

# WHICH WAY NOW?

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR KEY STAGE 4 OPTIONS

➔ YOUR CHOICES   ➔ SUPPORT  
➔ HELP   ➔ ADVICE   ➔ YOUR FUTURE

*PARENTS  
& CARERS  
SUPPLEMENT  
INCLUDED*

Name:

Date:

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# Parents & Carers Supplement Included

See centre pages ►►

# Introduction

**Congratulations! You've reached the next stage of your education journey and it's time to choose your key stage 4 options.**

You probably feel as though you have only just got used to life at secondary school and now someone is asking you to choose your key stage 4 options. How will you choose what subjects to study? How will you decide which courses are right for you?

Don't panic. **Which Way Now?** 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.

### Involve your parents



Your parents or carers 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.

### The law has changed



Your education and training will continue until you are 18, helping you to gain the knowledge, skills and qualifications you need to get a job you enjoy in the future. Your key stage 4 option choices are important, but you don't have to have a career in mind at this stage. Concentrate on choosing options that suit your abilities and interests and that give you plenty of choice post 16. If you already have a good idea about a career, make sure that you ask your careers adviser about how your option choices might affect your plans.

### There's help at hand



Careers lessons. Careers information. Options events. Course tasters. Progress reviews. Online prospectuses. Form tutor. Options coordinator. Subject teachers. Careers advisers. Employers who visit your school. They are all there to help you with your decision-making. Make the most of them so that you choose options that work for you.



# Who can help you?

**Everyone needs a bit of help with decision-making. Make sure you get all the help and support you need - your option choices are too important to leave to chance!**

## Who knows you really well?

Talk to your parents or carers, your form tutor and subject teachers. Speak to the people who are helping you with other parts of your life - like friends, mentors, coaches and learning support staff. They want the best for you. They will tell you if they think that an option will suit you and explain why. They will also help you to explore and think about the alternatives.

## Who knows what you need to know?

Don't let teaching methods, workload and assessment come as a surprise. Find out what an option is really like, where it leads and how it could help you in the future. Check that it suits your abilities and interests. Read all the information you get. Go to options events. Sign up for taster activities and visits. Talk to the people running the courses and the students doing them.



## HOT TIP

Get as much information and support as you can so you choose well. If you have no particular career in mind, look for options that will give you plenty of choice post 16. If you have a firm career idea, research it and choose your options accordingly.



## Who can give you expert help if you're confused?

Start by speaking to your school's careers leader, your options coordinator or a careers adviser. They know a lot about what each option involves. They can tell you how it could help you in the future and where to get more information and help. Your school must provide you with access to impartial, independent careers guidance if you need it to help you to choose wisely.

If you want to speak to someone outside school, you can get confidential and practical help through the National Careers Service's helpline on **0800 100 900**. It is open from 8am to 10pm seven days a week.

## How can the internet help you?

Use the websites your teachers recommend and the ones signposted in **Which Way Now?** Bookmark and browse the 'Job Profiles' pages on <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>. These have information about jobs and the job market.

You can also use social media and online communities to find information and share ideas. Make sure that you follow safety guidelines and remember that you need people with expert knowledge to give you advice. Remember too that what worked for someone else may not work for you. If in doubt, ask your school's careers adviser for help.

# ACTION POINT

## PLAN HOW TO GET HELP AND SUPPORT

What kind of help do you need?

What is the name of your careers leader?

Who can you ask for this help?

What is the name of your options coordinator?

Where can you go to get this help?

Is there a careers adviser that you can speak to? If so, what is their name and when are they in school?

## JESSE SAYS...

### ...unsure about your future?

*I didn't have any career plans in year 9. After talking to my subject teachers and the options coordinator, I chose GCSEs in subjects I liked and was doing well in. At the end of year 11, I still didn't know what job I wanted to do. The careers adviser said that if I wanted to keep my options open, I should study A Levels in the GCSE subjects I liked best and was good at. That's what I did. I took mathematics, further mathematics and physics and I'm hoping to start a mechanical engineering degree next year.*

## HOT TIP

Write some questions or make a list of things you want to find out in careers lessons, at options and careers events and from the internet so that you get the information you need.

# Your local choices

No two schools are the same, so every school offers something different at key stage 4.

## What subjects are compulsory?

You can do very little in life without a good grasp of English, mathematics and science so everybody studies these subjects. You will also do courses and activities that help prepare you for later life – subjects like PE and PSHE for example.

**Many schools make other subjects like computing or a modern foreign language compulsory too, so read your options information very carefully.**

## What can I choose to study?

Your school will tell you about the subjects you can choose. It will also tell you about any other local options that might suit you. These could include moving to study at:

- A University technical college which specialises in subjects like engineering and construction - and teaches these subjects along with business skills and using IT. You would study 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. This means working in realistic situations as well as learning academic subjects. 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.

