

# extra fingers

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## It didn't do anything

**AMELIE:** "Dad, last night I weighed myself on Grandma and Pa's scales."

**DAD:** "Did you? And how much did you weigh?"

**AMELIE:** "Twenty-five."

**DAD:** "Twenty-five kilos?"

**AMELIE:** "Yeah."

**DAD,** not knowing what else to say: "Is that good, do you think?"

**AMELIE:** "I don't know . . . I wanted to weigh thirty."

**DAD:** "Thirty!"

**AMELIE:** "Hmm-hmm. Kilos. But I couldn't. Like, I got this toilet roll and put that on with me but it didn't do anything. It just stayed on twenty-five."

# Well, talking about cats

As told to me by Holly

**AMELIE**, whilst talking to Holly and Isabella: “Well, talking about cats.”

**HOLLY**: “But we weren’t. We weren’t talking about cats.”

**AMELIE**: “Yeah, I know. But I wanted to change the subject because what you were talking about was really boring and I thought cats would be better.”

## Well then how would you know?

Between attaining the rather unremarkable height of four and a half feet and then recently reaching, the far more significant height of five feet, Isabella complained constantly about growing pains. I’m sure Amelie must have overheard the complaints because one day not long ago, whilst sitting at our kitchen table, she lent over and winced, telling me her stomach was really hurting.

**AMELIE**: “I think it’s growing pains.”

**DAD**: “What! Oh no, darl. It can’t be growing pains. Stomachs don’t grow like that.”

**ISABELLA**: “Yes they do. Stomachs grow. What are you trying to say? That they don’t? That Amelie’s tummy is the same size as yours is, Dad?”

**DAD**: “Well no, I’m not trying to say that. I’m just trying to say that a stomach doesn’t grow like a leg does.”

**ISABELLA**: “Dad. Growing pains are normal and they can happen to anyone and to any part of them. You’re not a doctor, so how would you know?”

## Isabella changes subjects

**(more often than airlines change departure times)**

**ISABELLA**, about to board the plane for Sydney: “Dad, on our way to London—”

**DAD**: “Yep.”

**ISABELLA**: “Not today.”

**DAD**: “No, it’s obviously not today.”

**ISABELLA**: “Um, will they have a co-driver? To do the night time?”

**DAD**: “Yes, it’s called a co-pilot.”

**ISABELLA**: “Because they’ll need to have someone to swap at night. They can’t do it all day. Because they’ll just fall asleep and then they’ll go (*makes the sound of someone falling asleep and then losing control of the plane*) . . . They should have three co-drivers. And a doctor.”

**DAD**: “Well, when they need to sleep they switch the plane on to what’s called auto-pilot. That means a computer runs it.”

**ISABELLA**: “But what if the computer smashed?”

**DAD:** "'Smashed?'"

**ISABELLA:** "Yeah, what if a robber—"

**DAD:** "What robber?"

**ISABELLA:** "Dad, you know how in 9/11—"

**DAD:** "Yeah, they have those doors to the cockpit locked now."

**ISABELLA:** "Didn't they have them locked before?"

**DAD:** "No."

**ISABELLA:** "That is so dumb!"

**DAD:** "Well, they've changed that now."

**ISABELLA:** "Good."

**DAD:** "Yeah, I know."

**ISABELLA,** changing the subject: "Can cars go as fast as a plane?"

**DAD:** "Um, well, no, they can't."

**ISABELLA,** disappointedly: "Oh! What if you went like a hoon?"

**DAD:** "Even if you went like a hoon you're still not going to catch up to a plane."

**ISABELLA:** "Unless it was a really broked (sic) down plane."

**DAD:** "Well, if it was—"

**ISABELLA:** "Or if it was just a car with wings and they called it a plane . . ."

**DAD:** "Well, yes . . . You know, it takes a long time to become a pilot. You have to train for a really long time."

**ISABELLA:** "How long?"

**DAD:** "Oh, many years."

**ISABELLA:** "Five years?"

**DAD,** distracted: "Yeah."

**ISABELLA:** "But what if you got it on the first day? Like, you were perfect? Nothing went wrong."

**DAD:** "But you don't get a chance to have a go on the first day. You don't get handed the controls and then given that chance."

**ISABELLA:** "Why don't they just give them [trainee pilots] a go to see if they're 'naturals'?"

**DAD:** "No, it's not like that. There are so many different controls."

**ISABELLA:** "Well, who was the first person who actually did it? Because they would have to have a good chance."

**DAD:** "That was a long time ago. The first flight was in 1903 with the Wright Brothers."

**ISABELLA:** "'Wright brothers?'"

**DAD:** "Yeah, the Wright brothers. They were the first people to do a powered flight."

**ISABELLA:** "Dad, what if someone looks really risky? Like, they were laughing and going, 'you'll never find out what I've got' and they were being really mean to the security people?"

