

2022 - 2023



The Parents' Guide to

WHAT'S NEXT

How to get the most out of this guide

Useful links

If you want to delve deeper and find out more, we've included useful links to other reliable sources. Simply click on the picture icons to be taken to our recommended websites.

Interactive

To make moving around this guide easier, the contents and chapter headings are interactive. Simply click on a heading to be taken to the chapter or page you would like to read.

Call out boxes

Information we think is particularly important has been highlighted throughout this guide; pay special attention to these!

Key terms

Easy to understand definitions are provided throughout this guide in the key terms boxes.

Join us

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Our school membership package provides a year-round solution to positively increasing parental engagement. Our specialist guides and resources will make it easier to reach out to parents on a regular basis. Content covers actions for parents during key times throughout the academic year and will help schools meet Gatsby Benchmarks, especially 1, 2 and 3.

[Find out more about school membership.](#)

Sponsorship opportunities

If you'd like to feature your university or apprenticeship in future editions of this guide, please contact us on info@theparentsguideto.co.uk for sponsorship/marketing opportunities.

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Introduction

If you're not sure what options are out there, it's tricky to help your teen choose what to do next. This guide gives you an introduction to what's available after GCSE and sixth form, and why certain options suit some students more than others.

If your teen learns best through practical experience, they may not do as well with academic or classroom-led learning. Similarly, if they enjoy quiet, lecture-led lessons, getting an apprenticeship

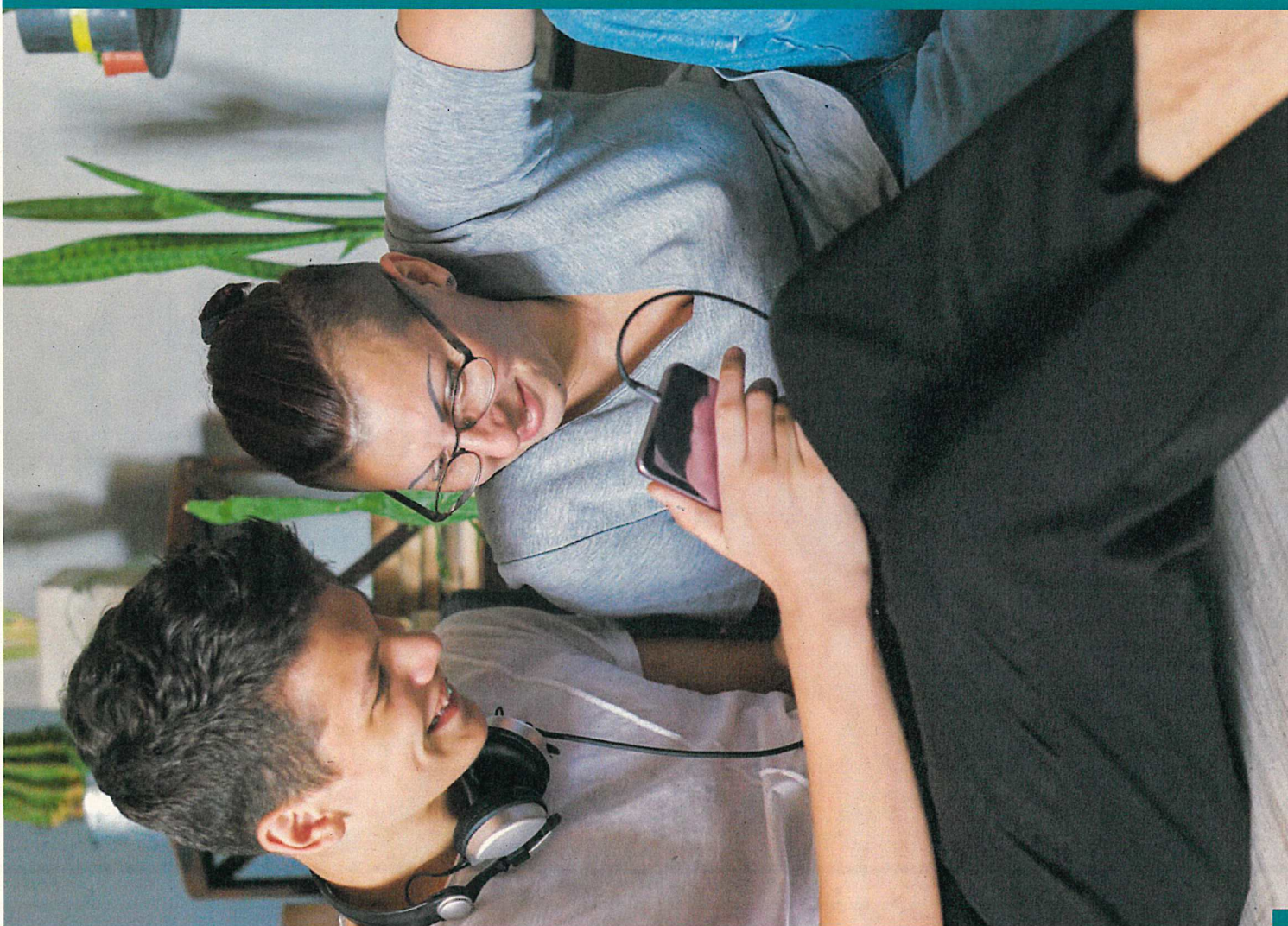
and learning on the job may not suit them. We explore how you can help your teen make choices to suit their personality and learning preferences, so they have the best chance of success as they enter the next stage of their educational journey or career path.