## Do your research

When you know exactly what your options are, you can research those that interest you. Use our checklist to make sure you don't forget anything.

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## ACTION POINT

### RESEARCH CHECKLIST

To do	Done	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Read all the options information school gives me
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Explore school and other local options that interest me
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check what subjects are compulsory - the ones I have to do
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk to the teachers to see if they think that it is a good idea for me to do their course
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk to people who are taking the courses that interest me
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk to my parents and find out what options they think I should do and why
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Go with my parents to information and other events
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sign up for a taster activity or visit to find out what an option will really be like
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Look up the careers that interest me in the careers library or learning resource centre and on the internet and find out what subjects, qualifications and grades I will need for these
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Find out what Apprenticeships could offer me post 16 and what I need to do to get one - <a href="http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk">www.apprenticeships.gov.uk</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Look up higher education courses that interest me on <a href="http://discoveruni.gov.uk">http://discoveruni.gov.uk</a> or <a href="http://www.ucas.com">www.ucas.com</a> and see what subjects, qualifications and grades I will need to do these courses
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Speak to my careers leader, options coordinator or a careers adviser about my option choices and career ideas
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask my careers leader, options coordinator or a careers adviser who I should speak to if I think that I will need extra help with my key stage 4 courses.

## What if I want to change direction later on?

Once you have started your key stage 4 courses, it is unlikely that you will be able to change them. But whatever options you choose, you will be able to change direction at the end of year 11.

Remember though that all choices have consequences. Your key stage 4 choices could affect what you can do later on. So don't close off options. Choose subjects that will give you the widest possible choice post 16 (see pages 22 to 25).

Use the information in **Which Way Now?** and the information and support you get at school to help you think about the possible consequences of your choices. Pay particular attention to:

- how well an option fits your abilities and interests
- where an option leads - what you can and can't do next
- if an option will help you meet the entry requirements for higher level courses and jobs that interest you.

### ALEX SAYS...

#### ...research your options carefully

*I wanted to make sure I chose subjects that I would enjoy and that would help me in the future. I talked to my parents and my careers leader and had a chat with people doing some of the courses that interested me. They all said go for a broad range of subjects and do the ones you like and are good at as it will give you plenty of choice post 16. I chose my three favourite subjects: French, history and drama. I'm enjoying them all but I was surprised – drama involves a lot more work than I had expected. I'll spend more time researching course details, especially workload, when I'm choosing my post-16 options.*

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## ACTION POINT

### THINKING ABOUT CONSEQUENCES

If I could do anything I want at the end of year 11, I would:(tick as many as you want)

- Study full time so I can do a higher education course
- Study full time so I can get a job
- Get an Apprenticeship and train for a specific career
- Get a job and study part time
- Work for myself and study part time
- Do some voluntary work and study part time
- Prepare for supported employment and/or independent living

Now think about how the key stage 4 options that interest you might help you to get where you want to be and then fill in this table.

Option	Lets me do	Stops me from doing

# Put yourself first

It is important to choose options that interest and motivate you.

What interests you?

What makes you work hard?

**Do our quiz to find out.**



## ACTION POINT

TICK ANYTHING YOU ENJOY DOING OR THINK THAT YOU WOULD ENJOY DOING

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**A**

- Building things
- Being active and working outdoors
- Making and fixing things
- Using tools and machines
- Solving problems

**D**

- Finding out how things work
- Doing experiments
- Researching and testing ideas
- Designing a new computer game
- Doing calculations

**B**

- Designing and displaying things
- Being on television
- Writing a book
- Playing in a band
- Doing a makeover

**E**

- Organising parties and social events
- Buying and selling things
- Running a business
- Entering competitions
- Campaigning for change

**C**

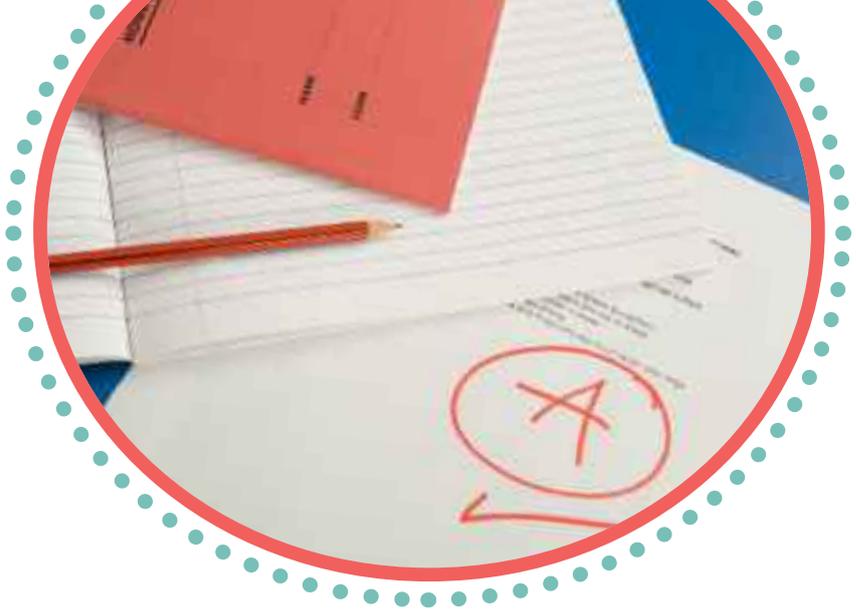
- Helping people
- Sorting out arguments
- Showing people what to do
- Looking after people
- Doing voluntary work

