

# WHICH WAY NOW?

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR  
KEY STAGE 4 OPTIONS

- 
- > YOUR CHOICES
  - > HELP
  - > SUPPORT
  - > ADVICE
  - > YOUR FUTURE

WHICH WAY NOW?

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# Contents

## Getting Started

Who can help you .....	4–5
Your local choices .....	6–7
Put yourself first .....	8–9
Take the right steps .....	10–11

## Choosing the right options

Qualifications .....	12–18
Finding good information sources .....	19
Taking control of your decisions .....	20
Deciding what to do .....	21
Thinking ahead .....	22–25

## Confirming your choices

Frequently asked questions .....	26
Your action plan .....	27

**Don't forget to share  
the Parents and  
Carers supplement  
with your family!**

# Introduction

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

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

Don't panic. **Which Way Now?** is full of information, ideas and action points to help you choose well. To get the most from it, use it as a workbook. Start at the beginning and work all the way through it.

## DON'T FORGET...

### Education and training are vital to your future success



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

### Involve your parents



Your parents or carers want the best for you, but things have changed a lot since they went to school. Help them to understand what you are doing and how they can help you. Share the Parents and Carers supplement with them.

### The law has changed



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

### There's help at hand



Careers lessons. Careers information. Options events. Course tasters. Progress reviews. Online prospectuses. Form tutor. Options coordinator. Subject teachers. Careers advisers. Visitors to your school including; employers, and representatives from training providers, colleges, and universities. They are all there to help you with your decision-making. Make the most of them so that you choose options that work for you.



# Who can help you?

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

## Who knows you really well?

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

## Who knows what you need to know?

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



## HOT TIP

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



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

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

If you want to speak to someone outside school, anyone over the age of 13 can get confidential and practical help from the National Careers Service.

See: <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/contact-us> for ways to get in touch.

## How can the internet help you?

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

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

# ACTION POINT

## PLAN HOW TO GET HELP AND SUPPORT

What kind of help do you need?

What is the name of your careers leader?

Who can you ask for this help?

What is the name of your options coordinator?

Where can you go to get this help?

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

### KRIS SAYS...

#### ...unsure about your future?

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

### HOT TIP

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



# Your local choices

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

## What subjects are compulsory?

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

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

## What can I choose to study?

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

- A University Technical College which specialises in subjects like engineering and construction - and teaches these subjects along with business skills and using IT. You would study academic subjects as well as practical subjects leading to technical qualifications. The curriculum is designed by universities and employers, who also provide work experience for students.
- A Studio School which is typically a small school (usually around 300 students) that teaches qualifications through project-based learning. This means working in realistic situations as well as learning academic subjects. Students work with local employers and a personal coach, and follow a curriculum designed to give them the skills and qualifications they need in work, or to take up further education.

## Do your research

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

## ACTION POINT

2

### RESEARCH CHECKLIST

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

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

Once you have started your key stage 4 courses, it is unlikely that you will be able to change them. But whatever options you choose, you will be able to change direction at the end of year 11. Remember though that all choices have consequences. Your key stage 4 choices could affect what you can do later on. So don't close off options. Choose subjects that will give you the widest possible choice post 16 (see pages 22 to 25).

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

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

## ALEX SAYS...

### ...research your options carefully

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

3

## ACTION POINT

### THINKING ABOUT CONSEQUENCES

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

- ☐ Study full time so I can do a higher education course after I am 18
- ☐ Study full time so I can get a job after I am 18
- ☐ Get an Apprenticeship and train for a specific career
- ☐ Get a job and study part time
- ☐ Work for myself and study part time
- ☐ Do some voluntary work and study part time
- ☐ Prepare for supported employment and/or independent living

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

Option	Allows me to do	Prevents me from doing

# Put yourself first

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

What interests you?

What makes you work hard?