This guide is not written so you do the work for them! It's a source of ideas so you feel confident talking to your teen about their future choices.

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Options after GCSEs

All 16 year olds must undertake further education until they are 18. This doesn't mean they have to stay on at school or go to college, they can get a job with a training element to it, but they cannot work full-time without some training.

Most teens stay on at school or go to college and take either A levels or BTECs. This usually works well for students that enjoy being in the classroom. However, if your child prefers practical experience, they might achieve better results and be happier by taking a different route towards a career, such as T Levels, an apprenticeship or traineeship. Don't rule out an option because it's not one you know.

Thinking ahead

If your child thinks they know what they want to do when they leave school at 18, this may influence their choices. However, in most cases, they won't have a firm idea of what they want to do (and may not even know whether they hope to progress to further education once they're 18) so it may be a good idea for them to make choices which will give them some experience in different areas, so they can find out what they really do and don't like. For the best chance of success, they should lean toward academic choices if they like classroom learning or vocational options if they prefer practical experience.

Subject choices

There's much more choice at sixth form than GCSE, so there will be many subjects available that are new to them. Don't worry about them taking something they have never studied and then finding out they don't enjoy it or aren't good at it; they can make changes at the start of Y12.

Going into the workplace

If school or college is not for them, apprenticeships offer a great career pathway, with the added benefit of hands-on workplace experience as well as obtaining valuable qualifications.

Don't panic!

It's important to bear in mind that whatever your teen chooses to do after GCSE, whilst it will influence Post-18 options, it will not close any doors. If they make a mistake, there's still plenty of opportunity to change direction (it might mean a little additional work on their part!). If they go straight into an apprenticeship and change their mind later, there's always the chance to go back to full time study further down the line.

Useful links

The Parents' Guide to Post 16 options



Summary:

There are lots of choices available to your child once they've completed GCSEs, so make sure they know what's on offer.

1. A level and IB are more suited to theoretical learning;
2. BTECs and T Levels are great for those who enjoy practical experience and coursework;
3. EPQ offers the chance to earn more UCAS points as well as undertaking a project centred around your child's personal interests;
4. Apprenticeships, traineeships and internships provide on the job training and valuable experience.



T Levels are a two-year vocational qualification equivalent to three A levels

A spotlight on T Levels

You've probably heard of A levels and BTEC, but have you heard of T Levels, a new sixth form qualification introduced in 2020?

What are T Levels?

T Levels are a two-year vocational qualification equivalent to three A-levels. They involve a mix of classroom learning (about 80% of the course time) and practical experience (about 20% of the course time) including a 45 day on-the-job placement in a genuine business. Afterwards, students may go on to university, alternative higher education, another job, an apprenticeship or they may be offered an opportunity with the company where they were placed.

Business in mind

It could be easy to discount T Levels as a credible sixth form choice because they're new and haven't been tried and tested. However, their recent development with input from businesses means they are tailored to meet existing industry needs much more directly than other generic qualifications and this is likely to appeal to future employers as well as preparing students for working life.

Keeping options open

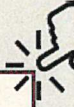
T Levels broaden the study choices for 16 years olds. They can offer a clear path to employment although, should your teen start the course and realise that industry or specialism it is not for them, there are still plenty of options for them to continue higher education or get work in a different industry once the T Level is complete.