**F**

- Making plans and lists
- Talking to people
- Organising digital files
- Working to deadlines
- Managing money

# Check out your scores

How many ticks did you get in each section? Write your scores in the boxes below. Most people have more than one interest so pay attention to any score of three or over.



**A**

Mostly As

You seem to like practical work. Look for options where you can use your practical skills, do something active and work on different types of project.

**Subject ideas:**  
Design and technology, engineering, food preparation and nutrition, manufacturing, physical education.

**B**

Mostly Bs

You sound creative. Look for options where you can express yourself and work on new ideas.

**Subject ideas:**  
Art and design, dance, drama, media studies, music, performing arts, photography, textiles.

**C**

Mostly Cs

You seem to be a sociable person. Look for options where you can find out more about people and how society works.

**Subject ideas:**  
Citizenship studies, geography, health and social care, history, languages (modern or ancient), religious studies, retail.

**D**

Mostly Ds

It seems that you like investigating things. Look for options where you can use your number and thinking skills to find out more about why things are the way they are.

**Subject ideas:**  
Biology, chemistry, environmental science, geography, history, mathematics, physics, statistics.

**E**

Mostly Es

You sound like an enterprising person. Look for options where you can use your energy, communication, number and thinking skills to test your ideas about how to improve the world

**Subject ideas:**  
Business, citizenship studies, computer science, economics, modern foreign languages, psychology, retail.

**F**

Mostly Fs

Being well organised seems important to you. Look for options where you can use your planning, communication and technology skills to find out more about the systems and structures that keep the world working properly.

**Subject ideas:**  
Business, computer science, economics, history, hospitality, law, travel and tourism.

# Take the first steps

Choosing well means thinking hard about:

- what you are like
- how different subjects might help you in the future
- the questions you should ask about the subjects you have to do (compulsory subjects) and the options that interest you.

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## ACTION POINT

TICK ANYTHING YOU ENJOY DOING OR THINK THAT YOU WOULD ENJOY DOING

### Me

*I am ...*

practical

creative

sociable

investigative

enterprising

organised

*I learn best by ...*

seeing and reading

listening and talking

touching and doing

doing projects

doing tests

## My Options

**Subjects I have to do:**


**Subjects I like and why:**


**Subjects I don't like and why:**


**New subjects I'd like to try and why:**


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# ACTION POINT

CONTINUED...

## My Future

**Career ideas and interests:**


**Subjects I need for my career ideas:**


**Subjects that will give me plenty of post-16 choices:**


## My Questions

**Things I want to find out before I make my career choice:**


**SANDY SAYS...**

### ...think ahead

*I love animals and want to work with them. Lots of people want to do this so I know it's going to be really competitive. I knew I had to find out exactly what subjects and qualifications I needed before I chose my key stage 4 options. I did a lot of online research and talked to the careers adviser at school. I'm glad I did. I found out that for most animal care jobs you need to be physically fit and have experience of working with animals as well as having good qualifications. I'm in year 10 now and studying for my GCSEs. I'm also volunteering at a local animal rescue centre. I go swimming regularly and do a weekly dance class to keep myself fit. I'm determined to get my dream job!*

### HOT TIP

Remember that you don't have to have a career in mind when choosing your options – you just need to choose a broad range of subjects that will give you plenty of choice post 16.



# Qualifications

Do you understand qualification levels?  
Do you know how qualifications can help you  
in the future? Find out here.

## Qualification levels

Whatever you want to do in life, there is a qualification to help you do it. The important thing is to choose the right ones at the right time. To do this you need to understand qualification levels. There are nine qualification levels, ranging from Entry level up to level 8. Every level includes different types of qualifications. Some are subject-based. Some are work-related. Some are job-related.

The level tells you how hard a qualification is - the higher you go, the harder the qualification.

