

2010-2011

# IT'S YOUR CHOICE



**PARENTS  
& CARERS**  
SUPPLEMENT  
INCLUDED

**How to choose  
your post-16 options**

- **The choices**
- **Qualifications**
- **What to study  
and where**
- **Jobs,  
applications  
and interviews**
- **Getting help  
and support**



Name

# CONTENTS

## Get started

- What are my choices? **2-3**
- Getting the right qualifications **4**
- Personal calendar **5**

## Research your ideas

- Qualifications **6-13**
- What to study and where **14-15**

## Think ahead

- Higher education **16-17**
- Experience needed **18**
- Work in a changing world **19**
- Finding work **20-21**
- Applications and interviews **22-23**

## Get help and support

- Money matters **24-26**
- People, places and websites **27-28**
- Action plan **29**

# WELCOME

## Congratulations! You've reached the next stage of your education and it's time to choose your post-16 options.

You probably feel that you have enough on your mind what with studying, taking exams and dealing with everyday life. And 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.

### Continuing your education or training does not mean you have to stay at school

Whatever you have achieved in school, there is a post-16 option to suit you. Staying on at school is one option. But you could also continue your education or training at a college, with a training provider or in the workplace.

### You may be eligible for financial help post 16

Most young people choose to continue their education or training post 16. You may be able to get financial help (see **page 24**).

### You need good careers information and advice to choose well

Make the most of the help on offer – in careers lessons, from your family and friends, subject teachers and careers adviser and through

➔ [www.direct.gov.uk/educationandlearning/](http://www.direct.gov.uk/educationandlearning/)

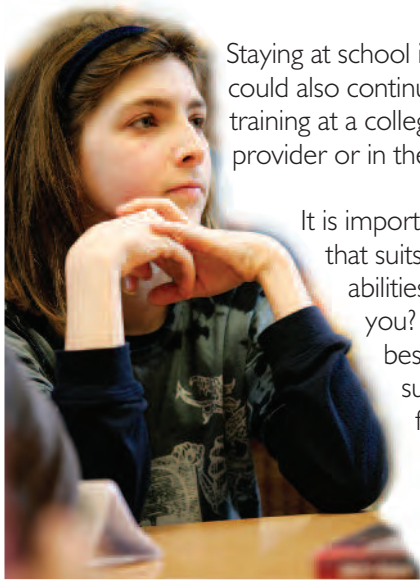
### Involve your parents

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 at the end of this booklet.



# WHAT ARE MY CHOICES?

Having the right knowledge, skills and qualifications improves your job prospects and boosts your future earning power. There are different post-16 options to gain these.



Staying at school is one option. But you could also continue your education or training at a college, with a training provider or in the workplace.

It is important to choose something that suits your interests and abilities. What will motivate you? What will give you the best possible chance of success? Do our quiz to find out.



## CASE STUDY 1

### Gincy

#### Keeping your options open

Gincy is in Year 11 and recently made her post-16 option choices. She doesn't have any set career ideas at present, but has interests in both travel and tourism and design. Gincy's main priority in making her choices is to keep her future career options open as much as possible.

She plans to go to college after Year 11 and has applied to study a range of A Level subjects. She has chosen art and design because she enjoys it and it will enable her to pursue her interest in design. She has opted for sociology, because she is interested in other people and it will be useful for many careers, and also ICT to increase her computer knowledge. She is also going to study chemistry because she enjoys it and it is one of her strongest subjects.

Gincy is thinking about progressing to higher education after college and this also influenced her post-16 option choices. To enter a degree course, she knows that she needs to achieve level 3 qualifications and her choice of A Levels will enable her to choose from a range of degree courses at university.

## ACTION POINT 1

### Which route is best for you?

Think about what you want to do post 16 then choose **A**, **B** or **C**.

#### Post 16, I want to ...

- A** Continue studying to gain more qualifications
- B** Go to work and gain qualifications as I earn
- C** Continue to study, but I am not sure which qualifications to do
- A** Do a full-time course at a school or college
- B** Work and study part time
- C** Think about what I could do in the future – maybe get a job with training
- A** Study subjects I enjoy and am good at
- B** Gain a qualification linked to the work I want to do
- C** Get some advice about courses and qualifications that would suit me
- A** Gain qualifications so I can earn more in the future
- B** Get a job with training and start earning money now
- C** Find out how to get some financial support to help me study or train
- A** Study for higher level qualifications as a step towards getting the job I want
- B** Start work as soon as possible
- C** Get some help to make the right decision for me

#### How did you score?

Add up your totals of **As**, **Bs** and **Cs** and check your results.

**As**

**Bs**

**Cs**

## Mostly As

Continuing your education or training at school or college seems to appeal to you. If so, you have many choices to research before you make a decision. When you are using **It's your choice**, pay special attention to the sections on **Qualifications (pages 6-13)** and **What to study and where (pages 14-15)**.

## Mostly Bs

Earning while you learn seems to interest you. If so, you have many choices to consider before you make a decision. When you are using **It's your choice**, pay special attention to the following sections: **Qualifications (pages 6-13)** and **Think ahead (pages 16-23)**.

## Mostly Cs

It sounds like you are not sure what you want to do. When you are using **It's your choice**, pay attention to the following sections: **Qualifications (pages 6-13)** and **Get help and support (pages 24-29)**.

### CASE STUDY 2

### Michael



#### Entering a competitive area

Michael has always wanted to be a surgeon and has done a lot of research into medical careers. He has found out what subjects he should study after Year 11, how he should train and how he can improve his

chances of beating the competition to get into medicine.

'I had a look at university websites and they gave me information such as what GCSE results I needed, what A Levels I should study and even what work I could do now to help improve my chances of getting into medical school and pursue a degree in medicine.'

Michael's research into his career goal has really helped him make decisions about what to do after Year 11.

'I have decided to take maths and three sciences at A Level and study at my school sixth form. I am also planning to find a job or do some voluntary work with people, ideally within a healthcare setting, to improve my chances of getting into my chosen career.'

## ACTION POINT 2

### Organise your ideas

#### The option that interests me most now is:

- A Levels
- Vocational qualifications and the Diploma
- Apprenticeships
- Foundation Learning
- Other forms of work with training

This interests me because:

I want to find out more about:

I can get the answers I need from:

I need to speak to the careers co-ordinator

or my careers adviser as soon as possible.



# GETTING THE RIGHT QUALIFICATIONS

**Knowledge, skills and qualifications are increasingly important in today's workplace. How will you know if you are getting the right ones? Find out here.**

## Labour market information

The labour market is the place where workers compete for jobs and employers compete for workers. Experts spend a lot of time researching and gathering data and statistics about what is happening in the labour market. Some look at what is happening now. Others look at the long-term trends – what is likely to happen in the future. The information they produce is called labour market information.

## Long-term trends

Economic problems around the world have put pressure on the labour market. There is more unemployment and part-time working. Job prospects are uncertain. But labour market information suggests that there is little change in the long-term trends. So when you are deciding what to do next, you need to think about these long-term trends. They show that:

- there are very few 'jobs for life' – you will change jobs many times in your working life

- new jobs are emerging all the time – because of technological, economic, social and political changes
- all industries will recruit some new workers to replace people who retire, change jobs or swap careers
- the number of jobs for unskilled, poorly qualified people will continue to fall
- the number of jobs for skilled, well-qualified people will continue to grow
- the number of jobs using science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) and modern foreign language skills will continue to grow
- the workplace is changing fast so employers will continue to need people who are willing and able to learn.

## Using labour market information

You can use labour market information to see if your career plans and ideas are realistic. You can also check that you are aiming for the qualifications that will give you the knowledge and skills you need. Research labour market information for the career ideas that interest you and make a note of what you find, for example:

- if they have a long-term future – if there is any chance that they will disappear in the next few years you can change your plans
- what employers are looking for – so you can work towards getting the skills, qualifications and attitudes that will put you ahead of the competition
- where the jobs are – so you know where to look for work when you are ready.

## **ACTION POINT 3** Find labour market information for a job that interests you

Choose a job that interests you.

Look it up in your school's careers information resources? What did you discover?