**DAD:** "They'd get arrested. They have federal police here."

**ISABELLA:** "No, but what if they were actually just kidding? And they said it was a joke?"

**DAD:** "You're not allowed to do jokes at the airport, darl."

**ISABELLA,** deciding to move on: "What if the pilot vomited all over the controls?"

**DAD:** "Well, they'd wipe it off."

**ISABELLA:** "Yeah, but, then if you wipe it off all the buttons would go."

**DAD:** "All the buttons would go? Well, you'd have to be careful wiping it off."

**ISABELLA:** "Because if you weren't, the plane would go (makes the sound of a plane losing control)."

**AMELIE**, interrupting: "Yeah, it could land on someone's head. Or a house. And they wouldn't even know."

**DAD:** "What do you mean 'they wouldn't even know'? Of course they're going to know if a plane lands on their head! Planes are huge, darl. They're not going to land on someone's head without them knowing."

**AMELIE**, changing the subject: "Dad, did you know that a man can pick up a plane?"

**DAD:** "Oh, I don't think so."

**AMELIE:** "He can. In The Goodest (sic) World Records he did."

**DAD:** "In The Goodest World Records?"

**ISABELLA** and **AMELIE**, in unison: "He can!"

**DAD**, skeptically: "He can't pick up a plane!"

**ISABELLA** and **AMELIE**, in unison again: "He can!"

**DAD:** "What is it? A toy plane?"

**ISABELLA:** "No, no, no."

**AMELIE:** "With his head he can."

**DAD**, incredulously: "He picks a plane up with his head! How does he do that?"

**ISABELLA:** "He can."

**AMELIE:** "Yeah, he can."

**DAD:** "Yeah, I'm not so sure about that."

**ISABELLA:** "No, seriously. The Guinness World Records are actually . . ."

**AMELIE:** "True."

**DAD:** "No, he'd be in the Olympics. Go and have a look at the Olympic world record for weight lifting. A plane is way heavier than the world record for the heaviest thing ever lifted."

**ISABELLA:** "Maybe he didn't go in the Olympics. Because you don't have to."

**DAD:** "I know, but clearly if the fellow can lift a plane then he should be representing his country."

**ISABELLA:** "But his country might go, 'Nah, we've already got someone.'"

**DAD:** "No, they wouldn't be like that. They'd go, 'Great! A gold medal for sure.'"

About ten minutes later . . .

**ISABELLA**, on pilot training: "Would training pilots be able to just have a little go at flying a plane with only a few people onboard first?"

## Advice for the airlines

**ISABELLA:** "Dad, how long does it take to go from Perth to London?"

**DAD:** "Well, to Singapore it takes around five hours and then to go from Singapore to London it takes about twelve more hours."

**ISABELLA:** "Oh. Why can't we go straight from Perth to London?"

**DAD:** "You think about it."

**ISABELLA:** "Fuel?"

**DAD:** "Exactly."

**ISABELLA:** "So, you have to get more fuel in Singapore?"

**DAD:** "That's right. Planes need to refuel there."

**ISABELLA:** “Oh. Well, how come a plane can go for twelve hours without stopping after it gets fuel in Singapore? I thought you said a plane has to stop after five hours.”

**DAD:** “No. It doesn’t have to stop in Singapore. It can go longer without needing to refuel if it wants to. Planes just stop in Singapore because it’s convenient and a lot of people like to get off there. Of course, you could break up the flight more evenly if the plane stopped off in, say, India. That would be more even in distance than Singapore is.”

**ISABELLA:** “Well, why don’t they?”

**DAD:** “Because Singapore is more of a business destination than cities in India are.”

**ISABELLA:** “Well, you know what I think?”

**DAD:** “No.”

**ISABELLA:** “I think they should just have petrol stations in the sea. That would be so much easier. A plane could then fly down low, stop, get some fuel, and then fly off again. It’d be so much simpler than what they’re doing now.”

## Remembrance Day

**ISABELLA,** referring to The Last Post that is always played at Remembrance Day ceremonies: “Who wrote that song?”

**DAD:** “The Last Post?”

**ISABELLA:** “Yeah.”

**DAD:** “I don’t know.”

**ISABELLA:** “Oh great! So how are we going to remember that person on Remembrance Day?”

## Which one to lose?

**DAD:** “Well, Issy. Guess what? As we’re in NSW we’re going to have to put our clocks forward tonight. What do you think of that? We’re going to lose an hour.”

**ISABELLA:** “Which one?”

**DAD:** “No, it’s not a particular hour that we lose; we’re just going to have an hour taken off the next day.”

**ISABELLA:** “Oh.”

About fifteen seconds later . . .

**DAD:** “Having said that though, Issy, if you could choose a particular hour to lose, which one would you pick?”

**ISABELLA,** her tea still at least an hour away and clearly feeling quite hungry: “This one for sure.”

### LAST WORD

## Facing up to the facts

**AMELIE,** measuring herself against Isabella: “All I need is for my face to grow and then I’ll be as tall as Issy.”