Most employers ask first-time job applicants for level 2 qualifications (for example GCSEs at grades 9 to 4), but they increasingly want people with qualifications at level 3 and above.

To find out more about the qualification levels see the chart below.



## HOT TIP

Thinking of going to university? Check the GCSE entry requirements carefully. Some places require you to take and pass your GCSEs in one go and will not accept re-sits.

Qualification	Achievement level	Examples of some qualifications at this level
<b>Entry Level 1</b>	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)
<b>Entry Level 2</b>		
<b>Entry Level 3</b>		
<b>Level 1</b>	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)
<b>Level 2</b>	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
<b>Level 3</b>	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)
<b>Levels 4-8</b>	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

## How qualifications can help you in the future

Here are six good reasons why you should take qualifications seriously.

**1. To give you a choice of jobs** - the number of jobs you can get without any qualifications is shrinking quickly. If you want a choice of jobs, you need good qualifications.

**2. To 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.

**3. To improve your earning power** - there is a big pay gap between people with qualifications and those without them. If you want a well-paid job, you need good qualifications.

**4. To show other people what you can do** - qualifications show employers, universities and colleges that you have the attitudes, skills and knowledge they value. They tell them what you already know and can do. They also give them an idea of how well you might do in the future.

**5. To prove to other people that you can learn** - qualifications show people that you want to learn and that you can learn. Employers, universities and colleges look for people like this.

**6. To show yourself what you can do** - gaining qualifications boosts your self-confidence and self-awareness.

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## ACTION POINT

### EXPLORE YOUR INTERESTS

Choose a career or job that interests you. Look it up in your careers library or learning resource centre and on the internet. List the subjects and qualifications you will need to do it.

Career/job:	Subjects and qualifications needed:

Look back at the chart on page 10; use it to match up the subjects and qualifications you need for your chosen career or job. What is the highest level of qualifications that you will need to be successful in that career?

ENTRY LEVEL	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4-8

# GCSEs

GCSEs are an important part of a broad education at key stage 4. Find out more about them here.

## FACT FILE

### Subjects

Schools and colleges decide what subjects to offer. Subjects range from English, mathematics and science to engineering, music and psychology.

### Learning

Mostly classroom learning. Mix of theory and subject-based investigations. The amount of practical work depends on the subject.

### Assessment

All subjects have externally set examinations that you take at the end of the course. Most are written examinations.

You will do some practical assessments, for example in science, if it would be difficult to test learning in any other way. You will do at least eight practical activities in science; there will be exam questions about this work that make up at least 15% of your final marks.

### Grades

GCSEs are graded from 9-1. The top grade is 9. A grade 4 counts as a standard pass and a level 2 achievement.

### What next

GCSEs will help you whatever you plan to do after key stage 4. You can use them to meet the entry requirements for level 3 courses and for work-based learning opportunities such as an Apprenticeship. Having five GCSEs at grades 4 and above (including English and mathematics) gives you a much bigger choice of post-16 options. If you do not achieve a grade 4 or above in English and mathematics at age 16, you will usually continue to study them until you are 18 or have reached the required standard.

## A taste of GCSEs...

### English language and literature

Developing effective communication skills in written and spoken English. Reading widely, analysing texts and learning how to express and debate complex ideas. Essential for further learning, employment and wider adult life.

### Mathematics

Developing the ability to read and understand mathematical information. Learning how to work accurately and how to select and use an appropriate mathematical method to solve problems. Vital for employment, business, finance and personal and public decision-making.

### Science

Developing and using knowledge and skills in biology, chemistry and physics. Learning about scientific concepts, their practical applications and their impact on the world. Essential for further and some higher-level learning, employment and taking a full part in society.

## HOT TIP

Employers want people with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills. Find out about the jobs and careers that use these skills at [www.futuremorph.org](http://www.futuremorph.org)

## 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 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 options

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 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, their tutor or their careers adviser



## 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](http://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 the choices on offer. 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](http://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](http://www.ucas.com) and <https://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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## A taste of GCSEs...

### Business

Learning about the world of business; how businesses develop, promote themselves and serve their customers. How they manage finance and the people who work in the organisation.

### Computing

Learning about the design and development of computer systems and how computers work. Using different programming techniques and languages to solve problems.

### Dance

Learning about and developing the knowledge and skills needed to perform, choreograph and appreciate dance, including its artistic qualities.

### Design and Technology

Creative and practical work with different tools and materials. Using planning, designing, making and evaluation skills.

### Economics

Learning about personal, national and global economic issues in modern society. Understanding basic economic principles, concepts, theories and institutions.

### French

Developing reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Using these skills in different contexts such as social situations, learning, home and work.

### Geography

Learning about and exploring the impact of the human, economic and physical forces and processes that shape and change the world.