Go to [www.sscalliance.org](http://www.sscalliance.org) and find the Sector Skills Council for the job that interests you. Follow the links and browse the Sector Skills Council's website. Look for labour market information. What did you discover?

If you have access to a local online 14-19 prospectus, use it to look for labour market information. What did you discover?

Do you think the job that interests you is likely to exist in the future? Give your reasons.

Do you think that you will be able to do the job that interests you in your local area? Give your reasons.

# PERSONAL CALENDAR

## ACTION POINT 4

Use this calendar to help you plan what to do as you make your post-16 choices

### By now you will be able to:

- ▶ Think about careers that interest you and find out as much about them as you can.

---

- ▶ Ask your careers adviser how school will help you find out about further and higher education courses – for example, organising visits or discussions with college and university students or current Apprentices.

---

- ▶ If available use your local online 14-19 prospectus (see **page 13**) and the resources in the careers resource centre to research your post-16 options, including Apprenticeships.

---

- ▶ Collect information about options that interest you and attend open days and other events.

---

- ▶ If you're thinking of doing a higher education course later on, check the entry requirements of the courses that interest you on [↻ http://unistats.direct.gov.uk](http://unistats.direct.gov.uk) and [↻ www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

---

- ▶ If you don't have a firm career idea, think about how you can keep your future options open.

---

- ▶ Find out if you have access to the Common Application Process (CAP) for local opportunities.

---

- ▶ Check application deadlines for options that interest you.

---

- ▶ Talk to your careers adviser about your plans and next steps.

---

- ▶ Speak to your careers adviser if you are interested in an Apprenticeship or another form of job with training.

---

- ▶ Discuss your ideas with your family, friends and subject teachers.

---

- ▶ Be prepared to rethink your plans if your predicted grades change – they could go up as well as down.

---

- ▶ Update your plans and your portfolio of evidence to help you with post-16 applications and interviews.

### Spring term 2011

- ▶ Prioritise your choices.

---

- ▶ Make a back-up plan.

---

- ▶ Be prepared to rethink your plans if your predicted grades change – they could go up as well as down.

---

- ▶ 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.

---

- ▶ Speak to your careers adviser if you are looking for an Apprenticeship (see **page 11**) or other form of job with training. Use [↻ www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk) to search and apply online.

---

- ▶ If you are still not sure what to do, speak to your careers adviser.

### Summer term 2011

- ▶ If you still have no plans, make an appointment to see your careers adviser.

---

- ▶ If you are interested in but not quite ready for work, ask your careers adviser about Foundation Learning that includes preparation for work.

---

- ▶ 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 work experience or voluntary work in the summer holidays – you may even be able to get a job.

---

- ▶ If you think you'll need help with the cost of continuing in education or training you may be able to get help through the enhanced Discretionary Learner Support Fund (see **page 24**).

---

- ▶ GCSE and Diploma results are published at the end of August. If they are better or worse than expected, speak to your careers adviser as soon as possible.

# QUALIFICATIONS

**Qualifications are your passport to more opportunities in education, training and work. 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. Entry level is at the bottom and level 8 is at the top. 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 A\* to C) – but they increasingly want people with qualifications at level 3 and above.
- You need level 3 qualifications to get on to most university courses. You generally need a grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics too.

To find out more about qualification levels see the diagram on the opposite page.

### HOT TIP

Whatever you have achieved in school, there is a post-16 option to suit you.

## How qualifications can help you in the future

There 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 make sure you don't spend your life in a dead end 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, colleges and universities 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, colleges and universities look for people like this.
- 6 To show yourself what you can do** – gaining qualifications boosts your self-confidence and self-awareness.

### CASE STUDY 3

### Zoe

#### Do your research

Zoe is in Year 12 and aims to be a studio photographer when she leaves the sixth form.

With her interest in taking family and wedding photos, she opted to take a GCSE in photography and then continued with the subject at A Level. Whilst planning for her post-16 options, Zoe sought advice on the best entry routes into her chosen career and also spoke to existing professional photographers.

'I realise that getting a job as a professional studio photographer could be difficult. I will keep investigating doing an Apprenticeship when I leave the sixth form as this is my preferred

option. However, I have also kept my options open by doing A Levels, so that I could also look at other options such as going to university. I chose courses that would make use of practical tasks in assignments, which is how I learn best.'

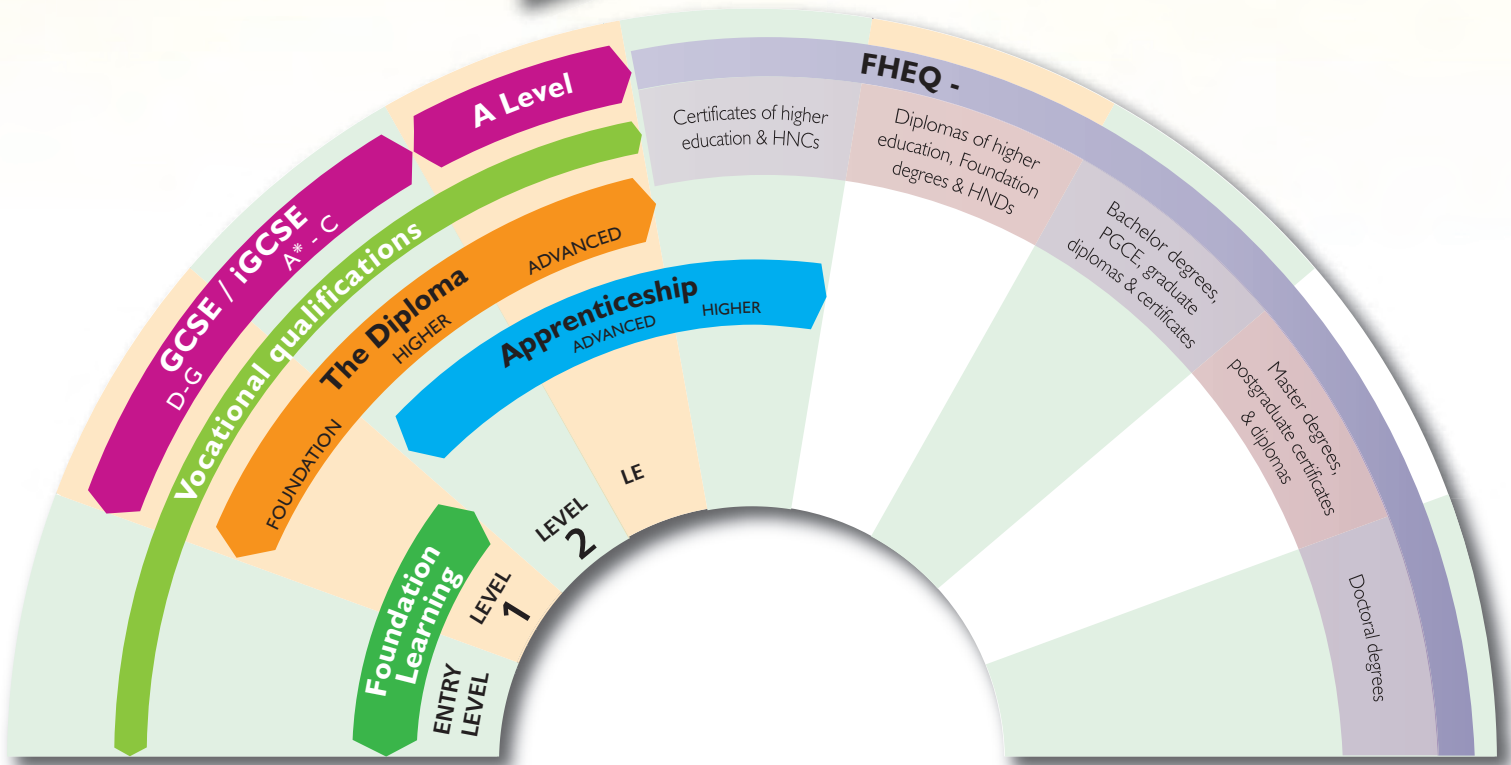
Zoe chose A Levels in media studies and English alongside photography, so that she could also pursue a possible career in magazine editing.

There are different routes into many careers. It is important to research the options and choose a course that suits you best.



