

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR POST 16 OPTIONS

- ➔ YOUR FUTURE
- ➔ THINGS TO THINK ABOUT
- ➔ EXPLORING YOUR OPTIONS
- ➔ TAKING ACTION
- ➔ FINDING AND APPLYING FOR OPPORTUNITIES

**PARENTS
& CARERS
SUPPLEMENT
INCLUDED**

Name:

Date:

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Welcome

Congratulations! You've reached the next stage of your learning journey and it's time to decide what to do after year 11.

You probably feel that you have enough on your mind what with studying, taking exams and dealing with everyday life. Now someone is asking you to make big decisions about what you want to do next year. How will you decide which option is right for you?

Don't panic. **It's Your Choice** is full of information, ideas and action points to help you choose well. To get the most from it, use it as a workbook. Start at the beginning and work through it from cover to cover.

Don't forget...

Education and training are vital to your future success

The number of jobs for poorly qualified, unskilled people is shrinking quickly. You need knowledge, skills and qualifications if you want to get on in life. And that means continuing your education or training.

The law has changed

The law says that you must continue to do some kind of education or training until you are 18. This is so that you have the best possible chance to gain the knowledge, skills and qualifications that you need to get a job you enjoy in the future. Staying on at school is one option. But you could also continue your education or training at a college, with a specialist provider or in a workplace.

You need good careers information and advice to choose well

Make the most of the help on offer - in careers lessons, from careers advisers, your careers leader, family, friends, tutor, subject teachers and through the **National Careers Service** at

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

Involve your parents

Your parents want the best for you, but things have changed a lot since they went to school. Help them to understand what you are doing and how they can help you. Show them the parents and carers pages in the centre of this booklet.



Four things to think about...

... before you start exploring your options and making decisions.

1 There is an option to suit you whatever you have achieved so far

The law says that you must continue to do some kind of education or training until you are 18. This is so that you have the best possible chance to gain the knowledge, skills and qualifications you need to be successful in the future. You can choose one of the following options:

- full-time education - such as school or college (see page 13)
- an Apprenticeship or a Traineeship (see page 14)
- part-time education or training - if you are employed, self-employed or volunteering (see page 15).

3 Life is always changing

The future starts here. And the future is unpredictable. When you are deciding what to do after year 11, remember the following points:

- a career is a lifelong journey - and it will be full of twists, turns and surprises.
- this decision marks the next stage of your career journey - but it is only one step and you will have many opportunities in the future to change direction, learn new skills and gain new experiences.
- everyone has the potential to do well in more than one thing in life - just as every picture tells a thousand stories, your unique 'package' of skills, qualities and experiences can take you in many different directions.
- many roads lead to the same place - if one opportunity closes down, you can usually find another way to reach your goals.
- the world of work is always changing - most people do not stay in the job they start in and many change direction completely.

2 Choosing your key stage 4 options taught you something

Choosing your key stage 4 options gave you some practice in making decisions about your future. Now you have more decisions to make and more options to choose from. This time your choices will have a bigger impact on your life. You are not only deciding what to study but also where and how to do it. Before you start thinking about your post-16 options, take a few minutes to reflect on what happened when you chose your key stage 4 ones. Ask yourself:

- how did I make my decisions and what influenced me?
- did I choose well?
- what could I have done better or differently?
- what should I do better or differently this time?

4 You are not alone

Everyone needs a helping hand with important decisions. Your family and friends will be there for you and your school or college will give you a lot of help, including access to impartial and independent careers guidance. You can also get confidential advice from the National Careers Service at:

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>.

You can speak to a qualified adviser on its helpline (0800 100 900), which is open from 8am to 10pm seven days a week.

HOT TIP

Make the most of your experiences. Keep a record of what you have done and what it tells other people about you. If you do not have a personal portfolio in which to store these records, set one up now.

First steps

Choosing well means thinking hard about what interests and motivates you and what you want from life.

What makes you tick?

The people who are most successful in life know themselves, believe in themselves and chase their dreams.

✓ **They know what they like and what they are good at** - and they look for opportunities that will let them do more of these things.

✓ **They know what is important to them in life** - and they look for opportunities that support their values.

✓ **They think about what they want to be doing in a few years' time** - and they look for opportunities that will help them get there.

✓ **They know what they dislike and what they cannot do** - and they avoid opportunities that depend on these things.

✓ **They know what they are like as a person** - and they look for opportunities that fit their qualities and personality.

✓ **They focus on their goals** - and they seek help and support from people who want them to succeed and have a back-up plan in case things don't go the way they hope.

So, what kind of opportunities should you be looking for? What inspires and energises you? What interests and motivates you in learning and in life? Use our action point to help you work out what makes you tick.

ACTION POINT

DESCRIBE YOURSELF

1

I like:

Assessment methods that suit me:

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I am good at:

How I learn best:

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I do not like:

I cannot do:

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My values:

My qualities and personality:

My career dreams and goals:

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I should look for opportunities that:

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What are you looking for?

When it comes to choosing a post-16 option, everyone has different priorities. It is easier to spot opportunities that suit you if you know what you are looking for. Use our action point to help you work out what is important to you - remember though that life is not perfect and you may have to compromise.

HOT TIP

Whatever your interests, there is probably a STEM career (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) that matches them. Find out more at www.futuremorph.org

2

ACTION POINT

WORK OUT YOUR PRIORITIES

Tick the things that are important to you in a post-16 option. Then use the results to see which of your options provide the closest match.

People

- Being with friends
- Being with people my own age
- Knowing some of the staff

Other

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Place

- Familiar
- Friendly
- Good reputation
- Good social, sports and other facilities
- Small
- Near home
- Live-in/residential

Other

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Learning

- Mostly in a workplace
- Mostly in a classroom
- In different places
- Studying academic qualifications (subject-based)
- Studying technical/vocational qualifications (work-related)
- Studying a mix of qualifications
- Opportunity to do work experience
- Opportunity to volunteer
- Opportunity to do enterprise activities
- Good help and support

Other

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Personal

- Relaxed dress code
- Flexible hours
- Regular pay
- Own boss

Other

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Which options will suit you?

Which post-16 options will give you the best chance of success? Use our action point to help you organise your ideas.

3

ACTION POINT

WHICH OPTIONS INTEREST YOU MOST?

Thinking about what I am like, my priorities and my career ideas, the options that interest me most now are:

- Staying in full-time education
- Training for a specific career through an Apprenticeship
- Getting work-ready with a Traineeship
- Getting a job and studying part time
- Working for myself and studying part time
- Volunteering and studying part time

These interest me because:

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I want to find out more about:

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I can get the answers I need from:

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- I need to speak to my careers adviser as soon as possible.

AISHA SAYS...

...I kept my options open

I didn't have any specific career goals in year 11, but I knew I wanted to stay at school, do A Levels and go to university. My family, teachers and the careers people all said do what you enjoy and are good at. So I did. I carried on with English, French and history. I also chose a new subject, politics, for a bit of variety. I'm enjoying the courses even though they're hard work. I still don't know what I want to do in the future, but I have a wide range of university courses to choose from!

HOT TIP

Having a disability should not stop you from continuing your education or training. If you think you may need extra help post 16, mention it at open days and in applications and interviews. Find out more from the 'Education and learning' or the "Disabled people" pages at www.gov.uk



Research tips

Research is essential - it's the only way you can find out what you need to know. Use our action points to make sure you don't miss out on any important sources of information to help you to choose well.



ACTION POINT

RESEARCH BASICS

4

- Use this booklet to get an overview of your options.
- Talk to your tutor, subject teachers, careers leader and/or a careers adviser about local opportunities in education and training and where you can get more information.
- Look for careers information in the library and learning resource centre - they should also have computerised careers programs and internet research facilities that you can use. Find out what subjects, qualifications and experience you will need to follow your chosen career or do higher education courses that interest you (see www.ucas.com).
- Order prospectuses from colleges and sixth forms to find out what they offer - or use their websites and online prospectuses.
- Browse www.gov.uk to find out about Apprenticeships or Traineeships.
- Go to open days, open evenings, taster activities and other events.
- Connect with people already doing the options that interest you - face to face and through email, message boards, social networking sites and other online communities. Remember to keep safe online; never arrange to meet anyone who you only know through email or the internet.
- Find out if there is a common application process for post-16 education and training in your area - and how and when to use it.
- Discuss your ideas and plans with your family, friends and other people who know you well.
- Get an expert opinion from your careers leader or a careers adviser - they can help you compare your options and you can ask them who to speak to if you think that you will need extra help post 16.
- Bookmark and browse the websites that this booklet and your teachers recommend - start with the 'Education and learning' pages at www.gov.uk and the National Careers Service at <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>
- Talk to any employers who come into your school to talk to your class or at a careers event. Ask them about how they chose their options, why they chose their particular career and for any tips and advice.