### History

Learning about key individuals, societies, events and developments. Understanding the issues and the links between past and present.

### Music

Listening to and learning about a variety of musical styles. Composing music and performing as a soloist and in a group.

## ACTION POINT

### EXPLORE GCSEs

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Look at your options information and choose a GCSE subject that interests you. What does the course involve?


Use the internet and the careers information in school to find out how this subject could help you in the future.


# Technical and vocational qualifications

Do your options include technical and vocational qualifications? Find out more here.

These are work-related qualifications. You may be able to take them alongside your GCSEs or as part of a personalised programme.

## HOT TIP

Learning pays! Getting higher level qualifications could be worth a couple of thousand pounds a year to you. That is the average pay gap between people with higher level qualifications and those with lower level ones.

## FACT FILE

### Qualifications

Technical and vocational qualifications are work-related qualifications that employers and professional bodies helped to develop. Examples are Edexcel BTEC, City & Guilds and Cambridge National qualifications. Schools and colleges decide which qualifications to offer and at what level. At key stage 4, most students study for Entry level, level 1 or level 2 qualifications (see page 10).

### Subjects

Schools and colleges decide which subjects to offer. They can choose from a wide variety ranging from child care, engineering and retail to hospitality and health and social care.

### Courses

All courses develop knowledge and understanding of an industry sector. They also develop practical skills used in the workplace such as communication, team working and problem solving.

### Learning

Mix of theory and practical activities. Mostly classroom based. Some learning may take place at another school or college or in a workplace.

### Assessment

There may be some practical assessments but you will also take written tests.

### What next

Technical and vocational qualifications prepare you for further learning and for entry to work. You can go on to study for higher level qualifications such as A Levels or T Levels or apply for an Apprenticeship or other form of work-based learning.

## ACTION POINT

### EXPLORE TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Look at your options information and choose a vocational subject that interests you. What does the course involve?


Use the internet and the careers information in school to find out how this subject could help you in the future.


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# Personalised programmes

Do you have additional learning needs and/or need extra support to build your confidence and gain qualifications to move onwards and upwards?

## FACT FILE

### Personalised programmes

These are programmes of study that are specially designed to meet your needs. Your school will help you to think about what you want to do post 16. Then it will organise lessons and give you support to help you get where you want to be. These programmes give you time to grow in confidence and let you build your knowledge and skills at a pace that's best for you.

### What you learn

Your school will help you choose courses that meet your needs. You will learn:

- English and mathematics
- skills you need to organise yourself, to work with other people and to get better at what you do
- subjects that will help you in the future – you may do work experience as part of this.

You will study some of the subjects you do now. You could also take some new subjects. The new subjects could show you what the world of work is like and help you with your personal and social development.

### Qualifications

Your school will advise you about the most appropriate qualifications for your course.

### What next

You could study for GCSEs or other level 2 qualifications. You could apply for an Apprenticeship, a Traineeship or other form of work-based learning. You could also take courses that help you prepare for supported employment and/or independent living. Your school/provider might not use the name 'Personalised programmes' but they will offer something like it. To find out more speak to your teachers, learning support staff, parents/carers and your careers staff.

## RYAN SAYS....

### ...listen when they try to help you

*I didn't bother much with school and at the end of year 9 there was a meeting to talk about my future. I went with my parents and met my head of year and a careers person. We talked about what I liked, what I didn't like, where I saw myself in five years' time and what we all thought might get in the way of my success. They suggested ideas for a study course from year 10 onwards that might be better for me as an individual. I said I'd give it a go and I'm enjoying it. I spend four days a week in school doing GCSE subjects and a preparation for work course. I spend one day a week in college doing motor vehicle studies in a proper workshop with modern equipment. I'm in year 11 now and college says that if I pass my exams and my attendance is good I can do a motor vehicle maintenance and repair course next year. I've only had two days off since the start of this year so I'm on my way.*



# Coping with examinations

Almost all of the courses you take will include one or more exams at the end of the course. These are tests that take place at a set time and assess how well you understand a subject.

## Tips

- **Check the dates and times** of your exams very carefully.
- **Make a revision plan** and stick to it - include revision classes and revision clubs. Creating a revision timetable is a great way to organise your study time - you could make a wallchart for use at home or use an online calendar. Just don't spend all your time creating the plan and then forget to carry it through!
- Take **regular breaks** from revising. If you are tired or stressed, then you are unlikely to be able to study effectively. Go for a walk or treat yourself to an episode of your favourite TV show.
- **Take any practice papers seriously** - your teacher may give you individual questions to try, or even a whole GCSE exam so that you can practise organising your time effectively.
- **Act on any feedback** you get so that you improve your performance and get closer to your target grades.
- **Revise using memory aids** that fit your learning style - graphics, flowcharts, highlighted text, summary notes, cartoons, sound recordings, key point cards.
- You could **revise with other students**, in class or as a group of friends. Test each other's knowledge with quick quizzes.
- **Sleep and eat well** before an exam and prepare any equipment you need beforehand - don't leave it until the last minute.
- Learn some **relaxation techniques** to help you stay calm during an exam.
- Once an exam is over, try to put it out of your mind and concentrate on the next one - it's too late to change anything although you can always **learn from your mistakes**. Work out what you could have done better and aim to change things next time.