**HOT TIP**

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



**ACTION POINT 5**

**Explore your interests**

Choose one career or job that interests you. Look it up in careers information resources and list the subjects and qualifications you will need to do it.

Career/job:

Subjects and qualifications needed:

Now use the chart above to match the qualifications you need to their level.

Levels 4-8

Level 3

Level 2

Level 1

Entry level

# QUALIFICATIONS CONTINUED

Each post-16 option offers you different qualification opportunities and a different mix of teaching methods and assessment. Your options may include one-year courses that mean you have to make more decisions in a year's time. Find out more about the different options here.

Before you finalise your options it is important that you:

- check that employers and universities value the qualification – look up the entry requirements for the jobs and higher education courses that interest you at ➔ [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)
- consider how well your preferred qualification compares with other options, such as studying for A Levels or doing an Apprenticeship – your subject teachers and careers adviser can help you with this
- speak to your careers adviser and the course provider about your preferred qualification.

## HOT TIP

Use [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) to research the entry requirements for jobs and higher education courses that interest you.

## FIND A LEARNING

**Do you need a bit more time to build your confidence and gain qualifications to move onwards and upwards?**

**What you learn:** You will get help to choose options that fit your needs and improve your chances of success in the future. Most people do a mix of:

- functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT)
- personal and social development – these build your confidence and teamwork skills and help you to organise yourself
- subject or work-related learning – these prepare you for the future by adding to the experiences and skills that you can offer a learning provider, a training provider or an employer.

**What you can do next:** You will get help to plan your future and choose options that fit your needs. You could study for more qualifications like GCSEs or other level 2 qualifications. You could apply for an Apprenticeship or other form of job with training. Or you could prepare for supported employment and/or independent living.

**Find out more:** Your school/provider might have a different name for this learning route but they will offer something like it. To find out more speak to your teachers, learning support staff, parents/carers and your careers adviser.



# A LEVELS

**Do you want to look at some of your GCSE subjects in more depth? Do you want to study more than one subject? A Levels are subject-based so this option could suit you.**

## A Levels (Advanced Level General Certificates of Education)

**Entry requirements:** These depend on the subject. Most courses ask for the equivalent of four or five GCSEs at grades C and above. You may also need to have studied and achieved good grades in particular subjects.

**Length:** Most courses take two years. Many people study three or four subjects in the first year then decide which to continue studying in the second year. Others take A Levels alongside or as part of a Diploma.

**Subjects:** You pick your own subjects from those a school or college offers. Look at online prospectuses (see [page 13](#)) to see what you can study locally. There are over 80 subjects in total.

**Courses:** Most courses are broken down into units.

**Assessment:** Each unit is assessed separately through a mix of internal assessment and examinations.

**Where they lead:** A Levels prepare you for employment and higher education.

If you have a particular higher education course or career in mind, you need to check the entry requirements – some require specific subjects and grades.

## Extended Project qualification

This qualification helps you to develop research, independent learning and other skills that will be useful in higher education and employment. It is worth half an A Level. To gain the qualification 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.



CASE STUDY 4

**Tori**

### Comparing GCSEs and A Levels

Tori is in Year 12 and studying A Levels in ICT, business studies, psychology and English. At the moment she is unsure what she wants to do after the sixth form but is considering further study at university.

Tori remembers when she first started her A Level subjects and reflects on how different they were to GCSEs.

‘You have to work a lot harder because of the greater depths of the subjects. The courses demand a lot more time and are structured differently to what I had done before.’

Tori says that when she was deciding what to do after her GCSEs she looked into what exactly each subject would entail. She read the course outlines in her sixth form prospectus and spoke to friends in the year above who were doing the courses already to see what the content would be like and how they would be assessed.

‘I found that by doing this it was easier to choose what I wanted to do. I was particularly looking at subjects that I had done well in at GCSE as well as ones that seemed interesting and new. Looking back, I am pleased with the choices I have made. Even though I felt a bit shocked to start with I am really enjoying what I am doing!’

## GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education)

Some schools and colleges offer students the chance to do GCSEs in new subjects or to redo some GCSEs alongside A Levels. GCSEs are highly valued by schools, colleges and employers, so students may retake important GCSEs like English and mathematics. Some schools may offer iGCSEs in some subjects.

### HOT TIP

Other subject-based qualifications like the International Baccalaureate (IB) or the Cambridge Pre-U can prepare you for higher education and some schools offer them as an alternative to A Levels.

# VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND THE DIPLOMA

**Do you want to find out more about a particular area of work? Do you want to combine classroom learning with independent research, practical activities and work experience? Then these options could suit you.**

## Vocational qualifications

These are work-related qualifications that employers and professional bodies helped to develop. Examples are BTECs, City & Guilds qualifications and OCR Nationals. Some cover a broad industry sector. Others are specialist qualifications covering a specific part of a sector or designed for a specific job. Vocational qualifications come in different sizes. An Award is the smallest, the next is a Certificate and the largest is a Diploma.

**Level:** Vocational qualifications are available at many different levels. Most people aged 16 to 19 study for qualifications at Entry level to level 3 (see [page 7](#)).

**Entry requirements:** These depend on where you study and on the subject and level of your qualification. To do a level 3 course, you generally need four or five good GCSEs or a level 2 vocational qualification or Diploma in a related area. To do a level 2 course, you generally need four or five GCSEs at grades D to G or a level 1 vocational qualification or Diploma in a similar subject.

**Subjects:** You pick a subject from those that schools and colleges offer. You can choose from a wide variety of subjects ranging from construction and building to engineering, floristry and plumbing.

**Course:** Most courses take between one and two years to complete. Much depends on the size and level of the vocational qualification. All courses have a mix of theoretical and practical activities. Many are classroom based. Some include work experience.

**Assessment:** Assessment is through a mix of practical and written tests. Achievement is graded pass, merit or distinction.

**Where they lead:** Vocational qualifications prepare you for further learning and work. You could study for higher level qualifications at college or university. If higher education is something you are considering, check the entry requirements of the courses that interest you on [www.ucas.com](https://www.ucas.com). You could also get a job and continue your training to gain specific job-related and professional qualifications.

For more on these go to  
[www.direct.gov.uk](https://www.direct.gov.uk)

## The Diploma

Diplomas are a qualification that employers, universities, schools and colleges helped to develop.

**Level:** You can take a Diploma at three levels.

**L1 Foundation**

**L2 Higher**

**L3 Advanced** There is also a shorter **Progression Diploma**.

**Entry requirements:** These depend on the level of your Diploma and where you study.

**Subjects:** You pick a subject from those that schools and colleges offer. Your choices could include a range from Engineering to Travel and Tourism.

**Course:** Diploma courses take one or two years and have three parts:

- learning about your Diploma subject
- developing the skills you need for everyday life, in learning and at work, and includes at least 10 days working with an employer. If you are working towards a level 3 Advanced Diploma, you will do the Extended Project qualification (see [page 9](#))
- studying additional, optional subjects that help you understand more about your Diploma subject.

**Assessment:** Each part of a Diploma is assessed separately through a mix of examinations and internal assessment, including practical tasks. You must pass all parts of your Diploma to gain the qualification. You will get a transcript showing your overall grade and your achievements in each part of the Diploma. You will also get separate certificates for each qualification you gain.

**Where they lead:** Diplomas do not qualify you to do a specific job but they do prepare you for work and further learning. Depending on the level of your Diploma, you could go on to other level 3 qualifications or higher education. You could also apply for an Apprenticeship or other form of job with training. Check that your subject choice will help you meet the entry requirements for any higher education courses that interest you. You can find this information on [www.ucas.com](https://www.ucas.com)

# APPRENTICESHIPS

## Do you know what you want to do for a living?

As an Apprentice, you can earn whilst you learn and gain nationally-recognised qualifications at the same time. The number of Apprenticeships is growing, and you must be ready to fulfil your responsibilities to both yourself and your employer.

**Level:** You can do Apprenticeships at three levels:

- L2** Apprenticeship
- L3** Advanced Apprenticeship
- L4** Higher Apprenticeships

**Entry requirements:** You must be 16 or over, living in England and not in full-time education. Other entry requirements vary so do your research carefully.