**Do our quiz to find out.**



## ACTION POINT

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

4

**A**

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

**D**

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

**B**

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

**E**

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

**C**

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

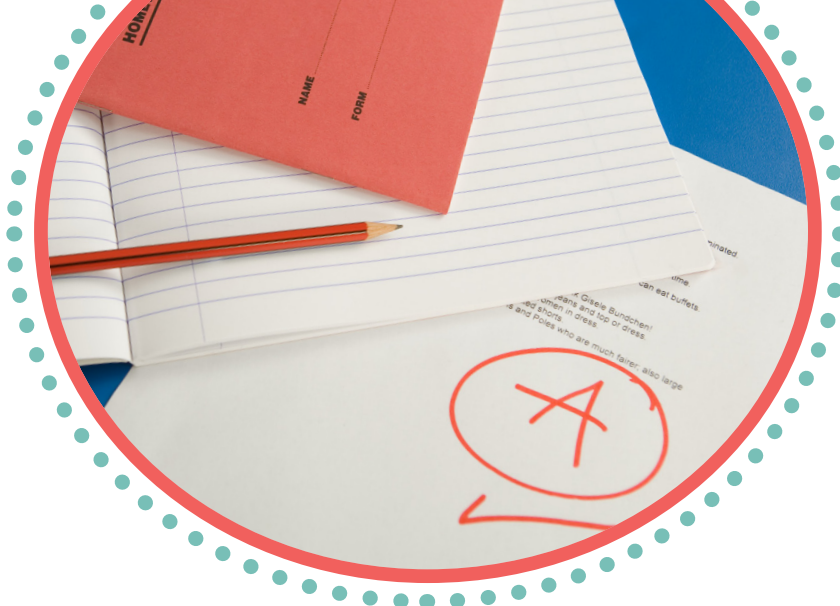
**F**

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



# Check out your scores

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



**A**

**Mostly As**

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

**Subject ideas:**

Design and technology, engineering, food preparation and nutrition, manufacturing, physical education.

**B**

**Mostly Bs**

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

**Subject ideas:**

Art and design, dance, drama, hospitality, media studies, music, performing arts, photography, textiles.

**C**

**Mostly Cs**

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

**Subject ideas:**

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

**D**

**Mostly Ds**

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

**Subject ideas:**

Biology, chemistry, environmental science, geography, history, mathematics, physics, statistics.

**E**

**Mostly Es**

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

**Subject ideas:**

Business, citizenship studies, computer science, economics, modern foreign languages, psychology, retail.

**F**

**Mostly Fs**

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

**Subject ideas:**

Business, computer science, economics, history, hospitality, law, travel and tourism.

# Take the first steps

Choosing well means thinking hard about:

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

5

## ACTION POINT

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

**Me**

*I am ...*

practical

☐

creative

☐

sociable

☐

investigative

☐

enterprising

☐

organised

☐

*I learn best by ...*

seeing and reading

☐

listening and talking

☐

touching and doing

☐

doing projects

☐

doing tests

☐

## My Options

**Subjects I have to do:**

**Subjects I like and why:**

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

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

# ACTION POINT

CONTINUED...

## My Future

Career ideas and interests:

Subjects I need for my career ideas:

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

## My Questions

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

**SAM  
SAYS...**

### ...think ahead

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

### HOT TIP

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



# Qualifications

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

## Qualification levels

Whatever you want to do in life, there is a qualification to help you do it. The important thing is to choose the right ones at the right time. To do this you need to understand qualification levels. There are nine qualification levels. 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 9 to 4), but they increasingly want people with qualifications at level 3 and above.

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



## HOT TIP

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

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

## How qualifications can help you in the future

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

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

**2. To give you the chance to move on from a basic level job** – without qualifications, it is hard to move on from a low paid, low skilled job.

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

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

**5. To prove to other people that you can learn** – qualifications show people that you want to study and that you are capable of learning. Employers, universities and colleges look for people like this.

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

6

## ACTION POINT

### EXPLORE YOUR INTERESTS

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

Career/job:	Subjects and qualifications needed:

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

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



# GCSEs

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

## FACT FILE

### Subjects

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

### Learning

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

### Assessment

All subjects have externally set examinations that you take at the end of the course. Most are written examinations. You will do some practical assessments, for example in science, if it would be difficult to test learning in any other way.

### Grades

All GCSEs will be graded from 9-1 by the time you sit your exams at the end of year 11. The top grade will be 9. A grade 4 will still count as a standard pass and a level 2 achievement.

### What next

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

## A taste of GCSEs...

### English language and literature

You will develop effective communication skills in written and spoken English. You will read widely, analyse texts and learn how to express and debate complex ideas. This subject is essential for further learning, employment and wider adult life.

### Mathematics

You will continue to develop the ability to read and understand mathematical information. You will learn how to work accurately and how to select and use an appropriate mathematical method to solve problems. This subject is vital for employment, business, finance and personal and public decision-making.

### Science

You will develop and use knowledge and skills in biology, chemistry and physics. You will learn about scientific concepts, their practical applications and their impact on the world. This subject is essential for further and some higher-level learning, employment and taking a full part in society.

## HOT TIP

Employers want people with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills. Ask your careers adviser about the jobs and careers that use these skills

## A taste of GCSEs...

### Modern Foreign Languages

You will develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. You will use these skills in different contexts such as social situations, learning, home and work.

### Design and Technology

You will do creative and practical work with different tools and materials. You will use planning, designing, making and evaluation skills.