## ACTION POINT

### THINK ABOUT EXAMS

List three things you can do to organise yourself so that you cope well with exams:


List three memory aids you find helpful:


List three relaxation techniques that could help you stay calm in an exam:

# Finding good information sources

Good information is the key to choosing well. Do you know how to get good information?

## Where to look

A great place to start looking for information is in your school's careers library or learning resource centre. They should have:

- people who can tell you where to find the careers information you want
- printed and multi-media information about careers and other things that affect your life
- the contact details of people and organisations who can give you expert help
- computer programs to help you work out your career interests and find courses and careers that might suit you
- internet access so you can explore online sources of careers information.

## 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?

**Relevance:** Does it answer my questions?

## HOT TIP

Before you start looking for information, make a list of the things you want to find out.

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## ACTION POINT

### EXPLORE INFORMATION SOURCES

Where and when can you access careers information in your school?


Who is there to help you?


Go online and browse the 'Education and learning' pages of **www.gov.uk**. Is the information on the site trustworthy, unbiased, accurate and up to date? Why do you think this?


What careers information in school and on the National Careers Service website: **https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk** could you use to help you with your option choices?


# Taking control of your decisions

Are you ready to make your own decisions? Or are you tempted to follow the crowd? If you let other people choose for you, you could end up studying subjects that suit them better than they suit you. Use these tips to make sure that this does not happen to you.

## Choosing an option

- Research all your options before making a decision.
- Avoid the trap of thinking that some subjects are only for boys and some only for girls - this is not true.
- If you have a firm career idea, choose the subjects you need to meet the entry requirements for future opportunities that interest you, including higher education.
- If you don't have a firm career idea, choose a broad spread of subjects that will give you plenty of choice post 16.
- Make the most of your careers lessons and ask for help from your family, friends, form tutor, subject teachers, options coordinator, a careers adviser and others - you need good information and advice to help you choose well.

## It's good to choose a course because:

- It fits your interests and abilities
- You are good at it and think you will enjoy it
- It goes well with your other choices
- It links to a career idea
- You think you might want to continue studying it post 16
- It will help you meet the entry requirements for the post-16 options that interest you
- It will help to give you plenty of choice post 16.

## It's not good to choose a course because:

- Your friends have chosen it
- You think it will be easy
- You think it is a good course for a boy/girl to do
- Someone else thinks that it is a good idea for you to do it
- You like the teacher you have now
- You didn't have time to research your options properly or to get any information and advice.

## ASH SAYS....

### ...follow your dreams

*I'm in year 12 and working towards my A Levels. I've always been interested in a career in the Armed Forces and joined the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) at school in year 10. It's given me some great opportunities and helped to develop my self-esteem, leadership and team working skills. I've made new friends and gone on many camps and courses. I wasn't sure which service I wanted to join until I did some training with the Royal Air Force (RAF). I really enjoyed it and it gave me a chance to find out what the RAF would be like. I'm now looking at a career in the RAF. My advice is be brave. Don't be influenced by other people's ideas about what job might suit you. Find out for yourself.*

## HOT TIP

Your choices don't have to be job-related. It's fine to choose some subjects simply because you enjoy or are good at them. But you should make sure that you choose a broad range of subjects that will give you plenty of choice post 16.

# Deciding what to do

Are you ready to start firming up your choices? Use our action points to help you organise your ideas.

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## ACTION POINT

DOUBLE CHECK THAT YOU HAVE NOT OVERLOOKED ANY CHOICES THAT MIGHT SUIT YOU

*I have looked at all my options:*

GCSEs

Technical and vocational qualifications

Personalised programme

Others

Options that interest me:	The qualifications I will get:	What I could do post 16:

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## ACTION POINT

FROM DREAM TO REALITY

With important decisions, it is often a good idea to start by describing your ideal outcome – what your perfect solution would be and why. Then you can see how close you can get to your ideal with the choices you have. If you give way on something small, you may find that you can shrink the gap between what you want (your dream) and what is possible (reality). Try it now.