**Career choices:** There are now nearly 200 types of Apprenticeship from engineering to boat building, veterinary nursing to accountancy. Your options will depend on your experience and what is available locally. Visit the Apprenticeships website to find out more about the types of Apprenticeships available and to search for Apprenticeship vacancies online at [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

**Length:** There is no set time for completing an Apprenticeship. Most take between one and four years, depending on the level you take and how quickly you learn.

**Training:** As well as working alongside and learning from experienced staff, you will do off-the-job training, usually on a day-release basis at a local college or specialist training facility.

**Qualifications:** You will study for a work-based qualification at level 2, 3 or 4, a technical certificate relevant to your chosen occupation, such as a BTEC or City & Guilds award and Functional Skills qualifications. You may also study for certificates or other qualifications that are required in your chosen occupation. Assessment includes a mix of observation by an assessor, the assessment of a portfolio of evidence and examinations.

### CASE STUDY 5

### Rachael

#### The Apprenticeship experience



Rachael's Advanced Apprenticeship in Engineering at BAE Systems saw her win the National Advanced Apprenticeship Award of the Year 2008. She has been so successful

in her role as a Structures Engineer on the Eurofighter Typhoon, the world's most advanced combat aircraft at BAE Systems, she has now been asked to support the management of the Saudi Arabian fleet of Typhoons.

'Without my Advanced Apprenticeship I do not think I would have been given this opportunity at such an early stage in my career', says Rachael.

As a keen ambassador for the advantages of work-based learning, Rachael (aged 23) regularly delivers speeches on engineering and Apprenticeship issues. She is studying part time for a Degree in Mechanical Engineering, and is an Affiliate Member of the IMechE and Whitworth award-holder.

'If I'm honest, I didn't always want to be an engineer or work with aircraft, and as my schooling drew to a close, I felt unsure of what the future held. I looked into Apprenticeships and other courses, and what clinched the Apprenticeship for me was the fact that I could go and begin a career, learning from people who are experts in their own right. I felt I could get involved in real work while applying my favourite subjects, like physics and maths, and continuing to learn.'

**Money:** You receive a salary, and the same benefits as other employees in the organisation you work for – like holiday entitlement and pension contributions. Currently the minimum wage for an Apprentice is £2.50 an hour, but many Apprentices earn more than this, with an average of £193 per week.

**Where they lead:** When you finish an Apprenticeship, you could go on to other skilled employment and training or promotion in your current organisation. You could also progress to higher education – for example, to do a Higher Apprenticeship, a Higher National Certificate or Diploma, a Foundation degree or other course.





# JOBS

## Is your goal to get a full-time job post 16? Or do you want to work for yourself? Get the facts here.

The law says that you can do this but you might want to think twice before actually doing it. It is a tough and risky option.

### The pros

**You are paid.** As an employee, you are entitled to the national minimum wage for your age group and you may be paid more. You can find the current rates at

➔ [www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw).

If you work for yourself, you pay yourself what you can afford after you have paid the bills.

**You get work experience** so you can improve your CV and show that you are a responsible worker with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that employers value.

**You may get some training**, giving you the chance to continue building your knowledge and skills and improve your future job prospects. Even if your job doesn't come with some training you could always look at doing some part-time learning at your local college alongside your job. If the training leads to nationally-recognised qualifications it could help you gain promotion. It could also help you meet the entry requirements for further and higher education courses.

### HOT TIP

You cannot start full-time work at the end of Year 11 until after the official school leaving date, which is the last Friday in June. And remember, whatever you have achieved in school, there is a post-16 education or training option to suit you.

### The cons

**It can be very hard to find a job.** You will face fierce competition from people your own age. You will also be competing against people who are older and who have more skills, qualifications and experience than you. Most 16 year old school leavers who do find full-time work end up in low paid, unskilled jobs. Some of these are temporary or seasonal. Few offer training and most have little job security.

**You're unlikely to get benefits if you can't find a job.** Under 18s cannot claim Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) or Income Support except in exceptional circumstances. Find out more from the 'Money' pages in the 'Young people' section of

➔ [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

**Starting out in a low paid, unskilled job makes it harder to find something better later on.** Lack of qualifications is one of the biggest barriers to getting skilled work and better pay as an adult.

**If you are thinking of working for yourself, remember that self-employment is a tough option.** You need a great business idea, a good business plan and proof that there is a market for the service or product you plan to supply. You also need strong enterprise skills, some expert advice and the ability to work extremely hard. Get a taste of what it might be like. Browse

➔ [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk),

➔ [www.shell-livewire.org](http://www.shell-livewire.org) and

➔ [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

## ACTION POINT 6

### Explore the job market

- Look at the vacancies noticeboard in school or college
- Look for job adverts in local shop windows
- Read the job pages in your local newspaper(s)
- Ask your careers co-ordinator or careers adviser what kind of jobs school leavers can get locally
- Search the internet, using the search terms 'jobs for school leavers' and 'jobs for 16 year olds'

What did you discover about job opportunities for school leavers?

Is getting a job at the end of Year 11 a realistic choice for you? Give your reasons.

## Help and support

If you want to start work at the end of Year 11, speak to your careers adviser as soon as possible.

Ask them to:

- help you compare getting a job or being self-employed with your other work-related options – like doing a preparation for work course as part of Foundation Learning (see **page 8**), studying for a Diploma (see **page 10**) or applying for an Apprenticeship (see **page 11**)
- tell you how to use **Time off for Study and Training (TfST)** – if you get a job without training, are 16 or 17 and left school without a level 2 qualification (see **page 7**), you should be able to get reasonable paid time off during normal working hours to train for an approved qualification. This must be a level 2 qualification that will improve your job prospects. Under 18s are allowed to finish any qualification that they have already started
- give you some advice on searching for work – you can also use the **Finding work (pages 20-21)** and **Applications and interviews (pages 22-23)**
- help you make a back-up plan in case things do not go the way you expect.

If you decide to go straight into a job when you leave school, look for an Apprenticeship or an employer who will offer you training and qualifications, which will help you to progress and get better pay when you are older.

## ACTION POINT 7 So, which options interest you?

a) Tick the options that interest you most.

- A Levels
- Vocational qualifications or the Diploma
- an Apprenticeship or Advanced Apprenticeship
- Foundation Learning
- a job with training/self-employment

b) If available, use your local online 14-19 prospectus to explore the options that interest you, to find out about any Common Application Process (CAP) and to see who can help you get where you want to be.

Name and website address of a prospectus.

Where I can do the options that interest me.

How they will help me in the future.

When I need to start using a CAP.

Who can help me get where I want to be.

# WHAT TO STUDY AND WHERE

Check out our advice on how to choose the right education or training programme and qualifications.

## Identify your priorities

Where you learn is as important to your success as what you learn. Make it easier to choose by deciding what is most important to you and where you are willing to compromise.

### ACTION POINT 8

### Work out your priorities

Tick the things that are essential to you. Then see which of your options provides the closest match.

- |   |                          |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| • Being with my friends                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | • Being able to study something new   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Being with people my own age                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | • Being able to take a mix of different qualifications  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Knowing some of the staff and students before I start | <input type="checkbox"/> | • Learning in one place   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Being at a place with a good reputation               | <input type="checkbox"/> | • Spending part of my time in the workplace   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • A friendly atmosphere                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | • Doing a course at a specialist college – these offer courses in specialist areas like music and horticulture as well as courses for young disabled people or those with special educational needs | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Being close to home                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | • Having a job and a salary.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Good social facilities                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |                          |
| • Good sports facilities                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |                          |
| • Being able to continue studying the subjects I enjoy  | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |                          |

### CASE STUDY 6

### Lauren

#### Benefiting from support

Lauren has cerebral palsy and epilepsy and attends a school for students with moderate learning difficulties. She is in Year 11 and recently made her post-16 option choices.

Lauren is very keen to work with children in the future and would like to train as a teaching assistant. During key stage 4 she did work experience at two primary schools to find out more about the work involved and really enjoyed it. After Year 11 she plans to continue her studies, taking the BTEC Entry Level Pre-Vocational Award at college.