5

ACTION POINT

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Use these examples as a starting point for making your own list of research questions.

- **Availability:**
Where can I do this? Will I have to travel? When can I apply? What is the closing date?
- **Organisation:**
What can this organisation offer me? What can I offer the organisation? Do our values match?
- **Entry requirements:**
What qualifications, skills and experience do I need to do this? Are there any age limits?
- **Time:**
How long will this last? How many hours a week will this take?
- **Activity:**
What will I be doing? What will I learn? How will I be taught and assessed? What is the workload like? Will I have to organise anything for myself? What help and support will I get?
- **Money:**
Will I have to pay for anything? Can I get any financial support to help me with the costs? Will I be paid? Will I get any benefits in kind like cheaper travel or free sports facilities?
- **Outcomes:**
What qualifications, skills and experiences will I get? Where could they lead? Will they help me to keep my options open? How does this compare with my other options?
- **Fun:**
Will I enjoy this? Will it suit me? Will I be a success at it?

ALEX SAYS...

...get information and impartial advice

Just before Christmas in year 11, school asked me what A Levels I wanted to do. I had so much on my mind with GCSEs that I hadn't thought about what would happen after I finished them. My parents encouraged me to talk to my teachers so I did. They tried to help me, but as I didn't know what I wanted to do in the future, they couldn't tell me what qualifications I'd need. I was stressed and asked people in my social networks for advice. One posted a couple of links to careers sites and one of the sites offered web chats with careers advisers. The web chat I had was great. The guy calmed me down and helped me make a 'to do' list. He also helped me work out what questions I needed to ask. Next day, I discovered that the careers library in school had one of the computer programs he'd mentioned. I had a go. It was hard because it was all about me and I had to be honest. A couple of days later, I made an appointment to see the school's careers adviser. She helped me think about the subjects that might suit me and where they might lead in the future. She gave me some great advice and I wished I'd gone to see her earlier.

6

ACTION POINT

HELP AND SUPPORT

List the people who you think could help you get the information you need.

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How could these people help you?

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Check the information you find before you use it.

This is very important if you use the internet and social media to find information. Ask yourself these questions to make sure that the information you have is trustworthy, unbiased, accurate and up-to-date.

Source: Where does this information come from? Do I trust this source?

Purpose: Does this information give me the facts? Is it trying to sell me something? Is it trying to persuade me to agree with a particular point of view?

Date: When was it written, published or updated? Is it still up to date?

Understanding Qualifications

Deciding what to do after year 11 means thinking about what to study.

What qualifications will you take? Do you know enough about qualifications to choose well? Find out here.

Why bother with qualifications?

Qualifications are your passport to more opportunities in education, training and work. You should take them seriously because they:

- give you a bigger choice of jobs - the number of jobs for people with no qualifications is shrinking quickly
- improve your earning power - people with qualifications earn more in their lifetime than those with no qualifications
- give you the chance to move on from a basic level job - without qualifications it is hard to move on from a low paid, low skilled job
- prove that you have what it takes to do well - that you are willing to learn, that you can learn, that you have the attitudes, skills and knowledge that employers, colleges and universities value
- boost your self-confidence - gaining qualifications shows that you are a success!

What level should you choose?

The level shows how hard a qualification is – the higher the level, the harder the qualification. There are nine qualifications levels, ranging from Entry Level up to level 8. Every level includes different types of qualifications. Some are subject-based academic qualifications (see page 11). Some are work and job-related vocational qualifications (see page 12). People work at the level that suits their abilities and experience in a particular subject. Once they have gained a qualification at one level, they often move up to the next level. When deciding what level to study after year 11, you need to consider:

- your starting point - what level are you working at now?
- the end point - can you move on to higher level qualifications?
- job entry requirements - most jobs require level 2 qualifications and many ask for qualifications at level 3 and above
- higher education entry requirements - most courses require level 3 qualifications and a grade 4 or above in GCSE English and mathematics (check the course requirements).

| Qualification | Achievement level | Examples of some qualifications at this level |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Entry Level 1 | Building a basic level of knowledge, understanding and skills | Entry level awards, certificates and diplomas at Levels 1, 2 & 3 Skills for life / Essential skills Functional skills (English, maths, ICT) |
| Entry Level 2 | | |
| Entry Level 3 | | |
| Level 1 | Basic knowledge, understanding and skills and the ability to apply learning to everyday situations | GCSE grades 3-1 Functional skills Level 1 Technical and vocational qualifications at Level 1 Skills for Life / Essential skills Functional skills (English, maths, ICT) |
| Level 2 | Building knowledge/skills in subject areas and their application. Important level for employers and further education applications | GCSE grades 9-4 Functional skills Level 2 Technical and vocational qualifications at Level 2 Apprenticeships at Level 2 |
| Level 3 | In-depth knowledge, understanding and skills, and a higher level of application. Appropriate for entry into higher education, further training or employment | All GCE AS and A Levels Technical and vocational qualifications at Level 3 International Baccalaureate Advanced Apprenticeships T Levels (starting in 2020 and 2021) |
| Levels 4-8 | Specialist learning that involves a high level of knowledge in a specific occupational role or study | Certificates and Diplomas of Higher Education Bachelor's degrees Higher Apprenticeships Postgraduate qualifications Professional qualifications Foundation degrees Degree Apprenticeships Technical and vocational qualifications at Level 4 and above PHDs / Doctoral degrees |

What type of qualification should you choose?

There are two main types of qualification post 16: academic and technical/vocational. Most people focus on one of these but some study both. When thinking about which qualifications to take, ask yourself if the ones that you are considering will:

- help you to meet the entry requirements for the jobs, careers and higher education courses that interest you
- help you to keep your options open if you are not sure what you want to do later on
- suit your preferred learning styles
- use assessment methods that suit you.

Academic qualifications

Do you want to look at some of your GCSE subjects in more detail? Do you want to study more than one subject? Academic qualifications are subject-based so may suit you.

A Level (level 3)

You can choose three or four subjects from those a school or college offers. People often take a mix of new subjects and ones they did well in at GCSE. Course entry requirements, teaching and assessment depend on the subject. Most courses:

- only accept people with good level 2 qualifications such as four or five GCSEs at grade 4 or above – and some ask for specific grades in specific subjects
- are classroom-based
- have a lot of theory and written work – the amount of practical work depends on the subject
- will be assessed mainly by exam only. Some courses, for example science subjects, also test your practical skills and ask you write about them.

A Levels prepare you for higher education and employment. If you have a particular career or higher education course in mind, it is vital to check the entry requirements – you may need specific subjects and grades for some.

T LEVELS

T Levels are the technical equivalents of A Levels at level 3. Fifteen new pathways will be developed in fifteen sector areas. The first courses will begin in 2020, the next 7 in 2021, with the remainder to follow in 2022 and 2023.

Extended Project Qualification (level 3)

Often known as an EPQ, this helps you to develop the research, independent learning and other skills that universities and employers look for. To gain an EPQ you must:

- choose a project and agree it with a teacher – it can be a topic that fits with your studies or one that is of personal interest
- do the project and show that you can plan, deliver and present an extended piece of work at level 3.