### Geography

You will learn about and explore the impact of the human, economic and physical forces and processes that shape and change the world.

### Computing

You will learn about the design and development of computer systems and how computers work. You will use different programming techniques and languages to solve problems.

### History

You will learn about key individuals, societies, events and developments. You will understand the issues and how the past impacts on the present day.

### Music

You will listen to and learn about a variety of musical styles. You will compose music and perform as a soloist and in a group.

### Art and Design

You will study and appreciate artistic works from a wide range of disciplines including painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, ceramics, and film design. You will design and create your own artworks.

### Drama

You will study theatrical works and attend performances. You will develop the knowledge and skills needed for creating your own staged works.

### Physical Education

You will study theory including applied anatomy, sports data, sports psychology, health, fitness and wellbeing. You will take part in a range of sports and physical training.

## ACTION POINT

### EXPLORE GCSEs

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

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

7

# Technical qualifications

Do your options include technical qualifications? These are sometimes called 'vocational' qualifications.

These are work-related qualifications. You may be able to take them alongside your GCSEs or as part of a personalised programme. (See page 17)

## HOT TIP

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

## FACT FILE

### Qualifications

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

### Subjects

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

### Courses

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

### Learning

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

### Assessment

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

### What next

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

## ACTION POINT

### EXPLORE TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS

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

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

# Personalised programmes

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

## FACT FILE

### Personalised programmes

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

### What you learn

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

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

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

### Qualifications

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

### What next

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

## ZEE SAYS....

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

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





# Coping with examinations

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

## Tips

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



## ACTION POINT

### THINK ABOUT ASSESSMENT

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

List three memory aids you find helpful:

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



# Finding good information sources

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

## Where to look

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

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

## Check the information you find before you use it

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

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

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

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

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

## HOT TIP

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

10

## ACTION POINT

### EXPLORE INFORMATION SOURCES

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

Who is there to help you?

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

What careers information in school and on the National Careers Service website:

**https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk** could you use to help you with your option choices?

# Taking control of your decisions

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

## Choosing an option

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

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

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

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

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

## ASH SAYS....

### ...follow your dreams

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

## HOT TIP

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

# Deciding what to do

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

11

## ACTION POINT

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

*I have looked at all my options:*

GCSEs

☐

Technical qualifications

☐

Personalised programme

☐

Others

☐

Options that interest me:

The qualifications I will get:

What I could do post 16:

--	--	--

12

## ACTION POINT

**FROM DREAM TO REALITY**

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

*My ideal option choices are:*

*The courses I can actually do are:*

*I would choose these because:*

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

13

## ACTION POINT

**WHAT I WANT TO DO AT KEY STAGE 4**

*First choices:*

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

# Thinking ahead

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

## The job market

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

## How the job market is changing

Labour market information shows that:

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

## How to find labour market information

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

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

Explore the job profiles on the National Careers Service website at <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>.

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

## How to use labour market information

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

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

## TAN SAYS....

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

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

## HOT TIP

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

## Skills and experiences

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

## Enterprise activities

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

## Work experience

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

## Volunteering

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

## Part-time, temporary and holiday jobs

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

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

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

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

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

You are entitled to a break of two consecutive weeks each year that must be taken during school holidays.

There is no national minimum wage for young people under 16.



## Thinking ahead *continued...*

## HOT TIP

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

## What will you do post 16?

The future is closer than you think! Having some idea about what you might do after you are 16 can help you to choose your key stage 4 options. Will you need to study certain subjects at key stage 4 so that you can follow your interests later? Will some subjects be more helpful to you than others in keeping your choices open?

## Which of these post-16 options interests you most?

## Full-time education

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

- **A Levels** – to study these subject-based qualifications you'll need four or five GCSEs at grades 4 or 5 and above
- **T levels** - to study these subject-based qualification for 16-18 that is equivalent to three A Levels
- **Technical qualifications** – these give you the inside story on the world of work and are also great preparation for higher education
- **a Traineeship** could help you get a job or Apprenticeship or move into supported employment or independent living.

## An Apprenticeship

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

## Part-time education or training

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

## ACTION POINT

14

## OPTIONS, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES

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

[illegible]

## HOT TIP

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

# ACTION POINT

15

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

Options that will help me follow my interests post 16:

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

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

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



CHOOSING THE RIGHT OPTIONS

## LEE SAYS....

### ...use the support you have

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

## HOT TIP

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

# Frequently asked questions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# YOUR ACTION PLAN

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

## Where I am now

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

## Who can help me and how

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

## What I need to do and when

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

Actions	By what date	Completed (Y/N)

## Checklist

*I have now:*

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

## Congratulations!

Now you can concentrate on enjoying key stage 4!

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

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