Useful links

[T Levels official website](#)

[Department for Education](#)

[The Parents' Guide to T Levels](#)



The Parents' Guide to Post 16 options - summary (1)

	A levels	International Baccalaureate	BTEC Nationals	T-Levels (England only)
Qualification type	General Certificate of Advanced level qualification	International Baccalaureate Diploma	Business and Technology Education Council Diplomas <i>(Level 3 are similar standard to A Levels, with subsidiary diploma equivalent to one A level, BTEC diploma equivalent to 2 A levels and extended diploma equivalent to 3 A levels).</i>	Technical Level Qualification
Type of learning	Mostly theory. Can depend on the subjects taken	Mostly theory, some practical. Can depend on the subjects taken	Combination of practical and theory	Classroom learning (80%) with industry placement (20%)
Qualifications needed to sign up	At least x5 GCSE grade 4 - 9. At least grade 5/6 in the subject/s chosen for A level	Set by the school, up to 5 GCSEs	Up to 5 GCSEs	Up to 5 GCSEs
Subject choices	Three subjects	Up to six subjects (three standard level and three at higher level plus some compulsory modules including an extended essay)	Three vocational subjects	One industry field, such as construction (includes design, surveying and planning) or Education (includes early years, assisting teaching and supporting and mentoring students)
Commitment	2 years full time			
Tuition costs	Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)			
UCAS points awarded for passing	56 points - A* 48 points - A 40 points - B 32 points - C 24 points - D 16 points - E	56 points - Higher Level 7 48 points - Higher Level 6 32 points - Higher Level 5 24 points - Higher Level 4 12 points - Higher Level 3	For subsidiary diploma: 56 points - D* (distinction) 48 points - D 32 points - M (merit) 16 points - P (pass) <i>Points are doubled for diploma and tripled for extended diploma</i>	168 points - Distinction* 144 points - Distinction 120 points - Merit 96 points - Pass (C or above) 72 points - Pass (D or E)
Can lead to	University, further study, training or work	University, further study, training or work	University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work	University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work

The Parents' Guide to Post 16 options - summary (2)

	Cambridge Technicals	Other qualifications	BTEC apprenticeship	Other options
Qualification type	A Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate (equivalent to an A level) or Cambridge Technical Diploma (equivalent to x2 A levels)	City and Guilds; National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or Tech Bac (similar to Baccalaureate)	Advanced Level 3 (equivalent to x2 A levels)	Traineeship / Volunteer with training / internship – all to help your child get enough skills to take on an apprenticeship or other form of qualification if they do not already have the minimum qualification requirements.
Type of learning	Practical course with lots of coursework based on real life case studies	Dependent on the qualification, most contain practical on the job training	Work based including off-site learning	Work based
Qualifications needed to sign up	At least x5 GCSE passes	x5 GCSE passes	Advanced Level 3 - depends on employer, some require at least 3 GCSEs	None
Subject choices	Range of vocational subjects	Range of vocational subjects	Range of vocational subjects, driven by the job offered	Range of vocational subjects, driven by the job offered
Commitment	2 years	2 years (level 3)	1-2 years	6 weeks - 6 months
Tuition costs	Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)			
UCAS points awarded for passing	Cams Tech level 3: 56 points – D* (distinction) 48 points – D 32 points – M (merit) 16 points – P (pass)	In most cases no UCAS points are awarded but there are some exceptions.	n/a	n/a
Can lead to	University, further study, training or work	Further study, training, professional development programmes or work	University, further study, training or work	Further study, apprenticeships or job offers

There are lots of choices available to your child once they've completed sixth form, so make sure they know what's on offer

Options after sixth form

What your child chooses to do after sixth form (or college) is exciting but can be nerve-racking. There are lots of options available and understanding the pros and cons between different choices can be confusing.

It's not just about deciding whether to go to work or continue further education – although that's a good starting point. Important considerations include how long they want to continue studying, how they will finance living expenses and course fees (and whether you can afford to help them), whether they want to study in a more academic environment or in a more practical environment (such as studying whilst working).

Many qualifications can be built upon, so they may commit to one year of further study and then decide to increase it for another year or two to get a higher qualification. This flexibility can be very useful, particularly for students who are not keen to commit to long-term studies after school, but find that they enjoy it once they've got started. In the case of degrees, they will need to commit to the length of study (minimum three years) from the beginning.