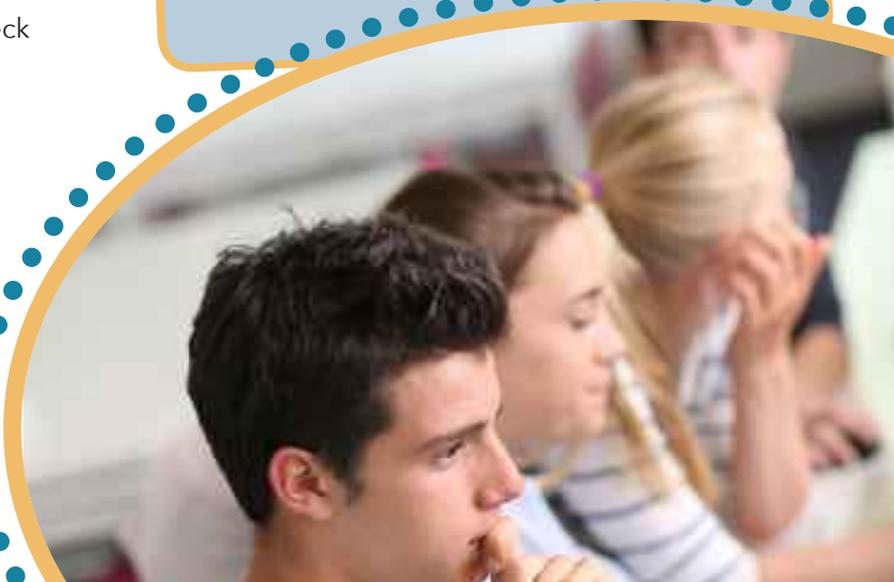
GCSE (levels 1 and 2)

If you do not achieve a good GCSE grade in English and mathematics in year 11, you will probably continue to study these subjects after you are 16. Others study for GCSEs alongside level 2 vocational qualifications (see page 12) or as part of a personalised programme (see page 13).

JAMIE SAYS...

...A Levels aren't like GCSEs

It's a huge jump from GCSE to A Level. The workload is much heavier than I expected and the level of detail much more challenging. There is a lot of freedom and independent learning, but there is a lot of pressure too. It didn't take me long to realise that free time on the timetable really means study time. It's impossible to keep up with the work if you spend all your free time hanging out with your mates. I'd advise anyone thinking of doing A Levels to talk to people doing the subjects they want to do so they know exactly what the courses are like.



Technical and vocational qualifications

Do you want to find out more about a particular area of work? Do you want to train for a particular job? If so, technical/vocational qualifications may suit you. They are qualifications that employers and professional bodies helped to develop. Examples are Tech Levels, Edexcel BTEC, City & Guilds and Cambridge National qualifications.

LIAM SAYS...

...I found it easy to choose

I've always been interested in all sorts of sports. I got good grades at GCSE but A Levels didn't appeal. I'm a practical learner and thought that a vocational course would suit me better. I did a BTEC level 3 qualification in Sport and Exercise Science at college and my course tutor helped me get some voluntary work at the local cricket club. I start my Sport Science degree in September.

General work-related qualifications

These help you to find out more about an industry and/or prepare for a particular type of work. You can choose a subject from those that schools and colleges offer – subjects range from construction and engineering to music and public services. Some people take an academic qualification (see page 11) alongside, and at the same level as, their work-related one.

Most courses take between one and two years to complete. They combine classroom learning with independent research and practical activities. Some include work experience. Assessment varies but there is always a written exam at the end, as well as assignments, practical tests and online tests.

You can do these qualifications at many different levels. Most people aged 16 to 19 study for qualifications at Entry level and levels 1, 2 and 3. Course entry requirements vary and depend on where you study and on the subject and level of the qualification.

To start a level 3 course, you generally need four or five good GCSEs or a level 2 technical/vocational qualification in a related area. To start a level 2 course, you generally need four or five GCSEs at grade 3 or below or a level 1 technical/vocational qualification in a related area (check the course requirements).

To start an Entry level or level 1 course, you generally need to show that you have a real interest in the subject and are prepared to work hard. Work-related qualifications prepare you for further education, training and work. You could study for higher level qualifications at college or university. You could apply for an Apprenticeship or get a job and continue your training to gain occupational and professional qualifications.

Occupational qualifications

Occupational qualifications are job-related. They develop the skills needed to do a particular job. They cover all sorts of jobs ranging from plumbing, food preparation and cleaning through to facilities management, veterinary nursing and dog grooming. You can take occupational qualifications at different levels to suit your experience.

Some people study for an occupational qualification in the workplace. Others study partly in the workplace and partly with an education or training provider. Each occupational qualification has several units. You can study the units one at a time to fit with the work you are doing. There is no age limit and you do not have to take the full qualification if it does not fit your needs or those of your employer. Assessment is through a portfolio of evidence and practical skills tests.

Young people aged 16 to 19 generally work towards occupational qualifications at levels 1 to 3. The qualifications rarely make up a full learning programme so you may take one:

- as part of an Apprenticeship (see page 14)
- as part of a personalised programme that includes preparation for work (see page 13)
- through work experience or an extended work placement
- through a part-time job
- through part-time education or training (see page 15).

HOT TIP

If you are considering higher education, check the entry requirements for the courses that interest you on www.ucas.com

Understanding Your Choices

Each post-16 option offers you a different mix of learning, experience and qualifications. Which will give you the best chance of success? Find out more about the different options here.

Full-time education

This is what most people do after year 11.

What can you study?

Your choices will generally include the following.

Level 3 programmes: These prepare you for higher education and employment. You work towards academic and/or technical/vocational qualifications at level 3 (see pages 10-12). All level 3 programmes include opportunities for work experience and enterprise activities. To start a level 3 programme, you usually need good level 2 qualifications - four or five GCSEs at grade 4 and above for example.

Level 2 programmes: These prepare you for further education, training and employment. You work towards academic and/or technical/vocational qualifications at level 2 (see pages 10-12). All level 2 programmes include opportunities for work experience and enterprise activities. To start a level 2 programme, you usually need level 1 qualifications - some GCSEs at grade 3 and below for example. You may also be asked for a grade 4 in GCSE English and mathematics.

Personalised programmes: These are Entry level and level 1 programmes. They are sometimes called by other names such as 'Foundation Learning'. These programmes give you a bit more time to build your confidence and gain qualifications that will help you move onwards and upwards. You will get help to choose options that fit your needs and improve your chances of success in the future. Most programmes include English and mathematics, personal and social development activities and some technical, vocational or subject learning. They also include work experience. When you have finished the programme, you will get help to plan your future and choose options that meet your needs. You could study for more qualifications. You could apply for a Traineeship or an Apprenticeship. You could prepare for supported employment and/or independent living.

Where can you study?

No two local areas are the same but in most you will have the following choices.

School sixth form: If you go on to the sixth form in your own school, you will know the place, the people and the support systems. If you apply to another sixth form, you can start afresh. School sixth forms are often quite small, which may limit the number of courses and subjects they can offer. Many have arrangements with other local schools and colleges so that they can offer a wider range of choices.

Sixth form college: Enrolling at a sixth form college gives you a fresh start - a new location, different rules and new friends, teachers and support systems. Students come from many schools and are around the same age. Sixth form colleges are bigger than school sixth forms so the choice of subjects and courses is usually bigger too.

Further education college: Moving away from your school and enrolling at a further education college gives you a fresh start - a new location, different rules, more independence and new friends, teachers and support systems. Further education colleges are very large with students of many different ages doing full and part-time courses. Their size means that they can offer a very wide range of subjects, courses and facilities.

Some people attend **specialist colleges**. These are usually outside the local area and mean studying away from home. They offer courses in specialist areas like agriculture and performing arts as well as courses for young people with disabilities or learning difficulties.

Where can you find out more?

Speak to your careers leader or a careers adviser. Look at school and college prospectuses to find out about courses, facilities and student life - most prospectuses are online.

Apprenticeships

This option suits people who know what they want to do for a living.

What is an Apprenticeship?

As an Apprentice, you work and earn money at the same time as you are learning and getting qualified. An Apprenticeship combines hands-on training in the workplace with off-the-job training at a local college or specialist training provider - this can be on day or block release. You work towards qualifications that give you the theoretical knowledge and practical skills you need to do a job well. There is no set time for completing an Apprenticeship but most take between one and four years.

Who can do an Apprenticeship?

You must be aged 16 or over, living in England and not in full-time education. Other entry requirements vary and depend on the Apprenticeship and the industry sector. At age 16, you can do an Apprenticeship at two levels: Intermediate Level (level 2) and Advanced Level (level 3). There is fierce competition for many Apprenticeships so you must be committed to your chosen occupation. You must also be ready to fulfil your responsibilities to both yourself and your employer.

What types of Apprenticeship are there?

There are hundreds of different types of Apprenticeship ranging from engineering to boat building, and veterinary nursing to accountancy. Your options will depend on your qualifications, experience and what is available locally.