Since Lauren has a range of additional needs, she sought advice from her teachers, parents and personal adviser to ensure she chose the most appropriate course of study. She visited the college and discussed her support needs with the college staff. She is happy about her plans and is confident that the right help will be available for her when she arrives.

'I'm looking forward to going to college and continuing with my studies. I want to meet new people and make new friends. I think it will help me to be more confident.'

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 at

[www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople](http://www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople) and [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)



## Do your research

This is the only way you can find out what you need to know. Use our research tips to help you get the information you need.

### ACTION POINT 9

#### Research tips

- Use the information in this booklet to get an overview of what you can do.
- Contact local schools and colleges to ask for their prospectus or use online prospectuses to find out about local opportunities.
- Find out if a Common Application Process (CAP) operates in your area – and how and when to use it.
- Go to open days, taster activities and other events.
- Look up opportunities that interest you in the careers resource centre or careers library.
- Read the information you collect. Pay attention to what different courses and programmes involve and where they lead. Look for information about entry requirements, course or programme length, teaching styles, assessment and any extras you may have to pay for.
- Talk to people who are doing the course or programme now – look at the student pages and message boards on an organisation's website and use your social networking service.
- Discuss your ideas and plans with your family and friends, and subject teachers.
- Get expert help from your careers co-ordinator and careers adviser – you can also ask them who to speak to if you think that you will need extra help post 16.



## Make your choices

Remember to think about the following questions when choosing courses and programmes.

### Will I enjoy this?

You will have more chance of success if you choose courses and programmes that you think you will enjoy. Before you decide what to do, discuss the ones that interest you with your family, friends, subject teachers, careers co-ordinator and/or careers adviser.

### How will the course be taught?

You should find out about how the course is taught, for example whether you will spend most of your time in the classroom, or whether there is lots of practical activity.

### How will the course be assessed?

Try to find out whether you will be expected to do a lot of coursework, or whether assessment is based on tests and written examinations.

### How will this help me in the future?

If you have a firm career plan, check that you are taking the subjects you need to reach your career goals. If you are still undecided about what you want to do, choose a variety of subjects or a qualification that will give you plenty of choice in the future.

### HOT TIP

Don't ruin your chances of success by missing an application deadline. You can apply to more than one place if you need more time to decide what is best for you. Doing this also makes sure that you have a back-up plan in case things do not go the way you expect.

# HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)

**Going into higher education (HE) sets you up for a greater choice of jobs and a good chance of better pay. It could be one of the most valuable things you ever do. Not sure what HE is or what it involves? Find out here.**

## Courses

There are over 50,000 different courses available in over 300 universities and colleges. They range from animation and astrophysics to languages, drama, engineering, history, mathematics and zoology. Each has a different mix of theory and practical learning. In some courses you study one or two subjects in depth. In others you gain work-related knowledge, understanding and skills. 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.



## HOT TIP

Investing time and effort in achieving HE qualifications will pay you back over time. Employer surveys show that a third of current jobs require workers qualified to degree level. This proportion will continue to grow – and the number of jobs for people without knowledge, skills or qualifications is expected to continue to fall.

## Study

Depending on the course, you can study close to home or a long distance away. You may even be able to study from home through flexible and distance learning – this means studying on your own using multi-media resources and attending workshops or residential sessions as required.

## Qualifications

HE provides a range of qualifications including honours degrees such as a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or a Bachelor of Science (BSc). You can also study work-related qualifications such as a Higher National Certificate or Diploma (HNC/HND) and a Foundation degree (Fd). Work-related HE qualifications are designed with employers and combine academic study with workplace learning.

## Entry requirements

The exact qualifications, grades and experience required depend on the course you choose. Most higher education institutions (HEIs) accept a wide range of level 3 qualifications (see [page 7](#)) including A Levels and Advanced Diplomas. You can also enter HE from an Apprenticeship and from full or part-time work. Check the entry requirements of the courses that interest you as you may need to have studied and achieved good grades in particular subjects. Contact the HEI if you have any queries.

## Costs

Costs depend on the course and HEI you choose. Some places are much cheaper to study in than others. You will have to pay tuition fees and for things like study materials, food, accommodation (if you decide to study away from home), transport, clothes and leisure activities. For eligible students, there is government help available with these costs. Find out more at [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](https://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance)

## Student life

You have to organise a lot of your own learning as tutors and lecturers guide you rather than tell you what to do. HEI staff and information on the intranet help you get used to this. You

**ACTION POINT 10****Is higher education (HE) for you?**

HE interests me because:

HE does not interest me because:

I am worried about going into HE because:

I will discuss my ideas about HE with:

meet many new people of different ages and from different places and backgrounds. All HEIs have student clubs and societies. Most have social and sports facilities too. You will also have access to student discounts.

### What you can do with an HE qualification

Having an HE qualification gives you many employment options. You can also choose to continue your study. Professional and managerial jobs usually require a degree and many require postgraduate qualifications (see **page 7**).

### Find out more

Talk to other young people who have followed this route. Find out if your school or college offers HE modules as part of the curriculum or organises other activities that give you a taste of what HE is like. You could also browse these websites:

- ➔ [www.direct.gov.uk/uni](http://www.direct.gov.uk/uni)
- ➔ [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) – look at the general information on entry requirements and at the detailed Entry Profiles in the course information that HEIs provide
- ➔ [www.brightsideuniaid.org](http://www.brightsideuniaid.org) – for ideas on how to cope with the financial side of student life
- ➔ <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk> – to search for, review and compare HE courses.

### Gap year

Some people take a year out (a gap year) before starting HE, but it could be at any time. They spend it studying, working or travelling. If this interests you, check out

- ➔ [www.yearoutgroup.org](http://www.yearoutgroup.org)

# EXPERIENCE NEEDED

**How can you get the experience you need to meet the entry requirements for a specific opportunity? How can you test your career ideas and employability skills while boosting your self-confidence and learning new things? Find out here.**

## Do some work experience

This is a great way to find out more about working life and to test your career ideas and employability skills. You may do work experience as part of a post-16 course or programme. If not, speak to a careers adviser and find out how to negotiate your own work placement. Make the most of any work experience that you do. Think about how it has improved your knowledge and skills and changed your career ideas and attitudes to learning and work.

## Be a volunteer

There is no pay but volunteering gives you the chance to help your community, experience different workplaces and learn new skills. It also builds your confidence and self-esteem. Make the most of any volunteering that you do. Think about your achievements and the skills you have gained. How have they affected your attitude to life, learning and work? Check out these websites if you want to see what you could do.

- <http://vinspired.com>
- [www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk)
- [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)
- [www.dofe.org](http://www.dofe.org)
- [www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk](http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk)
- [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)

## 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.



## Get a part-time or holiday job

It might be hard to find one of these but if you can it is a great way to earn money and find out about working life. It also adds to your knowledge and skills and builds your confidence. Make the most of it. Think about what your performance tells other people about your employability and your ability to learn. If this option interests you, look at **Finding work (pages 20-21)** and **Applications and interviews (pages 22-23)**.



## CASE STUDY 7

### Ellen

#### *Influenced by work experience*

Ellen is working towards her GCSEs. She is interested in becoming a dentist and recently did a week's work experience at a local dental practice.

'All I could do was observe, but I thoroughly enjoyed watching the procedures and asking questions. It really helped me understand what the job entails and motivated me to achieve the right grades to become a dentist. I was also lucky enough to spend an afternoon with a dental surgeon who extracted wisdom teeth which was very interesting.'

The work experience confirmed Ellen's ideas and she now knows what she needs to aim for.

'Having adequate work experience is very important as getting a university place for dentistry is competitive. It was also useful because I could ask the dentists what subjects and qualifications I needed and also found out that universities look for evidence of dexterity, for example, playing a musical instrument or sewing.'

'After my GCSEs I plan to study sciences at A Level and then go to university to study a degree in dentistry. I want to work as a dentist for a few years before further qualifying as an orthodontist.'

If you are considering a particular job, work experience is really useful to confirm your ideas. However, if it puts you off, you still have time to explore other careers.

# WORK IN A CHANGING WORLD

## Will you be able to hold down a job in the future? If you are not sure, read on.

The world of work changes very quickly so employers want people who are flexible, who can learn and who can cope with change. They also want people with general employability skills who will not lose sight of business basics like customer care. Are you employable? Use our checklist to help you find out.