Summary:

There are lots of choices available to your child once they've completed sixth form, so make sure they know what's on offer.

1. Higher education options (such as university or Higher National Diplomas) are more suited to theoretical learning;
2. Apprenticeships, trainee programmes and internship are great for those who enjoy practical experience and coursework and are a terrific way to get first-hand experience of what a job is like;
3. School leaver programmes offer opportunities to join the workplace and begin skills development and careers development through experience as well as study;
4. Other options include taking a gap year, starting their own business or entering the world of work.



The Parents' Guide to Post 18 options - summary (1)

	University Degree	Degree Apprenticeship	Non-degree apprenticeship	Higher education course at College
Qualification type	Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science	Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science	Advanced or Higher apprenticeship	HNDs HNCs, Foundation Courses, Diplomas, Vocational course
Length of commitment	3-4 Years (Some degrees, such as medicine, are longer)	3-4 Years (Some can be longer, even up to 7 years)	6 Months - 3 Years	1 - 3 Years Some are part-time.
Tuition Costs	£££ Students take out a "tuition fee loan" to pay course costs. No repayments are made until the student is earning £25k in the April after graduation. Any outstanding debt is wiped clear after 30 years.	£0 Course costs (at university) are paid by the company and government.	£0 Course costs (usually at college or by an education provider) are paid by the company and government.	££ Tuition fees need to be paid but these are less expensive than university fees. Students can apply for an "advanced learner loan" where repayments are made as a percentage of earnings above a certain threshold. Any outstanding debt is wiped clear after 25 years.
Accommodation Costs and living expenses (i.e. food, book, travel, going out)	£-£££ May receive a "maintenance loan" dependent on parents' income; however, this is rarely sufficient to cover all costs and students will either need to supplement by working or have help from their parents (or both!).	£-££ A salary is paid, but parents may need to subsidise living expenses, especially if relocating to an expensive area.	£-££ A salary is paid, and shorter apprenticeships may be local so students can continue living at home, but parents may need to subsidise living expenses, especially if relocating to an expensive area for longer apprenticeships.	£ Students can often find suitable courses at colleges commutable from home, but there are still living expenses to be covered.
Alternatives	Company sponsored degrees (they are not an employee but gain work experience from the sponsor company)	Could also consider school leaver programmes (non degree apprenticeships)	Higher education courses	Non degree apprenticeships

The Parents' Guide to Post 18 options - summary (2)

	Traineeship	Job with training	Job without training	Internship	Gap Year	Start a business
Qualification type	To prepare students for work or to go on to further education.	Training usually funded by employer, but check that it is a national recognised qualification, such as NVQ	Going straight into a job offers work experience but not a qualification. However, it is possible to create a personal training plan if desired.	None	Could include a year working for a charity or other employer to gain skills – not just about travelling. Can combine A level retakes in this year.	None, but it's important to have drive, commitment and an idea of what business idea to pursue.
Length of commitment	6 weeks to 6 months	n/a	n/a	1 month to 6 months But some up to a year.	1 year	n/a
Tuition Costs	£0 Training fees are paid by the government.	£0 Training funded by the employer.	£-££ Any training would be self-funded.	£0 Internships are about gaining practical work experience so there are rarely any formal qualifications undertaken.	£0 There are no tuition costs unless retaking examinations.	£-££ It may be useful to take some courses to hone skills when setting up a business. The Prince's Trust and Local Enterprise Partnership offer grants and mentoring.
Accommodation Costs and living expenses (i.e. food, book, travel, going out)	£-££ Not paid to work, but some expenses (such as travel) may be provided. Accommodation costs may be expensive if needing to relocate.	£ Salary provided and jobs are usually within commutable distance from home, though travel can be expensive.	£ Salary provided and jobs are usually within commutable distance from home, though travel can be expensive.	£-££ Legally interns should be paid although many aren't. Some companies may cover travel expenses. Depending on the location, living and travel expenses could be costly.	£-£££ Gap years need not be expensive. Flights and accommodation is usually covered for overseas volunteering. Personal travel can be funded by working for part of the year.	£ Lots of young people start their businesses online, which means minimal start up costs and they can continue living at home.
Alternatives	Job with training, internship or apprenticeship	Traineeship, internship or apprenticeship	Traineeship, internship or apprenticeship	Traineeship, job with training or apprenticeship	Gap Year after university / job / apprenticeship	Start a business whilst working or in education