What do Apprentices earn?

There is a minimum wage for Apprentices (see www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates), however many earn significantly more. Wage rates in the Agriculture sector may differ from the minimum wage. Employers often increase an Apprentice's pay as their knowledge, skills and experience improve.

Where does Apprenticeship lead?

An Apprenticeship prepares you for employment and higher level education and training. For example, from an Advanced Level Apprenticeship you could go on to do a Higher Apprenticeship, a Higher National Certificate or Diploma, a Foundation Degree, a Degree Apprenticeship or other course.

CHRIS SAYS...

...I got on track via a Traineeship

I wanted to start work and earn some money after my GCSEs but I kept being rejected for jobs or Apprenticeships. My careers adviser talked to me about the possible reasons and we worked out that I don't seem to have all the skills that employers are looking for. He sent me for an interview for a Traineeship. I was accepted on to the course which helped me to brush up my English and mathematics and my work preparation skills. I also have a really good work experience placement in customer service with a train company. I love working with people and travelling around. I'm also a friendly and helpful person. My mentor at work is really pleased with me and has already been in touch with his manager and the National Apprenticeship people to work out if they can take me on as an employed apprentice!

Where can you find out more?

Speak to your careers leader or a careers advisor. Visit www.gov.uk to find out more about the different types of Apprenticeships and to search for vacancies online.

HOT TIP

Careers advisers advise that you ought to start looking for Apprenticeship vacancies very early in the spring term of year 11, even though you can't start one until after the "official school leaving date" in June.



Helping your teenager with subject and career choices

This supplement has information and practical tips to help you support your teenager's decision-making.

Preparing for the future

Gaining skills and qualifications

Whatever your teenager wants to do in life, a good standard of education and training can increase their chances of success. Gaining skills and qualifications:

- helps them to make the most of their potential
- opens doors to employment and higher education
- improves their earning power.

Key stage 4 choices

What to study

All teenagers study English, mathematics and science during key stage 4, plus lessons in other essential subjects. They also study three or four optional subjects that they choose at the age of 13/14 before they start key stage 4. Some options lead to GCSEs. Others lead to work-related technical/vocational qualifications. If your son or daughter has additional learning needs and/or needs extra support to build confidence and skills or gain qualifications, their options may include a personalised programme tailored to their needs.

Where to study

In some areas, teenagers can also choose where to study at key stage 4. Their choices could include studying at:

- their current school
- a University technical college which specialises in subjects like engineering and construction - and teaches these subjects along with business skills and using IT. Offers academic subjects as well as practical subjects leading to technical qualifications. The curriculum is designed by universities and employers, who also provide work experience for students.

- a Studio school which is usually a small school (usually with around 300 students) that teaches qualifications through project-based learning. Students work with local employers and a personal coach, and follow a curriculum designed to give them the skills and qualifications they need in work, or to take up further education.

Post 16 Choices

The law says that all young people must continue to do some kind of education or training until they are 18. At 16, your teenager must decide what to study and where and how to do it. They have three options.

Full-time education

Your teenager could study full-time at a school, college or with a specialist provider. All study programmes will prepare them for higher level learning and employment and include opportunities for work experience and enterprise activities. They could work towards subject-based academic qualifications like A Levels, or the equivalent technical qualifications such as T Levels, or other technical/vocational awards. If they are interested in, but not quite ready for work they may be able to do a Traineeship or Supported Internship. All teenagers who do not gain a grade 4 or above (previously grade C) in GCSE English and maths may be expected to continue studying these subjects post 16.

Apprenticeships

An Apprenticeship will prepare your son or daughter for skilled employment and higher level education and training. There are hundreds of types of Apprenticeships, suitable for over 1,400 job roles. They combine high-quality training with paid work.

Apprentices work towards qualifications that give them the theoretical knowledge and practical skills they need to do a job well. Careers advisers will advise your teenager that they ought to start looking and applying for Apprenticeship vacancies very early in the spring term of year 11, even though they can't start one until after the "official school leaving date" in June.

Part-time education or training

If your teenager plans to work full-time for an employer, for themselves or as a volunteer, they must spend the equivalent of one day a week working towards approved and nationally recognised qualifications.

What, where and how your teenager learns will depend on the nature of their full-time work and whether the learning is organised for them or they organise it for themselves. They could, for example:

- work towards academic or technical/vocational qualifications that will help them to improve their future prospects, make their business a success and/or meet the needs of their employer or the organisation with which they are a volunteer
- study in concentrated blocks for one or two weeks at a time, or spread their learning over a longer period
- do a course in their workplace, at a local college, with a specialist training provider or online.



Getting Support

Support for your teenager

Making subject and career choices is an important part of growing up. It can be a challenge, so your teenager will receive a lot of support to help them choose well.

Careers education

Careers lessons will encourage your teenager to:

- think about and set goals for the future
- research their career ideas and explore their options
- make decisions and plans
- present themselves well in applications and interviews.

Careers advice and guidance

Teachers, tutors and other staff will discuss the pros and cons of different options including the career opportunities that studying certain subjects can open up. They will help your teenager to think through their ideas and offer them inspiration through work-related activities, including visits to and from employers or other learning providers.

The school must give your son or daughter access to independent, impartial careers guidance, including information on all available options.

Special educational needs

If your teenager has a disability or learning difficulty, there may be extra help with decision-making and transition planning. Ask the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in school or college, the careers adviser or their

Money matters

16 to 19 year olds whose financial situation might stop them from continuing in full-time education or training may qualify for financial support. The help available includes 16-19 bursaries. These are grants paid by schools, colleges and training providers to vulnerable young people and those in greatest financial need. Whether your teenager qualifies for help depends on their personal circumstances. They can find out more from their tutor, the person in charge of student support, their careers adviser or key worker, and through the 'Education and learning' pages at www.gov.uk.

Support for you

You will also receive support to help your teenager make choices that work for them. As decision time approaches, you will receive options information and invitations to attend events to help you understand these options. If you have any queries or concerns, you should contact your teenager's tutor. If they cannot help, they will put you in touch with someone who can - often a subject teacher or a careers adviser.

Outside school, many organisations and websites offer you and your teenager help and support including:

GOV.UK at www.gov.uk

The 'Education and learning' pages have information on young people's choices, financial support for learning and sources of help.

The **National Careers Service** at <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

This has careers information and a helpline. Young people and their parents can speak to a qualified adviser by contacting the helpline on 0800 100 900. It is open from 8am to 10pm seven days a week. They will also be able to help you as an adult if you are looking for support with your own learning and career plans.

The **Information, Advice and Support Services (IASS) Network** at <https://cyp.iassnetwork.org.uk/>

This gives details of local services that offer free impartial information and advice on a range of issues to parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs.

For information on apprenticeships:

An apprenticeship factsheet for parents can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-parents-guide-to-apprenticeships>



Tips on how to help your teenager choose well

Encourage them to find out as much as they can about their options

Discuss with your teenager the options information they receive and any material, such as prospectuses, that they find online. Encourage them to go to information and other events. Go with them if you can. Help them to make a list of questions about the options that interest them and where they lead. Check application deadlines, especially post 16, as popular options can fill up quickly.

Help them to identify their interests and abilities

Your teenager is more likely to succeed if they choose options that fit their interests and abilities. Help them to identify these by encouraging them to discuss how they feel about different lessons, spare time activities, tests, exams and practical projects. You could also work with them on the activities in Which Way Now? that covers key stage 4 choices or It's Your Choice that looks at post-16 options.

Encourage them to consider the consequences of their choices

If your teenager has a particular career in mind, they may need specific experience, subjects, qualifications and grades to do it. Encourage them to find out. Help them to research the careers that interest them – they could use the job profiles on <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk> Look at course entry requirements in options information and prospectuses and, for higher education courses that interest them, on www.ucas.com and <http://discoveruni.gov.uk> If your teenager has no clear career plans, encourage them to opt for a broad range of courses that will give them plenty of choice in the future.

Remind them that learning pays

Remind your teenager that education and training count. Better qualifications bring better job prospects, higher earnings and more job satisfaction. There is still a big pay gap between people with qualifications and those without. If your teenager starts their

working life in a low skilled, low paid job without training, they may find it difficult to move on to something better. If they are deciding what to do after year 11, encourage them to choose an option that offers structured education or training. They can speak to a careers adviser for help to find an education or training opportunity that suits them.