Memory is fragile. Start building a portfolio to remind you about your experiences and achievements. Use it to store certificates and other evidence. Look at it when you are writing a CV and making applications.

### Do you have:

- good practical skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT)?
- a positive attitude to work?
- the ability to organise and motivate yourself?

### Can you:

- work as part of a team?
- solve problems?
- follow instructions and accept criticism?

### Do you understand:

- why customer care is important?
- what makes a business successful?

### Are you ready to:

- be flexible about your working arrangements
- work with different types of contract – like part-time, full-time, fixed term and permanent ones?
- keep learning so that you can do several different job tasks, work in different parts of a company and move from one company to another?
- spend part of your working life abroad?

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

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



### 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 of their time working abroad.

# FINDING WORK

**Interested in getting a part-time job? Check out our advice on how to improve your chances of success.**

## Put some effort into your job search

Finding a job is a job in itself. If you need some practical help, speak to your careers adviser. You should also:

- use your personal networks – family, friends, neighbours etc.
- look in local shop windows
- look at the vacancies noticeboard in school or college
- read the job pages in local newspapers and magazines
- visit the websites of companies that you would like to work for to see if they have any vacancies
- use job search websites
- make copies of your CV (see **page 22**) to give to local businesses when you are asking about jobs
- write to companies that you would like to work for asking if they have any opportunities available (see **page 22**).



## Think about what makes you employable

Make sure that when you find something to apply for you can:

- state clearly what it is that you can offer an employer
- provide evidence to prove what you say.

If you need some help with this, look at **Work in a changing world (page 19)** and **Applications and interviews (pages 22-23)**.

## Work out your priorities

It is easier to spot job opportunities that fit you if you know what you are looking for. Remember though that life is not perfect and you may have to compromise.

## ACTION POINT 12

### What are your work preferences?

#### Tick the things that are important to you:

- knowing the place
- knowing some of the people who work there
- close to home
- the chance to learn new things
- doing different tasks
- having some responsibility
- flexible working hours
- working inside
- clean working conditions
- being paid above the national minimum wage
- other



**ACTION POINT 13****Plan a job search**

1. What help do I need to find the right opportunity for me?    2. Do I have any useful contacts? Who?

Blank space for response to question 1.

Blank space for response to question 2.

3. How can they help me?

4. What should I do next?

Blank space for response to question 3.

Blank space for response to question 4.

**Do your research**

Find out as much as you can about what a company does, what an employer wants and what the job involves. Then work out how your knowledge, interests, abilities, experiences and achievements match them. Remember that:

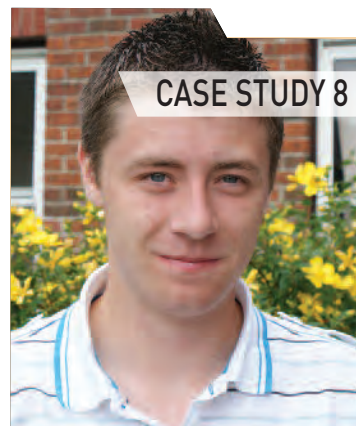
- different jobs pay different rates, but you are entitled to the national minimum wage for your age group – find out more at [www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw). Currently the minimum wage for an Apprentice is £2.50 an hour, but many Apprentices earn more than this, with an average of £193 per week
- job adverts quote gross pay – this is what you get before deductions. Your take home pay may be less as your employer may deduct National Insurance, income tax and voluntary contributions such as pension payments
- the law stops you from doing some jobs – for example, you cannot work in a bar during opening time unless the work you do is part of an approved training scheme. Under 18s cannot do some jobs for health and safety reasons. Speak to your careers co-ordinator or careers adviser to find out more.

**Get more tips and information from the:**

- 'Work and careers' section of [www.direct.gov.uk/youngpeople](http://www.direct.gov.uk/youngpeople)
- 'Work and study' section of [www.thesite.org](http://www.thesite.org)
- 'Employers' section of [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

**HOT TIP**

Learning pays! On average, a young person with five or more good GCSEs or equivalent earns over £100,000 more during their working life than someone who leaves education or training with qualifications below level 2.

**CASE STUDY 8****Richard****Benefiting from practical learning**

Richard is currently in Year 12 and has almost completed the first year of his BTEC National Diploma in Sports. After his GCSEs he opted to continue studying at his school sixth

form and is pleased to have chosen a course that reflects the way he learns best, in a practical way.

'The BTEC National Diploma in Sports is a great course if you like to get out and do the sports instead of doing loads of writing. I enjoy this course because it contains a variety of different aspects of sport and is 100 per cent coursework.'

Richard is still a little unsure about what he wants to do with his qualification after Year 13, but is very aware of the many possibilities it could lead to.

'The BTEC in Sports has given me a sound knowledge of a variety of sports and I am thinking I will continue into university and take a degree in sport and exercise science. I am interested in working for the Fire Service too, so will also see if there are any openings for me there.'

If, like Richard, you would like a practical course that could keep your progression options open, then vocational qualifications could be for you.

# APPLICATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

**Use our tips to help you create the right impression.**

## CVs

Most recruiters take less than 30 seconds to look at each CV they get. Will yours hold their attention? A CV is your personal publicity leaflet. It is short – no longer than two sides of A4. It tells the reader who you are and what you know, understand and can do. Every word counts. If you want to make a good impression you must put time and effort into writing it. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

### What do you put in a CV?

There are no rules but most people include:

- personal details – name, address, telephone number and a sensible email address
- a personal profile – two or three sentences highlighting your best points. For example, 'A hard-working, responsible person who ...'
- main skills and achievements – a bullet point list of skills and achievements showing what you can do and how you work
- qualifications and training – showing titles, actual or predicted grades/results, and when and where taken
- employment and work experience – employer names with dates and a brief description of work duties and responsibilities
- interests and hobbies – the top two or three plus anything like a Duke of Edinburgh Award
- referees – contact details for two referees (not relatives) who can say what you are like, including your attitude to work.

## HOT TIP

Don't use the heading Curriculum Vitae on your CV. It wastes space and recruiters know what they are looking at. Do use your CV to help you complete application forms.

## Application letters

These are formal letters. Will yours show recruiters you are taking your application seriously and care about the impression you make? If sending a letter by post, use good quality paper and envelopes. Word process it unless asked for a handwritten one. Use a standard layout and keep it to one side of A4.

### What do you put in a letter?

Start by giving your reasons for writing. Usually you will either be:

- applying for an advertised job vacancy or other opportunity – make sure you include the reference number and description given in the advert
- asking if someone can offer you a job or another opportunity such as a work placement.

Follow this with one or two paragraphs that tell readers why you are a good candidate for the job or opportunity. 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 assertively. 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'.





## Application forms

Application forms ask people for the same information. This makes it easier for recruiters and admissions officers to compare candidates and identify those who fit their requirements. Make sure that you pay attention to detail so that you make the right impression. Fill the form in carefully. Do not leave any sections blank unless told to do so. If you are working online, save your work at regular intervals otherwise you might lose it.

### You should:

- Read and follow all the instructions carefully. For example: writing clearly, using capital letters and black ink; using the specified font and font size in a form and the specified subject line in a covering email.
- Use a copy of the form (or a notepad) to draft your answers.
- Check your answers for accuracy and to ensure you have given enough detail.
- Ask someone you trust to check your draft.
- Keep a copy of your completed form so that you don't forget what you said.

## Interviews

These are your chance to find out more about an opportunity and for the opportunity provider to find out more about you. Follow these steps to increase your chances of success.

### Before you go for the interview:

- Prepare well. Research the organisation as well as the opportunity. Look at the website and read all the information you receive.
- Plan what to take to the interview – do you need a portfolio of work or a pen?
- Plan how you will get to the interview so that you will arrive in plenty of time.
- Check if the interview includes any tests or assessments. If it does, speak to your careers co-ordinator or careers adviser to get some ideas on how to tackle them.
- Think about what questions they might ask you and how you could reply. Share your ideas with your friends, family and other people who know you well.
- Make a list of questions to ask them.
- Plan what to wear. If it is a job interview, make a special effort to look smart.
- Don't take risks. Always tell somebody where you are going. Do not agree to meet anyone who suggests holding the interview in their car or somewhere unexpected like a café.