*My ideal option choices are:*


*The courses I can actually do are:*


*I would choose these because:*


*I can bring my dream and reality closer together by:*


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## ACTION POINT

WHAT I WANT TO DO AT KEY STAGE 4

*First choices:*


*Reserves in case I don't get my first choice:*

# Thinking ahead

Spending some time thinking about the future can help you with your option choices.

## The job market

It is important to think about the job market when you are exploring your options and planning for the future. You can use labour market information to help you do this. Labour market information describes what is happening in the world of work and how the job market might change in a few years.

## How the job market is changing

Labour market information shows that:

- there are very few 'jobs for life'
- new types of jobs are appearing all the time
- most industries need some new workers to replace those who leave or retire
- the number of jobs for skilled, well qualified workers continues to grow
- the number of jobs for unskilled, poorly qualified workers continues to fall
- the number of jobs requiring science, technology, engineering, mathematics and modern foreign language skills continues to grow
- the workplace is changing fast so workers must be flexible and prepared to learn.

## TERRY SAYS....

### ...have a back-up plan

*I chose subjects at key stage 4 that I thought would be useful in many careers. I'm in year 11 now. I'm really into sport. I love rugby, play for a local team and have done well so far. I hope to play professionally one day. I know that professional sport is hard to get into so I have a back-up plan. I've applied to college to do a BTEC level 3 qualification in Public Services because I'm a physical person and like to be active. The course has lots of practical activities and includes a work placement. Best of all it means that I don't have to decide yet if I want to go to university or get a job when I finish it - it leads to both.*

## How to find labour market information

Talk to your careers leader, options coordinator or a careers adviser. They can tell you where to find local labour market information. They can also tell you what other young people in your area do when they leave school or college.

Look at local and national newspapers and jobsites to see what sorts of jobs they advertise and what types of business are doing well or closing down.

Explore the job profiles on the National Careers Service website at

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

These cover over 750 jobs. You can find out what skills and qualifications a job requires, what the work and pay are like and if the job has a future.

## How to use labour market information

Use the labour market information you find to make sure that your career ideas and plans are realistic. Check:

- if the job or career that interests you is likely to exist in the future - and change your plans if necessary
- what employers are looking for - so you can work towards gaining the knowledge, attitudes, skills and qualifications that will put you ahead of the competition
- where the jobs are - so you know where to look for work.

## HOT TIP

Employers want qualified people who are willing and able to learn. Make your education and training count and do your best whatever options you choose.

## Skills and experiences

How will the options that interest you add to your skills and experiences and help you succeed in the future? Do they include enterprise activities or work experience? Would it be a good idea to top them up with volunteering? Or with a part-time, temporary or holiday job if you are lucky enough to find one?

## Enterprise activities

Most subjects include enterprise activities and many schools and colleges offer extra ones like Young Enterprise. They help you understand what running a successful business involves and what skills, qualifications and attitudes employers and employees need. They can also teach you how to decide if a risk is worth taking.

## Work experience

Some options include work experience. Spending time in a real workplace shows you the difference between work and school. You learn from experts and see for yourself exactly what a job involves and what employers look for in job applicants. Work experience can also strengthen your employability skills, improve your self-confidence and let you test your career ideas.

## Volunteering

You don't get paid but this is a great way to find out about different work environments, to learn new skills and to develop your self-confidence. It also improves your chances of success in the future by adding to the list of things that you can offer learning providers and employers. For more information look at the 'Charities, volunteering and honours' pages in the 'Citizenship and living in the UK' section of [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

## Part-time, temporary and holiday jobs

These are a good way to earn some money and gain experience of work. If you get a job with a business, you must have an employment permit before you start work. Speak to your form tutor about this. The law limits the hours you can work and the kind of work that you can do. You may not work during school hours on any school day and you can only do 'light work' if you are under 16 - this is work that keeps you safe from danger and does not interfere with your school work. Local authorities sometimes add their own rules.

### These are the main rules about the hours you can work.

Age	Term time	School holidays
<b>13 – 14</b>	2 hours on weekdays and Sundays 5 hours on Saturdays Maximum of 12 hours a week	5 hours on weekdays and Saturdays 2 hours on Sundays Maximum of 25 hours a week
<b>15 – 16</b>	2 hours on weekdays and Sundays 8 hours on Saturdays Maximum of 12 hours a week	8 hours on weekdays and Saturdays 2 hours on Sundays Maximum of 35 hours a week

You may not work before 7am or after 7pm.

You are entitled to a one-hour break after working for four hours.

You are entitled to a break of two consecutive weeks each year that must be taken during school holidays. There is no national minimum wage for young people under 16.

Thinking ahead *continued...* **HOT TIP**

If you are struggling to identify the skills and experiences that you will get from different options, ask your subject teachers, careers leader, form tutor or options coordinator for help.