Gently challenge any choices that concern you

For example, you might want to challenge a choice because you feel that your teenager has not done enough research. Or you may feel that they have over or underestimated their ability in a subject. Or that they have been too heavily influenced by whom they think will teach the course, what their friends say or fear of being the only boy or girl in a group.

Support their decision

Try to give in gracefully if you disagree with your teenager's choices. Show them that you want the best for them by accepting that it is their choice. If they realise later on that they made the wrong decision, they will need your support to deal with the consequences. Should this happen, remain positive and encourage them to learn from their mistakes – discovering that something is not for them is a positive step that will help them to identify an opportunity that will suit them better.

Encourage them to make a back-up plan

Practical reasons may prevent your teenager from doing what they want to do. Having a back-up plan will make them feel as though they still have some control over what happens.

Be ready to help them deal with personal problems

At some point, most teenagers have concerns that make it hard for them to cope with other parts of their life. You can help them to tackle these concerns by:

- offering your support as soon as you spot a problem – it is always better to get involved earlier rather than later
- listening to what they say and trying to see the problem from their point of view
- working on a solution with them, involving others if needed
- showing that you believe in them, helping them to recognise their successes and supporting them to achieve new things – for example, by encouraging them to make the most of opportunities such as mentoring, coaching, volunteering, work experience and schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh Award.



Checklist for action

- Read the options information your teenager receives.
- Look at the content of online materials such as prospectuses.
- Check the dates of options events and put them in your diary or calendar.
- Encourage your teenager to research their options, discuss their choices with you and share any concerns they may have.
- Help your teenager to think about how well different options match their interests and abilities.
- Encourage your teenager to consider the consequences of different choices and discuss who else could help them with this.
- Make a list of questions to ask at options and information events.
- Attend options and information events.
- Check that option/application forms are completed and handed in on time.
- Help your teenager to make a back-up plan in case things do not go the way they hope.

And for post-16 options...

- Remind your teenager to make and track applications, meet deadlines and check regularly to see if they have been offered a place or called for interview.
- Encourage your teenager to seek help from their careers adviser if they are unsure about what they want to do or are interested in getting a job, working for themselves or doing some voluntary work.
- Encourage your teenager to find out about possible sources of financial and other help.

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Keep on learning until you are 18

Do you want to work full time for an employer, for yourself or as a volunteer after year 11? You can do this, but you must spend the equivalent of one day a week working towards approved and nationally recognised qualifications. If you are thinking of choosing this option, speak to your careers leader or a careers adviser as soon as possible to find out what it will mean for you.

What is part-time education or training?

You must spend the equivalent of one day a week working towards approved and nationally recognised qualifications, generally at levels 2 or 3 (see page 10). Some people study in concentrated blocks – such as one or two weeks at a time. Others spread their learning over a longer period such as a year. Some people study on weekdays – during the daytime or in the evenings. Others study at weekends.

Why do you have to do part-time education or training?

You have to continue your learning so that you have the best possible chance of success in the future. All the evidence shows that having qualifications and skills gives you more opportunities in life – better prospects, better earning power and a bigger chance of living the dream!

What can you study?

You can study academic and technical/vocational qualifications (see pages 11-12) that will help you to improve your future prospects, make your business a success and/or meet the needs of your employer or the organisation with which you are a volunteer. Browse college prospectuses and awarding body websites to get an idea of the qualifications available.

Where can you study?

If you are an employee or volunteer, the organisation you are working with might run accredited training courses on-site or off-site in partnership with colleges and specialist providers. Otherwise, you will have to organise your own learning and where you study will depend on the course you do. You could do a course at a local college, with a specialist training provider or even online.

How can you organise your part-time education or training?

If you are looking for a job or a volunteering placement, try to find one that offers education or training that leads to approved and nationally recognised qualifications. If you cannot find one you will have to organise your own learning – as will people who opt for self-employment. Get advice on how to do this as soon as possible. Start by talking to your careers leader and a careers adviser.

Remember that you can contact an adviser through the National Careers Service's helpline on **0800 100 900**.



HOT TIP

Do the courses you want to do while they are free – most people aged 19 and over have to pay course and tuition fees.

Employment: This is paid work. As a young worker, there are some restrictions on the work you can do, where you can do it and for how long each week. For more information, look at the 'Employing people' pages at **www.gov.uk**

Self-employment: This means working for yourself. You need a great business idea, strong enterprise skills, some expert advice and the ability to work extremely hard. For help and advice on setting up and running your own business visit **www.princes-trust.org.uk**, and the 'Businesses and self-employed' pages at **www.gov.uk**

Volunteering: This is unpaid work. Volunteers work for many different types of organisation, not just voluntary organisations. Volunteering gives you the chance to make a difference whilst following your interests, gaining practical experience of different work environments, testing your career ideas, extending your network of useful contacts and building your confidence and self-esteem. To find out more about volunteering opportunities look at the 'Charities, volunteering and honours' pages in the 'Citizenship and living in the UK' section of **www.gov.uk**

Decisions, decisions

So will you choose full-time education, an Apprenticeship, a Traineeship or part-time education or training? Which option will best fit your plans for the future? Before making a decision, you should:

- **check that employers and universities value the subjects and qualifications you choose** - find out what subjects, qualifications and experience you need to start the jobs and higher education courses that interest you. Look online and in your careers library or learning resource centre. When researching jobs online, start with the job profiles on the National Careers Service website at <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk> When researching higher education courses, start with www.ucas.com
- **consider how well your preferred option compares with your other options** - careers leaders, subject teachers and careers advisers can help you with this
- **see if you are eligible for some financial help post 16** - are you worried that money problems may stop you from continuing in full-time education after year 11? If so, ask your tutor whom you should speak to about 16-19 bursaries and other financial support. You could also look at the 'Education and learning' pages at www.gov.uk
- **find out what additional help you can get if you have a disability or learning difficulty** - you may be able to get extra support such as study aids and specialist equipment. Speak to a careers adviser, your school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and the people who are helping you now.

ACTION POINT

FIRM UP YOUR IDEAS

7

a) Tick the options that interest you most.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staying in full-time education to study academic qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> Doing a Traineeship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staying in full-time education to study technical/vocational qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting a job and studying part time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staying in full-time education to study a mix of academic and technical/vocational qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> Working for yourself and studying part time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doing an Apprenticeship and training for a specific career | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering and studying part time |

b) Find out as much as you can about each option that interests you and then answer these questions.

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Where can I do the options that interest me? | How will they help me in future? |
| | |

What are the main points for and against each option?

| Option | For | Against |
|--------|-----|---------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

First choice:

Reserve/back-up:

Who can help me get where I want to be:

Questions I want to ask:

Thinking Ahead

Before you apply for anything, spend some time thinking about other factors that might affect your plans for the future.

The state of the job market

Changes

It is important to think about how changes in the job market could affect your plans.

- Will the jobs that interest you now still exist in five or ten years?
- Will there be much competition for the jobs that interest you?
- Will you be able to travel or work abroad to do the jobs that interest you?
- Will you have the skills, experience, qualifications and attitudes that employers are looking for?

Information

Labour market information will help you answer these questions. It describes what is happening in the world of work and how the job market might change in a few years. You can find labour market information by:

- speaking to your tutor, careers leader or a careers adviser
- using newspapers and job sites to see what type of jobs are being advertised and what types of business are doing well or closing down
- looking at the job profiles on the National Careers Service website at:
<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

JACKSON SAYS...

...do your research

My sister is an accountant and enjoys what she does. I like working with numbers too and thought that accountancy might be a good career for me. I researched it online, did a bit of social networking and work shadowed one of my sister's colleagues. I liked what I saw and decided to go for it. They need accountants all around the country and there's no sign that the industry is going to disappear any time soon although it's slowed down a bit. There's a clear route to becoming qualified and I'm on the first rung of the ladder now. I'm doing A Levels in mathematics, business studies and economics. I don't know yet if I'm going to apply for university when I finish my A Levels or look for a job with a training scheme.

Trends

Think about these long-term labour market trends when you are making your decisions.

