

A parent's guide

What do you need to know?

As a parent, you are incredibly influential when it comes to the decisions your child makes in all areas of their lives and that is especially true when it comes to their education and careers. We know that the choices, which are open to your child today, may be very different from when you were in their position and you may feel as if you're unsure about what advice to offer.

We want to try and make it as easy as possible for you to talk to your child about their options confidently and know that the information you have is as accurate and as up to date as possible.

National Careers Service is available for anyone aged 13 and over providing advice and information on a range of topics including careers, education, employment and training/apprenticeships. Our free helpline – **0800 100 900** – is open from 8am to 10pm every day and you are more than welcome to get in touch with our trained advisers, to ask any questions you may have about your child's education or career opportunities.

Our website has a range of contact channels which are accessible to all; we offer a free online chat with an adviser, you can send us an email, text or arrange a call-back and we also have minicom (for customers who are deaf or have hearing difficulties).

Your child can complete a free Skills Health Check test through our website which will suggest specific job sectors they may be suited to, based on their skills and strengths. They can also research their career ideas using our popular job profiles.



General Advice

You don't need to become a qualified careers adviser to be able to offer your child advice and support with their education and career decisions. The most important thing you can offer is the knowledge of where to find the right information, so you can do the research into their options together.

To begin with, it's important your child knows what their strengths are and their skills and abilities. You will undoubtedly know what they are good at but it's difficult to recognise your own skills and strengths. You can use the Skills Health Check test on our website to help your child become more aware of their strengths, weakness and career sectors they may be suited to.

The Skills Health Check is a great starting point and can help your child with researching specific career sectors and understanding more about themselves as an individual. It's important to remember that any careers related test you take is purely meant as a guide.

The career choices which the test may offer up can be researched further on the 'Job Profile' pages. We have over 800 different types of career options, from gardener to graphic designer and everything in between! Each one explains which skills and qualifications you need to get into that job. You can also read about what the work would be like, the average salary you could expect and what the career prospects might be.

One of the most popular search methods for the job profiles is through the 'Job Families' list. This groups similar jobs into one area so you can browse all the different jobs within this field. For example, if your child

knows they want to work with animals but isn't sure what jobs are available, you can look through the profiles for a vet, a kennel worker, a police dog handler, a farm worker or even a beekeeper!

GCSE choices

One of the first instances of your child making a firm decision about their future may come with them choosing their GCSE options. Up to this point, they have been learning the same subjects as most secondary students but now they will be asked to make a number of choices to ensure their learning is more individual and suited to their interests and skills.

Year 9 choices

To make sure you can offer the best support, it's good to know a little bit about what subjects their school considers 'compulsory', which subjects the school classes as 'option choices' and what ideas your child may be considering.

Each school is different, compulsory subjects may include English language and literature, maths and science (physics, chemistry and biology). Some schools also class subjects such as modern foreign languages (German, French, Italian, Spanish), design and technology (graphics, textiles), religious studies and ICT as compulsory subjects.

It's also possible that there will be a number of subject options available which your child may not have studied before, such as business studies, health and social care, travel and tourism, so it's worthwhile talking through all the choices they may be considering, not just the ones

they are familiar with. Option choices are normally set out in 'option blocks', the below image is an **EXAMPLE** of how schools can set out option choices:

Current option choices in Year 11

Options	Subjects
Option 1	Geography, History, Business Studies, Resistant Materials and IT
Option 2	Drama, Geography, History, Music, PE and Art
Option 3	Food Technology, French, German, Spanish, Business Studies, Sociology and Performing Arts
Option 4	French, German, Spanish, Business Studies, Graphics, Textiles, Food Technology and IT

BTEC qualifications

There may also be the option of taking a BTEC qualification. BTEC stands for Business and Technology Education Council and they offer vocational qualifications in areas such as engineering, health and social care, travel and tourism plus many more. You can do a BTEC, equivalent to one or two GCSEs, alongside other GCSEs.

As BTECs are offered in more vocational, hands on subjects, taking these qualifications can affect the routes available to your child in the future so it's worth making sure they speak to their teachers or a careers adviser about what career path they might be thinking about taking, just to make sure all options are open to them.

0800 100 900

nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

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Not every school will be set up to offer a BTEC option, but if it's something that might seem a good fit for your child, it's worth speaking to the school to find out more. Different BTEC subjects will become available after GCSEs and these tend to be studied at college rather than through sixth form.