### Just before the interview:

- Turn off your mobile phone.
- Dispose of any chewing gum properly.
- Check your appearance.

### In the interview:

- Sit up straight and make eye contact with the interviewer or interview panel.
- Smile and be polite. It is important to make a good impression on everyone you meet.
- Listen carefully to the questions and think before you speak – ask for more detail if you are unsure what they are asking.
- Always tell the truth.

## HOT TIP

You can get more information about applications and interviews at [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) and in the **Work and Training** section of your careers resource centre or careers library.



# MONEY MATTERS

## Have you thought about how you will manage for money post I6? If not, start here.

### Help with post-I6 learning costs

Learning is vital to your success in work and adult life, so you can often get help with your education or training costs.

#### Discretionary Learner Support Fund

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is being replaced by an enhanced **Discretionary Learner Support Fund**.

This fund will be managed by schools, colleges and training providers who will offer the fund to those students they assess as being in the greatest need, in order to help them continue in education and training post I6. Speak to the Student Support Officer in your school or college for more information.

#### Care to Learn

If you are a parent, **Care to Learn** might be able to help you with your childcare costs. Find out more at

➔ [www.direct.gov.uk/caretolearn](http://www.direct.gov.uk/caretolearn)

### Help with post-I6 living costs

Currently, if you are in full-time education and training, your parents/carers will normally receive child and other benefits until you are 19. Under 18s do not usually get any benefits except in exceptional circumstances – if you have caring responsibilities or cannot live at home for example.

You may also get extra financial support if you have additional needs. For example, you may get **Disability Living Allowance (DLA)** if you need help with personal care or have walking difficulties because you are physically or mentally disabled.

This is a tax-free benefit. Find out more at

➔ [www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople](http://www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople)

#### If you have money worries or need further information:

- speak to your careers adviser or Student Support Officer
- visit ➔ [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)
- contact DIAL UK, the network of disability advice lines at ➔ [www.dialuk.info](http://www.dialuk.info) or call **01302 310 123**



## Money and work

Things you need to know if you get a job post 16.

**Bank account:** Very few employers pay cash so you will probably need a bank account. Choose carefully and ask your friends and family for help if you need it.

**National Insurance number:** Keep this safe. You need it when you start work and if you have to claim benefits later on.

**National Minimum Wage (NMW):** This is a minimum amount per hour that most workers in the UK are entitled to be paid. There are different levels of NMW, depending on your age and whether you are an Apprentice. It does not matter what job you do or the size of the firm you work for. Currently the minimum wage for an Apprentice is £2.50 an hour. The government reviews the rates every year. Any increases take place in October. Find out the current rates at [www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw)

**Payslips:** Employers should give you a payslip each time they pay you. It will tell you your gross pay, your take home pay and any deductions made for National Insurance, income tax, pension and other contributions. Keep them safe as you may need to refer to them in the future.

**National Insurance contributions:** Most people pay these. They go towards your state pension and help to pay for the National Health Service and benefits like Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).

**Income tax:** Most people pay income tax through a scheme known as PAYE (Pay As You Earn). The more you earn, the more you pay. When you start work, HM Revenue and Customs will send you a tax code and a PAYE reference number. They also send them to your employer. Keep them safe. Employers use your tax code to calculate how much tax you should pay.

**P60:** Your employer will give you this tax form every April. It summarises your pay and tax payments for the year. Keep it safe. You can use it to prove your income, to apply for tax credits and to claim back any tax you have overpaid. If you lose it, your employer can give you a replacement.

**P45:** Employers will give you this tax form when you stop working for them. Do not lose it. You cannot get a replacement and you need it when you start a new job or apply for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). Without your P45, a new employer cannot calculate how much tax you should pay and will put you on an emergency tax code. This is usually higher than your actual tax code. You will get a refund if you pay too much under the emergency code but it will take time to sort out.

**Find out more:** Browse:

- [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) – look at the 'Money' pages in the 'Young people' section
- <http://studenttaxadvice.direct.gov.uk>



**ACTION POINT 14**

**What money matters do you need to know more about?**

	<b>Interested in:</b> (tick all that apply)	<b>Where to find out more:</b>
Care to Learn	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Discretionary Learner Support Funds	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Extra help because of my exceptional circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial support for higher education	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Help to meet my specific needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Income tax	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Managing my money	<input type="checkbox"/>	
National Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	
National Minimum Wage	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Opening a bank account	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Understanding payslips	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Others	<input type="checkbox"/>	



**HOT TIP**

Start your search with the 'Money' pages in the 'Young people' section of [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

# PEOPLE, PLACES AND WEBSITES

**Choosing what to do post 16 is not something you should leave to chance. Everyone needs a bit of help with decision-making. Read on to find out how you can get the help and support you need.**

## People

### Talk to the people who know you really well

People like your family, friends and subject teachers want the best for you. They will listen to and discuss your ideas with you. Better still, they will tell you why they think an option will suit you or not.

### Talk to the people who know what you need to know

The person running an option and the people doing it can give you a good picture of what it is really like. Ask them about things like learning activities, workload, assessment and costs.

### Get an expert opinion

Speak to your careers co-ordinator or careers adviser if you cannot make up your mind or want a second opinion from someone who will not take sides. Careers co-ordinators and careers advisers know a lot about what each option involves and how it might help you in the future. They can also tell you where to get more information and help. They may also be able to help you tackle personal issues.

## Places

**Visit your careers resource centre or careers library.** Look in the following sections:

-  Choices
-  Education
-  Work and Training
-  Money
-  Where to Get Help

In your careers resource centre you can talk to a careers co-ordinator or careers adviser, use computerised career guidance programs and do internet research. Your careers co-ordinator or careers adviser may also be able to help you find out more about applying for financial support.


### Sign up for open days, visits and course tasters

The best way to find out about an option is to see it in action!

## Websites

If you do not have a computer at home, you can access the internet at school and at your local public library.

### Find out more about Apprenticeships

The website  [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk) tells you everything you need to know about Apprenticeships and lets you apply online for vacancies with employers.

### Browse the 'Young people' section of

 [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

Directgov is the government's one-stop shop for information about public services and has links to other useful sites. You can search the site using age group, topics and keywords.



## Check the information you find before you use it

Getting information is step one. Step two is to check it before you use it. This is especially important if you use a search engine or a social networking service to find information. Ask yourself these questions to make sure that the information you have is trustworthy, unbiased, accurate and up to date.

**Source:** Who paid for it to be published and why? Do you trust this source?

**Purpose:** Does it give you the facts? Is it trying to persuade you to agree with a particular point of view? Do you think it gives you an unbiased picture?

**Writer:** Who wrote it? Do you believe the author knows enough to give you accurate information?

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

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



CASE STUDY 9

**Gavin**

### Seek information and impartial advice

Like many young people in Year 11, Gavin is undecided about what he wants to do as a career in the future. However, by talking to his school's careers adviser he

got some advice about what and where he could continue to study so that he could keep all his future options open.

'I plan to go on to the school sixth form and do A Levels in maths, biology, chemistry and physics, and then I hope to go on to university. I am unsure about which degree course yet but I want to choose something related to science. I chose my A Level subjects so that I have a wide selection of options I could do in the future. I want a lot of skills and range of qualifications so I can choose from different career paths.'

If, like Gavin, you don't have a clear career goal then it is a good idea to seek advice from a careers adviser who can talk you through the available options. Make choices that will keep your future career path open. Studying for further qualifications will broaden and maximise your options later.

## ACTION POINT 15

### Who will help you?

List the people in and out of school who you think could help you to make the right choices for you.

How could these people help you?

## ACTION PLAN

Use this plan to help you finalise your post-16 choices.

**Where I am now:** (e.g. thinking about my choices/looking at school and college prospectuses/looking at my local online 14-19 prospectus/gathering information/finding out how to use the Common Application Process/speaking to course and programme providers etc.)