- Most people do several different jobs in their lives.
- There are always some job vacancies - to replace people who retire, change jobs or swap careers.
- Job opportunities keep changing - jobs come and go because of technological and other changes.
- The number of jobs using science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) and modern foreign language skills is growing.
- People with good skills and qualifications find it easier to get a job - the number of jobs for unskilled, poorly qualified people is shrinking quickly.
- Keeping a job means continuing to learn - employers need people who can keep up with changes in the workplace.

HOT TIP

Sharpen your modern foreign language skills! Global markets mean that more firms than ever before want people with conversational skills in different languages. They also want more employees to spend some time working abroad.



Your employability

The world of work is changing all the time and employers want people who can add value to their organisation. Qualifications are important, but employers also want people who are flexible, who can learn and who can cope with change. They want people with general employability skills who will not lose sight of business basics such as customer care.

Getting a job may seem a long way off now, but employability is not something that appears overnight. Are you employable? Are there things that you must, should or could do to improve your employability?

Use our checklist to help you find out.

ACTION POINT

ARE YOU EMPLOYABLE?

8

Can you:

- Talk to different people?
- Understand and follow spoken instructions?
- Read and follow written instructions?
- Spell and write clearly?
- Use numbers?
- Use a computer?
- Organise yourself?
- Motivate yourself?
- Work well in a team?
- Solve problems?
- Accept criticism?

Are you:

- A 'can do' person with a positive attitude to work?
- Willing to try hard?
- Willing to learn?
- Adaptable?
- Punctual?
- Reliable and trustworthy?
- Polite?

Do you understand:

- Why customer care is important?
- What makes a business successful?

What could you offer an employer now?
(You can use this information in your CV)

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How could you improve your employability in the next couple of years?

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HOT TIP

Volunteering or doing some work experience are great ways to boost your employability. And they build your knowledge, skills and self-confidence at the same time.



Higher Education (HE)

Does higher education interest you? Is there a chance that you might want to do a higher education course in the next few years? If so, you should find out what qualifications, subjects, grades and experience you generally need to do the types of course that interest you – the choices you make now could affect your choice of higher education courses later on. Find out:

- how many GCSEs you need - and at what grades
- if you need any named subjects - and at what grades
- if you have to gain all your GCSEs at the same time - or if re-sits are acceptable
- what level 3 qualifications you need, in what subjects and at what grades
- if you need any kind of practical experience
- if there is a Degree Apprenticeship route that might be suitable

ACTION POINT

9

IS HE FOR YOU?

HE interests me because:

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HE does not interest me because:

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I am worried about going into HE because:

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I will discuss my ideas about HE with:

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What is higher education?

Higher education is the term used to describe courses and qualifications at levels 4 to 8 (see page 10) that universities and colleges offer. Some people move on to higher education when they finish a level 3 programme. Others take a year out (a gap year) or work for a few years before they start higher education.

What are higher education courses like?

In some courses, you study one or two subjects in depth. In others, you gain work-related knowledge, understanding and skills, or you will be paid a wage if you take a Degree Apprenticeship. Course length varies from two to five years. Sandwich courses include a placement year in a workplace or a year spent studying abroad. You can study some courses part time. Each course has a different mix of theory and practical learning. All demand good study skills as tutors and lecturers guide you rather than tell you what to do. You will usually have fewer taught sessions than at school or college and may spend much of your time working on your own, on some courses, for example a Degree Apprenticeship, you will be working for your employer for most of the week and studying part time.

What are the benefits of higher education?

Going into higher education sets you up for a greater choice of jobs and a good chance of better pay. Employer surveys show that up to a third of current jobs require workers qualified to degree level and this number is forecast to grow. Professional and managerial jobs usually require a degree and many require postgraduate qualifications.

How much does higher education cost?

Costs depend on the course you do and where you do it. For more information, look at the 'Education and learning' pages at www.gov.uk

Where can I find out more?

Speak to your tutor, careers leader or a careers adviser. Visit www.ucas.com and <http://discoveruni.gov.uk/> for information on courses and entry requirements.



Finding Opportunities

Finding an opportunity that suits you takes time and effort. Use our tips to help you get started.

Make a personal checklist

It is easy to get overwhelmed with information and forget what you are looking for. Make a checklist to remind you. Base it on what you wrote about yourself (see page 5), your priorities (see page 6) and your ideas (see page 16). Use the checklist when you are researching opportunities.

Use more than one source of information

The more information sources you use, the better your chance of finding something that suits you.

Full and part-time education

- Look at school and college prospectuses and websites – some areas have websites that cover all local opportunities in education and training.
- Find out when schools and colleges are running open days, open evenings and other events so that you can see first-hand what a place is like.
- Ask your careers leader, coach, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) or a careers adviser about specialist colleges.
- Use your personal networks – tutor, subject teachers, careers leader, careers adviser, family, friends, neighbours, online communities etc.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

- Browse **www.gov.uk** to find out about Apprenticeships and Traineeships and register to apply for opportunities online.
- Ask your careers leader if local providers have open days/evenings or taster events.
- Use your personal networks – tutor, subject teachers, careers leader, careers adviser, family, friends, neighbours, online communities etc.

Full and part-time jobs

- Look for job vacancy notices – at school or college and in supermarkets, shop windows, public buildings, local newspapers and magazines etc.
- Visit local recruitment and employment agencies.
- Contact local businesses – in person, with a phone call, by letter or email.
- Look online – at company and job search websites.
- Use job search apps – on smartphones and through Facebook and other social media.

- Use your personal networks – tutor, subject teachers, careers leader, careers adviser, family, friends, neighbours, online communities etc.

Self-employment

- Visit and browse, **www.princes-trust.org.uk** and the 'Setting up' pages in the 'Businesses and self-employed' section of **www.gov.uk**
- Contact local business support groups and networks – you can usually find these through local websites such as those run by local councils and local newspapers.
- Use your personal networks – tutor, subject teachers, careers leader, careers adviser, family, friends, neighbours, online communities etc.

Volunteering opportunities

- Visit and browse **www.vinspired.com**, **https://volunteermatters.org.uk** and **www.do-it.org.uk**
- Visit the 'Citizenship and living in the UK' section of **www.gov.uk** and look at the information on volunteering in the 'Charities, volunteering and honours' pages.
- Use your personal networks – tutor, subject teachers, careers leader, careers adviser, family, friends, neighbours, online communities etc.



Think about money

What will you have to pay for and how will you do it?

Education and training

If you are aged 16 to 19, you won't normally have to pay tuition and course fees for a further education course unless you attend a private, fee-paying school, college or specialist training provider. You will still have to pay for things like study materials, travel, food, childcare and so on. Depending on your personal circumstances, you may be able to get some financial support for your learning, including help with the costs of studying away from home. To find out more, look at the 'Education and learning' pages at www.gov.uk

Full and part-time work

Remember that although different jobs pay different rates, you are entitled to the national minimum wage for your age group. Remember too that job adverts quote gross pay, which is what you get before deductions. Your take home pay may be less as your employer may deduct National Insurance, income tax and other contributions such as pension payments. If you get a job:

- you will need your National Insurance Number (NIN) when you start work
- you may have to pay income tax, so make sure you understand the basics like Pay As You Earn (PAYE), tax codes and tax forms like the P60 and P45
- employers should give you a payslip each time they pay you - this tells you your gross pay, your take home pay and what deductions have been made.

To find out more look at the 'Working, jobs and pensions' pages at www.gov.uk

Volunteering

You may have to pay a registration fee. You may also have to pay for things like travel, accommodation, equipment and food. Look into this when you are researching an opportunity and use your personal networks and online communities to find out how other people cover these costs. Find out more through the 'Charities, volunteering and honours' pages in the 'Citizenship and living in the UK' section of www.gov.uk

HOT TIP

Think about opening a bank account if you don't have one. You will need it if you receive any financial support for your learning and if you get a full or part-time job.

Get help and support

There is plenty of support available to help you find and choose opportunities that suit you. Remember to:

- talk to the people who know you well
- talk to the people who know what you need to know
- get an expert opinion from a careers leader or a careers adviser.

10

ACTION POINT

PLAN AN OPPORTUNITY SEARCH

What help do I need to find the right opportunity for me?

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Do I have any useful contacts? Who?

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How can they help me?

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What should I do next?

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Applying for Opportunities

Whatever you decide to do after year 11 you will have to apply for it. Use our tips to help you make the right impression.