**ACTION POINT****14****OPTIONS, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES**

The skills and experiences I will get from the key stage 4 options that interest me

Option	Skills and experiences

**What will you do post 16?**

The future is closer than you think! In a couple of years' time, you will be finishing your key stage 4 courses and deciding what to do post 16. And having some idea about what you might do can help you to choose your key stage 4 options.

For example, will you need to study certain subjects at key stage 4 so that you can follow your interests post 16? Will some subjects be more helpful to you than others in keeping your choices open?

**Which of these post-16 options interests you most?****Full-time education**

You could continue in full-time education and do one or more of the following.

- **A Levels** - to study these subject-based qualifications you'll need four or five GCSEs at grades 4 or 5 and above
- **Technical and vocational qualifications** - these give you the inside story on the world of work and are also great preparation for higher education
- **a Traineeship or supported internship** - a flexible option that could help you get a job or Apprenticeship or move into supported employment or independent living.

**An Apprenticeship**

With an Apprenticeship, you work for an employer and earn while you learn. You gain job-related qualifications, skills and experience that employers and universities value. This suits people who know what they want to do for a living.

**Part-time education or training**

You could do part-time education or training if you are employed, self-employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week and for eight weeks or more in a row.

 **HOT TIP**

Make a portfolio and collect evidence of your experiences and achievements to help you with applications and interviews later on.

# ACTION POINT

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HOW COULD YOUR KEY STAGE 4 OPTIONS HELP YOU IN THE FUTURE?

Options that will help me follow my interests post 16:


Options that will help to give me plenty of choice post 16:


Options that will help me go on to higher education in the future:


Options that will help me get a job in the future:




CHOOSING THE RIGHT OPTIONS

## LEE SAYS....

### ...use the support you have

*I have dyslexia and got one to one tuition and other support at school. It was brilliant. It helped me learn how to focus and use visuals and sounds to understand, remember and communicate stuff. I've always loved outdoor activities, played a lot of sport and coached younger players. I wanted to do this full time in the future so choosing my key stage 4 options was pretty easy. I got good grades in all my courses and I'm at college now doing a BTEC level 3 qualification in Sport. I haven't decided yet if I'll look for a job or go on to higher education when I've finished.*



## HOT TIP

If you think you will find it difficult to continue in learning post 16 without some financial help, speak to your form tutor or look at the 'Education and learning' pages on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

# Frequently asked questions

## *How do I know if I have chosen the right options?*

Have you researched and thought carefully about your choices? Have you chosen options that interest you and match your abilities? Have you chosen options that you think you will enjoy, that link to a career idea or that give you plenty of choice in the future? If so, you can be confident that you have chosen well.

## *I like sports and creative subjects best - can I do just these?*

No. You must study compulsory subjects such as English and mathematics and most schools and colleges will give you option blocks or pathways to choose from.

## *The career I want to do is strongly linked to mathematics and science. Can I take more than one science?*

Yes. In most schools you can take one, two or three different science GCSEs. Talk to your science teachers, form tutor, options coordinator or a careers adviser to find out which option would be best for the career you have in mind.

## *Can I study something relevant to work that will help me to explore my career ideas?*

Most options include some work-related courses. Speak to your options coordinator or a careers adviser to find out which might suit you. Remember though that you will still have to study compulsory subjects such as English, mathematics and science.

## *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?*

It is never a good idea to choose a career simply because of your gender. Speak to your subject teachers or make an appointment with your options coordinator or a careers adviser to discuss your concerns. They will help you think through your ideas and how well they match your interests and abilities. They may also be able to put you in touch with someone of your gender who is already doing the career that interests you.

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

The best way is to choose a variety of subjects that match your skills and interests. All the subjects your school offers will give you a good general preparation for future learning and work.



# YOUR ACTION PLAN

USE THIS PLAN TO HELP YOU FINALISE YOUR KEY STAGE 4 OPTION CHOICES.

## Where I am now

(e.g. thinking about my options; speaking to family and teachers: almost ready to choose)


## Who can help me and how

(e.g. parents or carers; teachers; options coordinator; a careers adviser)


## What I need to do and when

(e.g. read my options information; talk to my parents or carers, teachers and a careers adviser; go to options events; complete and return my options form)

Actions	By what date	Completed (Y/N)

## Checklist

*I have now:*

- |                                      |                          |                                       |                          |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Read the options information         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Asked people for advice               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Been to the options events           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Made my choices                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Studied the options/application form | <input type="checkbox"/> | Returned the options/application form | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Done my research                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                       |                          |

**Congratulations!**

**Now you can concentrate on enjoying key stage 4!**

We welcome feedback on **Which Way Now?**  
and the supplement for parents and carers.  
Please email comments to **[resources@prospects.co.uk](mailto:resources@prospects.co.uk)**

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