**What do I need to do and when:** (e.g. speak to my careers adviser/update my plans and CV/make applications, perhaps using the Common Application Process/prepare for interviews/sort out finances 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 evenings, taster activities and careers events
- Spoken to my family, friends, subject teachers and careers adviser
- 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 over to you ...**

## Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank all those young people who agreed to be case studies for **It's your choice**. For reasons of confidentiality some names may have been changed.

The Department for Education is not responsible for the content or reliability of the websites listed in the publication and does not necessarily endorse the views expressed within them. Listings shall not be taken as an endorsement of any kind. We cannot guarantee that these sites will work all of the time and we have no control over availability or content of the sites listed.

**Some aspects of the curriculum and qualifications are currently under review. The Department for Education has made every effort to ensure the information contained in this booklet is accurate and up to date. It is correct as of December 2010.**

© Crown copyright 2010

Extracts from this document may be reproduced for non-commercial education or training purposes, on condition that the source is acknowledged.

## Feedback

This publication has been produced on behalf of the Department for Education by Babcock International Group.

We welcome feedback on **It's your choice** and **Parents & Carers**. If you have any thoughts on the content of this booklet, or how it's presented please contact Babcock International Group at email: [careers.publications@babcock.co.uk](mailto:careers.publications@babcock.co.uk)



This pdf is available online. To download please visit [www.cegnet.co.uk](http://www.cegnet.co.uk) or [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)





# Parents & Carers

Helping your children with their subject and career choices

This guide offers some practical tips to help you support them with their decision-making.

Supplement to **Which way now?** and **It's your choice**

## Preparing for the future

### Learning pays

Knowledge, skills and qualifications are increasingly important in today's workplace. The law has changed so that teenagers can continue their education and training for longer, helping them to gain the knowledge, qualifications and confidence to get a job they enjoy or to go to university. Research shows us that young people with level 3 qualifications (e.g. A Levels) earn on average 25 per cent more over their lifetime than those without level 3 qualifications.

The Education and Skills Act 2008 raises the participation age in learning to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015. This means that the current students in Year 9 will continue learning to 17, and those in Years 7 and 8 to 18. Continuing in learning after the age of 16 **does not** necessarily mean staying on at school. Your child can choose to learn at school, at college, or with a training provider or employer. Teenagers choosing their key stage 4 options are among the first to benefit from these changes.

### Options to suit everyone

There is more choice after the age of 16 because at key stage 4 some subjects remain compulsory – everyone has to do English, mathematics and science for example. Some post-16 courses take a year to complete and others take two, so your child may be making further choices when they are 17.

### » The options include

- **GCSEs/iGCSEs and A Levels** involve studying several subjects in depth, preparing teenagers for higher-level learning and for work.
- **Vocational qualifications and the Diploma** offer teenagers insights into the world of work. They are also good preparation for further and higher education.
- **Apprenticeships** allow teenagers to learn skills and gain qualifications whilst earning money. They are open to all suitably qualified 16 year olds who know what they want to do for a living. Apprenticeships are now available in over 80 industry sectors, not just the traditional sectors such as engineering and hairdressing.
- **Foundation Learning** provides options for teenagers who need more time to build their confidence and skills. They can go on to take more qualifications, apply for an Apprenticeship or prepare for supported employment and independent living.

After 16, teenagers can also choose to get a job with training.



To find out more about the options look at your child's booklet:

pages 12-17 in **Which way now?** or pages 8-13 in **It's your choice**

# Getting support



## Support for your child

Making subject and career choices is an important part of growing up. It can be a challenge, so your child will receive a lot of support to help them choose well – support that includes careers education, information and advice.

**Careers education** lessons will encourage your child to think about and set goals for the future. They will learn how to find and use careers information to research their ideas and explore different options. They will also learn how to make decisions and present themselves well in applications and interviews.

The **careers information** they will receive includes options information from school and access to online prospectuses. These give details of courses and qualifications that young people aged 14 to 19 can do locally, with information on other useful topics such as transport. They may also have a common application process (CAP) for post-16 courses, making it easy for your child to apply for those that interest them.

Your child will receive **careers advice** and guidance from many different people. Their subject teachers may discuss the career opportunities that studying their subject can open up. The careers co-ordinator or careers adviser will help them to think through their ideas and weigh up the pros and cons of different options.

If your child is disabled or has a statement of special educational needs, there may be extra help with decision-making and transition planning. Ask the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) in school, the careers adviser or their key worker.

## Support for you

You will also receive support to help your child make choices that work for them. As decision time approaches, you will receive options information from school and invitations to attend events to help you understand these options. If you have any queries or concerns, you should contact your child's form 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 can offer you help and support. Most parents start with the organisations below but there are many others.

### Directgov at [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

Browse the 'Parents' and 'Young people' pages to find all the information you need on young people's choices, financial support for learning and sources of help.

### National Parent Partnership Network at [www.parentpartnership.org.uk](http://www.parentpartnership.org.uk)

This site provides details of local services which provide neutral advice and information to parents of children with special educational needs about processes and support to help meet their needs.

### The Apprenticeships website at [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

Browse the 'Parents' section which focuses on the different questions you may have about Apprenticeships and why they could be right for your child.



# Tips on how to help your child choose well



## Help your child to find out as much as possible about the courses and qualifications they can do

Read the school's options information and browse your online prospectuses. Encourage your child to go to options events and sign up for taster activities. Go with them if you can. Help them to make a list of questions about the options that interest them, where they lead and any financial help available. Check application deadlines, especially post 16, as popular options can fill up quickly.

## Help your child to identify their interests and abilities

Your child is more likely to succeed if their choices 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.

## Help your child to consider the consequences of their choices

If your child has no clear plans at this stage, encourage them to opt for a broad range of courses that will give them plenty of choice in the future. If they have 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 find out about careers that interest them. Look at course entry requirements in online prospectuses and, for higher education courses that interest them, on [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) and <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk>

## Remind your child that learning pays

In these uncertain times, 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 child starts their working life in a low skilled, low paid job without training, they may find it very hard to move on to something better. If your child is choosing their post-16 options, encourage them to choose one that involves further learning. Apprenticeships, for example, combine high-quality training with a paid job.

**Remind them that no route is closed to them, whatever their background or their achievements at school so far.** They can speak to their careers adviser 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 child has not done enough research. Or you may feel 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 your child's decision

Try to give in gracefully if you disagree with your child'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.

## Encourage your child to make a back-up plan

Practical reasons may prevent your child from doing the combination of things 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 children 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.

Boost their confidence by helping them to recognise their successes and new achievements. Encourage them to make the most of opportunities like mentoring, coaching, work experience, volunteering and schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

# Money matters

Learning is vital to your child's future success, and money worries should not stop them from continuing their education or training. If they are over 16, they may be able to get some financial help. The main sources of help are given below. You can find out more at the 'Money' pages in the 'Young people' section at [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) and [www.direct.gov.uk/studentsupport](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentsupport)

- The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is being replaced by an enhanced **Discretionary Learner Support Fund**. This fund will be managed by schools, colleges and training providers who will offer the fund to those students they assess as being in the greatest need, in order to help them continue in education and training post 16. Speak to the Student Support Officer in your child's school or college for more information.
- If your teenager is a parent, **Care to Learn** might be able to help them with their childcare costs. Find out more at [www.direct.gov.uk/caretolearn](http://www.direct.gov.uk/caretolearn)
- There is a wide range of support available to help young people with **specific needs arising from a disability or learning difficulty**. Your child's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or careers adviser can help you identify the support your child may be able to get.
- Young people going on to university can access a mix of **grants and repayable loans to help with the costs of higher education**. The amount they get generally depends on household income.



## Feedback

This publication has been produced on behalf of the Department for Education by Babcock International Group. We welcome feedback on **Parents & Carers**. If you have any thoughts on the content of this booklet, or how it's presented please contact Babcock International Group at **email: [careers.publications@babcock.co.uk](mailto:careers.publications@babcock.co.uk)**

Some aspects of the curriculum and qualifications are currently under review. The Department for Education has made every effort to ensure the information contained in this booklet is accurate and up to date. It is correct as of December 2010.

© Crown copyright 2010



This pdf is available online. To download please visit [www.cegnet.co.uk](http://www.cegnet.co.uk) or [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

Department for  
**Education**

