. They had an idea which involved a chat site, an exchange of information, an online shop for women's products, advice pages and a chance for women to earn a bit of money, somehow. From this idea grew another idea. To try and set something like this up, without ever meeting. To communicate purely by email. To rely on the written word and to make friends with someone without any of the barriers which voice and appearance can create. It is true that new barriers were created: Elli couldn't see when Lorena was tired and Lorena couldn't hear when Elli was joking. But soon a new way of communicating developed as the need to be very open and to 'over-communicate' became clear. A note sent: I'm ill! Or: we're away this weekend/I've got loads on. This all helped. And also the longer mails which started with sentences like: I've had time today, but don't feel stressed by what I'm sending, read it and respond when you have time :-). This way of communicating has led to the slow gestation and birth of Conker Exchange, Lorena and Elli's baby. At the moment Baby Conker is very small, she just has some great places to chat and some new folks to meet. But like all parents, Lorena and Elli have great plans for their baby. When Conker grows up, she'll be rich and famous and beautiful and a doctor and will always shop ethically and help other people fulfil their dreams and lead happy lives.