Benefits of Parental involvement

- Children have better self-esteem, are more self-disciplined, and show higher aspirations and motivation toward school.
- Children tend to achieve more, regardless of ethnic or racial background, socioeconomic status, or parents' education level.
- Children generally achieve better grades, test scores, and have better attendance.
- Research indicates that when students feel supported and loved by their parents, they have more confidence in their own ability to research careers and to choose a career that would be interesting and exciting.

Choices after GCSEs

The choices, which your child makes after completing their GCSEs or BTEC qualifications, are dependent on a number of different factors including their own ambitions, the opportunities offered locally and the grades they have achieved.

These choices will really allow your child to tailor their own education and study towards subjects they feel passionate about and allow them to gain the knowledge

and experience needed to progress into their desired career path.

When thinking about steps after compulsory education, it's important to keep in mind that there is no one size fits all style of education and that everyone learns in different ways. There is no right or wrong or better or worse but with the raising of the participation age coming into effect, this now means your child needs to stay in some form of education or training until their 18th birthday.

Education until their 18th birthday isn't quite what it sounds; in fact school leavers have a range of choices:

1. To stay in full time education working towards, A levels, BTEC, NVQ or an alternative level 1/2/3 qualification at a local college or sixth form.
2. An apprenticeship.
3. A traineeship with the idea of progressing on to an apprenticeship or education.
4. Employment or volunteering of 20 hours a week while working towards an accredited qualification part time with the study hours adding up to 280 guided learning hours over the course of a year.

Sixth form

Young people who feel they work and learn best in a classroom environment are likely to be interested in moving into sixth form where the most common qualifications are A levels. A levels are offered in a wide range of subjects – from academic subjects like English, maths, history, biology to more work based subjects like health and social care, sport and exercise and business

studies. They are most likely to be studied at a sixth form but can be offered at further education colleges as well.

Entry requirements for A levels are usually at least five GCSEs grade 4 (grade C) or above which include subjects maths, English and sometimes science. Your child will be asked to pick three to four A level subjects, at this point in their education their choices begin to narrow so it may be worthwhile talking through their options with one of our advisers to keep them on track for the future. If your child doesn't know exactly what they want to do in the future, they can still study a combination of different subjects to allow them to keep as many options open as possible.

Some careers need a person to have specific A level qualifications as these qualifications directly influence what university courses could be available. If your son/daughter is thinking about a particular subject at university, it's best to make sure the A level choices they make are acceptable for entry and you can do this by checking the entry requirements through UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service).

For example, in order to become a doctor, it requires a student to take biology and usually chemistry at A level. If a student doesn't have a qualification in these subjects, they wouldn't be able to apply successfully for a medical degree at university.

However some degrees do not have any subject specific entry requirements but ask that you achieve specific grades which are then converted into UCAS points for entry onto a degree. The UCAS tariff table for A levels are detailed in the table below. Full details of UCAS tariff tables can be found online at www.ucas.com/advisers/guides-and-resources/tariff-2017

Grade	Tariff points
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

College

The teachers at your child's school are likely to have a lot more information about A level options than other areas; this is simply because it is the route they will most likely have taken to get into teaching and can draw on their own experiences when offering advice. However, for a lot of young people, staying in a school environment is not the best thing for them, as their abilities may lie with more practical or vocational learning.

There are a wide range of college courses your child can choose from and it will all depend upon the grades they receive at school in their GCSEs. Further education college qualifications are listed below:

Entry level qualifications – Designed to support students who received no GCSE grades and need support with basic Maths and English.

Level 1 NVQ – Designed to support students who may have left with some GCSE grades but at a low level 2-1 (E–G), student likely to focus on one specific subject.

Level 2 NVQ – Likely to be offered to students who achieved grades 3/2 (D/E) and as above students will focus on one specific subject.

Level 1 BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Certificates – This gives you basic knowledge and skills to show you can do a certain job.



Level 2 BTEC First Diplomas and Certificates – Equivalent to GCSEs in a specific subject and are generally offered to students who achieve 4/3/2s (C/D/Es) at GCSE.

Level 3 BTEC National Diploma – Equivalent to two A levels and can be used as a pathway to university. It is likely to be in one specific subject.

Level 3 BTEC Extended National Diploma – Equivalent to three full A levels and widely accepted by universities as an alternative to A levels for degree courses, again likely to be in one solid subject.

Functional/Key Skills – Can be a mandatory part of your course at college and are generally levels 1–3 in Numeracy, Literacy and ICT.

Both sixth forms and colleges will hold open days where students can visit and look around, speak to current students and teachers, check out the resources and facilities; basically see if they can picture themselves there in the future.

Visit – www.opendays.com to find out more.