Create the right impression

Check your online presence

Before you apply for anything you should take a few minutes to check your online presence. What happens if you put your name into a search engine? Can everyone see those embarrassing holiday and party photos? Or read that comment you posted? Are you a YouTube star? Have you gone viral? In a world where everyone is using the internet, you need to make sure that your online presence creates the impression you want it to create. You never know who will be searching for your name!

Pay attention to detail

Do you ignore instructions? Do you skip over big blocks of writing? Do you hand in work without checking it? If so, watch out. It seems that you do not pay much attention to detail. And that means that you run the risk of making silly mistakes in applications - like leaving out important information, misspelling simple words and missing application deadlines. Remember that paying attention to detail can make the difference between a successful and unsuccessful application.

Take your time and aim for quality

Are you always in a rush? Applications are your personal publicity documents and every word counts. Good quality ones take time and effort to prepare. They show schools, colleges, employers and others exactly how your qualifications, skills, experiences and personality fit the opportunity. Aim for quality and put enough time aside to do a good job of marketing yourself.

Know your application methods

Different opportunities ask you to apply in different ways. Be ready to make an application using one or more of the following methods:

- Provide a CV and covering letter - online or on paper.
- Fill in an application form - online or on paper.
- Visit in person to discuss an opportunity.
- Make a phone call.
- Attend an interview.

HOT TIP

Take a look at the information on CVs in the 'Help to get a job' pages of the National Careers Service website at:

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

Write a CV

Once you have done a CV you can use it to help you fill in application forms and prepare for phone calls and interviews. You can also take it with you if you are asked to visit in person to discuss an opportunity. A CV is your personal publicity leaflet. Like all leaflets, it must be short or people will not read it - one or two sides of A4 is ideal.

What do you put in?

There are no rules but most people have the following sections:

Heading: your contact details including your proper name, address, telephone number and a sensible email address.

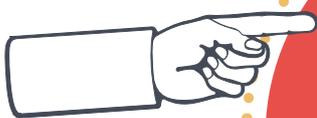
Profile: two or three sentences summarising your best points. For example, 'A hard-working responsible person who...'

Education and qualifications: the name of your school, the years you attended it (e.g. 2015-2020) and details of the qualifications taken with predicted or actual grades.

Experience and interests: a bullet point list of things you do or have done that highlight your skills and achievements and show readers what you can do and how you work. For example:

- voluntary work, work experience and paid activities like babysitting or dog walking that you do in your spare time
- positions of responsibility in and out of school such as captaining a sports team, being a peer mentor or being a first aider - mention any certificates you have gained through these activities
- your top two or three interests plus anything like a Duke of Edinburgh Award.

References: many people write 'references available on request' here. Others provide the contact details for one or two referees (not relatives) who can say what they are like, including their attitude to work.



Remember that covering letters are formal letters

A good letter will encourage people to read your CV.

- Always use a standard letter layout.
- Keep the letter short – four or five paragraphs.
- Do a draft and ask someone you trust to check it.
- Word process the letter, using the same font and font size as you used in your CV.
- Send your CV with your letter - attach it as a separate document if using email and make sure it has a sensible filename.
- Use good quality paper and envelopes if sending things by post.

What do you put in?

Explain why you are writing: you may be asking if someone can offer you a job or another opportunity such as a work placement. You may be responding to an advert for a job or other opportunity - if you are doing this, make sure that you include the reference number and description given in the advert.

Show why you are a good candidate: demonstrate how you are the best person for the opportunity and the organisation. Do not repeat what is in your CV. Give new or extra details about the skills, qualities and achievements that you think fit particularly well with what you are applying for.

End positively: for example, 'I look forward to hearing from you', 'I am available for interview...' or 'I would be grateful if you could keep my name on file in case any opportunities arise in the future'.

Get to grips with application forms

Application forms make it easy for recruiters and admissions staff to compare applicants and spot the people who fit their requirements.

You should:

- Read all the instructions carefully before you start and make a note of anything you might forget. For example, do they want you to use a specific font? Or to write in black ink and block capitals (capital letters)? Do any sections have a word limit?
- Remember that an application form is a formal document and you are trying to make a good impression – do not use text speak, slang or abbreviations that a reader might not understand.
- Draft your answers before you fill in the form so that you can correct any mistakes and add anything you have missed out – use a notepad, copy the form or save and print it.
- Ask someone you trust to check your draft.
- Fill the form in carefully. Do not leave any sections blank unless told to do so. If you are working online, save your work regularly.

- Keep a copy of your completed form so that you don't forget what you said.

Plan how to make and take phone calls

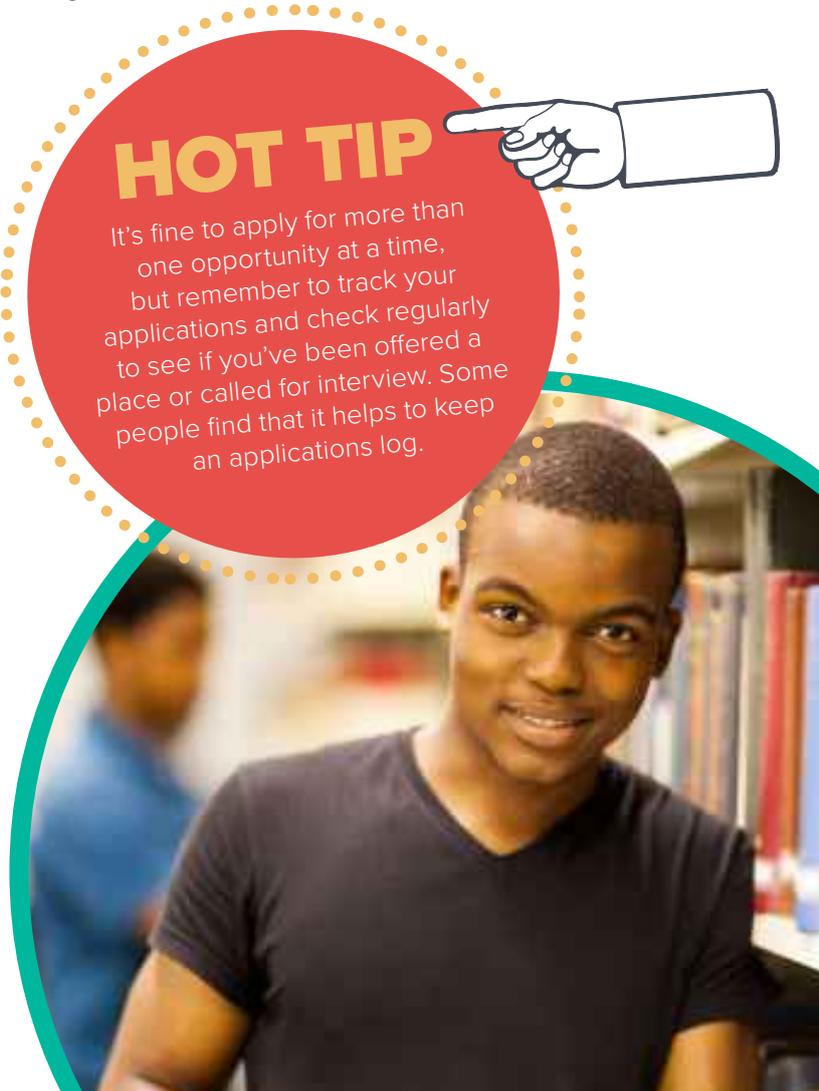
You might have to ring someone to apply for an opportunity or to ask if they have any opportunities available. Whatever the purpose of the call, you need to prepare for it.

- List the things you want to say and have your CV and any other paperwork handy.
- Practise how you will start the conversation and what you will say if the call goes through to voicemail.
- If using your mobile, charge it and find a quiet place with a good signal before you make your call.
- Have pen and paper ready to make notes.
- Before you end the call, make sure you know exactly what you have to do next.
- End the call by saying 'thank you for your help' or something similar.

You may receive a phone call to let you know the result of your request, to tell you how you did in an interview or to arrange a time for a telephone interview. You never know when this will happen so be on high alert – check for messages and answer your phone sensibly and politely if you do not recognise the number.

HOT TIP

It's fine to apply for more than one opportunity at a time, but remember to track your applications and check regularly to see if you've been offered a place or called for interview. Some people find that it helps to keep an applications log.



Get Ready for Interviews

Interviews are your chance to find out more about an opportunity and for the opportunity provider to find out more about you.

Preparation

Before any interview, you should:

- research the organisation as well as the opportunity
- look at the organisation's website and read all the information you receive
- read through your application again
- think about what questions they might ask you and how you could reply
- share your ideas and practise your answers with friends, family and other people who know you well
- make a list of questions to ask.

Other preparation will depend on the type of interview you have. For example, you may have to:

- do a test, assessment, presentation or group activity
- pass a telephone interview before being called to a face-to-face interview
- do a face-to-face interview on the shop floor or in front of a panel of people in a formal meeting room.

Try to find out as much as you can about what the interview procedure involves and then ask your careers leader or a careers adviser for some ideas on the preparation you should do. You should also look at the advice on interviews in the 'Help to get a job' section of

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

Planning

An interview is likely to go more smoothly if you think about practical things beforehand. For example, you should plan:

- what to take to the interview - will you need your CV, application form, portfolio of work or a pen?
- what to wear - if it is a job interview, make a special effort to look smart
- how to get there - so that you arrive in plenty of time
- how to introduce yourself to the receptionist
- how to greet the people you meet.

ASHLEY SAYS...

...don't make my mistakes

I was so pleased when I landed an interview with a great clothes store that I acted as if the job was already mine. On the day, I turned up at the city centre branch to be told that my interview was being held in another building; I hadn't read the invitation letter properly! I raced to get there, was ten minutes late, and so flustered that I was rude to the person who showed me where to go (turns out that she was on the interview panel). They waited patiently while I settled down and then asked about my presentation ... oh no, that must have been in the letter too! I had nothing prepared, and to top it all, my phone started to play my rather risky ring-tone announcing that one of my mates was checking how much staff discount I'd be getting. No prizes for guessing that I didn't get the job. Next time I had an interview I corrected all those mistakes, kept my cool and now have a great Apprenticeship with the opportunity to further my career in retail.

Presentation

First impressions count so make an effort to present yourself well. Just before the interview turn off your mobile phone, put your chewing gum in a bin and check your appearance. When you get into the interview:

- don't slump or slouch
- only sit down when invited to do so
- make eye contact with the interviewer or panel
- smile and be polite
- listen carefully to the questions and think before you speak - ask for more detail if you are unsure what they are asking
- speak clearly without using any slang or bad language
- be honest.

HOT TIP

Don't take risks. Always tell someone where you are going. Do not agree to meet anyone who suggests holding the interview in their car or somewhere unexpected like a café.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q *I have a career in mind but my friends say I won't be able to do it because of my gender. How can I find out who is right?*

A It is never a good idea to choose a career simply because of your gender. Discuss your concerns with your subject teachers, your careers leader and a careers adviser. They will help you think through your ideas and how well they match your interests and abilities. They may also be able to help you connect with someone of your gender who is already doing the career that interests you.

Q *I don't know what I want to do in the future - how do I keep my options open?*

A Having good qualifications will give you a bigger choice of opportunities in the future. That's why the best solution for most people in this situation is to continue in full-time education. You can work towards qualifications that prepare you both for employment and for higher level learning. And you can maximise your chances of success by choosing subjects that match your skills and interests. Speak to your careers leader or a careers adviser if you need help to decide which qualifications and subjects would suit you best.

Q *I'm fed up with school and want to start work at the end of year 11. Can I still do this?*

A Yes you can get a job at the end of year 11, but you will have to study part time for the equivalent of one day a week until you are 18. If you don't want to organise this yourself, look for jobs with planned training that lead to approved and nationally recognised qualifications. You could also investigate Apprenticeships. These combine high quality training with a paid job. Remember that doing a job with training improves your long-term prospects because many employers look for workers with higher level skills and qualifications.

Q *I'd like to study A Levels next year, but money is tight at home and I'm not sure I can afford to. What should I do?*

A Schools and colleges have a 16-19 Bursary Fund for students who are in greatest financial need. Contact the school or college you want to apply to as soon as possible. They can tell you if you qualify for a bursary and how you can apply for one. Depending on your personal circumstances, you may qualify for other support. Speak to your careers adviser or look at the 'Education and learning' pages on www.gov.uk. You could also think about applying for a part-time job.

Q *I've got a job to go to when I finish year 11 but there's no training. What will happen to me if I don't do any part-time study next year?*

A Your local authority will check to see if you are doing any part-time study. If you are not, they will organise support to help you find something that meets your needs. Remember that most courses are free until you are 19. Remember too that getting skills and qualifications will help you in the future by boosting your job prospects and improving your earning power.

Q *How do I know if I've chosen the best option for me?*

A Have you researched and thought carefully about your choices? Have you discussed your plans with a careers specialist and people who know you well? Have you chosen something that interests you and matches your abilities? Have you chosen something that you think you will enjoy, that links to a career idea or that gives you plenty of choice in the future? If so, you can be confident that you have chosen well.



Check the Calendar

Use this calendar to help you plan what to do and when.

Autumn Term 2020

- Find out about careers that interest you and check the entry requirements.
- Ask your tutor how school will help you to find out about your post-16 and other options – for example, organising visits or discussions with college and university students or Apprentices.
- Use the careers information available in school and online to research options that interest you.
- Collect information about opportunities that interest you and go to open days/evenings and other events.
- If you're thinking of doing a higher education course later on, check the entry requirements of courses that interest you at <http://discoveruni.gov.uk> and www.ucas.com
- If you're thinking of doing an Apprenticeship, explore www.gov.uk and register to apply for vacancies online at www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship
- Find out if there is a common application process locally for post-16 education and training opportunities – and how and when to use it.
- Check application deadlines for options that interest you – there may be some this term.
- If you don't have a firm career idea, think about how you can keep your future options open.
- Discuss your ideas with your family, friends, tutor and subject teachers.
- Talk to a careers adviser about your plans and next steps – especially if you have no firm career idea or are interested in an Apprenticeship, full-time work, volunteering or working for yourself.
- Sort out your personal information so you are prepared for applications and interviews.
- Be prepared to rethink your ideas if your predicted grades change – they could go up as well as down.

Spring Term 2021

- Prioritise your choices.
- Make a back-up plan – you can apply for more than one post-16 option so you have a 'reserve'.
- Update your plans if your predicted grades change.
- Apply for your chosen post-16 options – track your applications and check regularly to see if you have been offered a place or called for interview.
- Prepare for interviews.
- If you are still not sure what to do, speak to a careers adviser – all 16 and 17 year olds should be offered a place in post-16 education and training that meets their needs.
- Speak to a careers adviser if you need advice on working for yourself or help to find an Apprenticeship, a full-time job or a volunteering opportunity.
- If you are worried about money or other support that you might need post 16, ask your tutor whom you should speak to.

Summer Term 2021

- If you still have no plans, speak to your careers leader and/or a careers adviser.
- Keep tracking your applications – and keep applying for other opportunities if you are unsuccessful.
- If you are interested in but not quite ready for work, ask your teachers and careers staff about a personalised programme or Traineeship, that includes preparation for work.
- If you are worried about money or other support that you might need post 16, ask your tutor whom you should speak to.
- Check that you have received and confirmed the offer of a place in education or training – you can still apply if you haven't done so yet.
- Think about doing some voluntary work or work experience in the summer holidays – you may even be able to get a job.
- If your exam results are better or worse than expected, speak to your teachers and careers staff as soon as possible.

Make a Plan

Use this plan to help you choose well.

Where am I now?

(e.g. thinking about my choices/looking at prospectuses and websites/collecting information/speaking to people doing the things that interest me etc.)

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What do I need to do and when?

(e.g. speak to my subject teachers and careers staff/update my plans/write a CV/make applications/prepare for interviews etc.)

| Action | By what date | Completed Y/N |
|--------|--------------|------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Checklist

I have now:

- Researched my options and found out where they can lead
- Been to open days/evenings and other events
- Spoken to my family, friends, tutor, subject teachers and careers staff
- Made my decision
- Applied for the options that interest me
- Made a back-up plan

You now have all the tools and information you need. Think carefully about your decisions and do what is right for you. Good luck. It's your choice...

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We welcome feedback on **It's Your Choice** and the supplement for parents and carers. Please email comments to **resources@prospects.co.uk**

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