

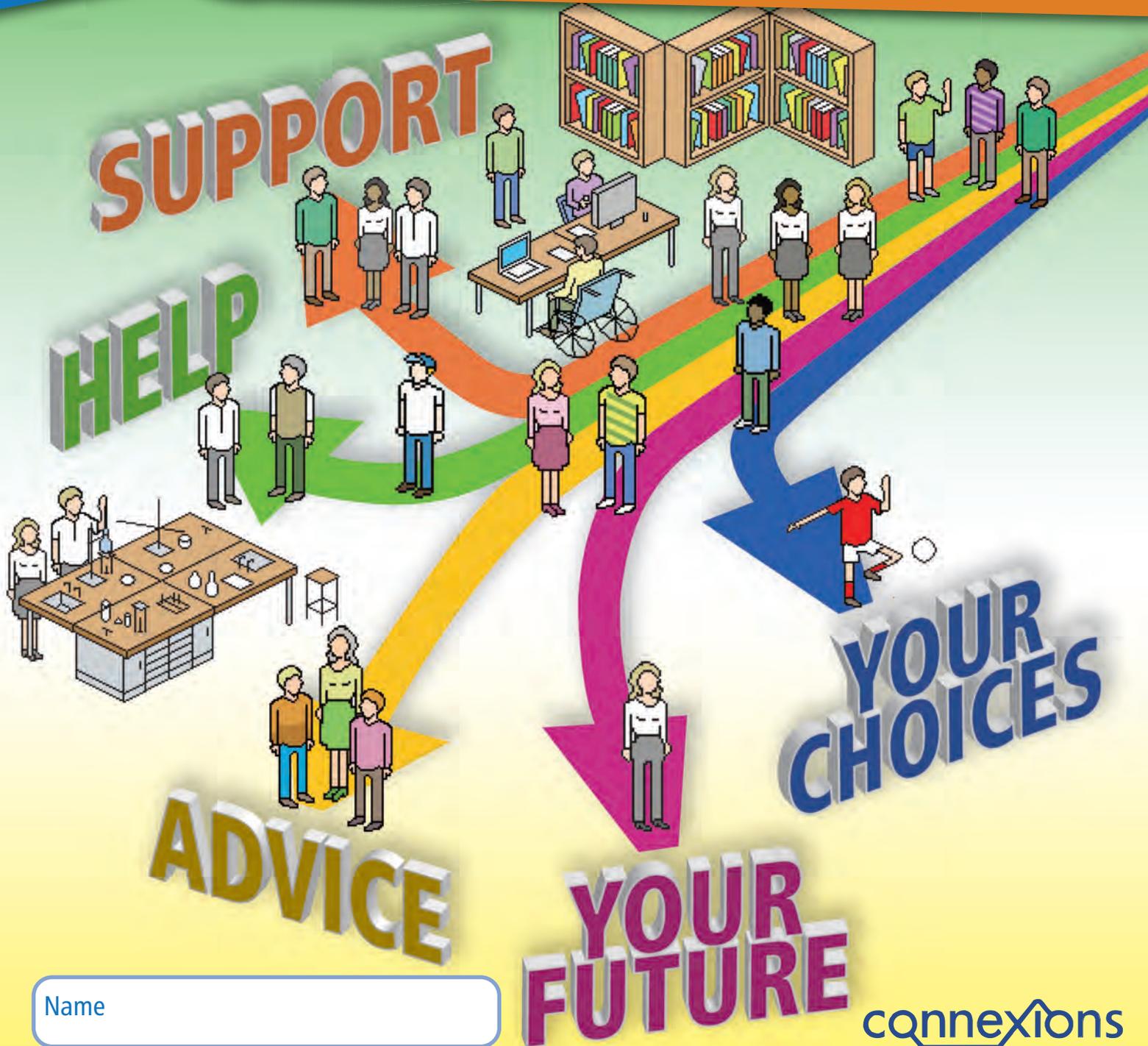


Also on the internet
www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow

2009 - 2010

WHICH WAY NOW?

How to choose your key stage 4 options



Name

connexions

Welcome to Which way now?



This magazine is full of ideas to help you choose your key stage 4 options:

- ➔ find out what you need to think about and who can help
- ➔ see what other young people did
- ➔ use the action points to help you organise your ideas, take control of your learning and shape your future.

And don't panic. It is normal to feel excited, confused and worried at options time!



Help your parents and carers understand what you are doing and how they can help

Give them the centre pages of this magazine and show them the full guide at www.connexions-direct.com/parentcarer

Think better online? Try the interactive version of **Which way now?** at www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow



Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank all those young people who agreed to be case studies for **Which way now?** For reasons of confidentiality some names may have been changed.

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Contents



PUTTING YOURSELF FIRST

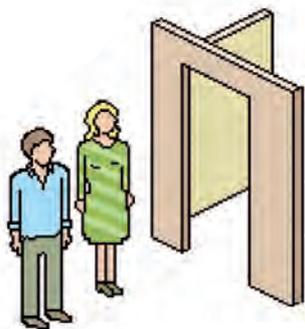
- Know yourself 2-3
- Get started on decision-making 4-5
- Get help and support 6-7

CHOOSING THE RIGHT OPTIONS



- Qualifications 8-9
- Learning pathways 10-18
- Local choices 19
- Finding good information sources 20-21
- Taking control of your decisions 22
- Deciding what to do 23

THINKING AHEAD



- The world of work 24-25
- The labour market 26
- The future 27

CONFIRMING YOUR CHOICES



- Frequently asked questions 28
- Your action plan 29

Know yourself



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 1

Tick anything you enjoy doing or think that you would enjoy doing

A

- building things
- being active and working outdoors
- making and fixing things
- using tools and machines
- solving problems

B

- designing and displaying things
- being on television
- writing a book
- playing in a band
- doing a makeover

C

- helping people
- sorting out arguments
- showing people what to do
- looking after people
- doing voluntary work

D

- finding out how things work
- doing experiments
- researching and testing ideas
- designing a new computer game
- doing calculations

E

- organising parties and other social events
- buying and selling things
- running a business
- entering competitions
- campaigning for change

F

- making plans
- using a computer and calculator
- arranging things over the phone
- putting CDs/DVDs into the right order
- organising your 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 check out any score of three or over.



Mostly As

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

Subject ideas: construction and the built environment, design and technology, engineering, food technology, hair and beauty, manufacturing, physical education, public services, sport and active leisure.



Mostly Bs

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

Subject ideas: art, catering, creative and media, dance, drama, hair and beauty, hospitality, music, photography, textiles.



Mostly Cs

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

Subject ideas: citizenship studies, creative and media, health and social care, hospitality, psychology, religious studies, retail business, society health and development, sociology, travel and tourism.



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, environmental and land-based studies, chemistry, geography, history, mathematics, physics, science, statistics.



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 studies, citizenship studies, economics, information technology (IT), law, modern foreign languages, psychology, retail business, sociology.



Mostly Fs

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

Subject ideas: business administration and finance, business studies, catering, economics, history, hospitality, information and communication technology (ICT), law.

Get started on decision-making

Choosing well means thinking hard about:

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



ACTION POINT 2

Use this activity to help you organise your ideas

ME

I am:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> practical | <input type="checkbox"/> investigative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> creative | <input type="checkbox"/> enterprising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sociable | <input type="checkbox"/> organised |

I learn best by:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> seeing and reading | <input type="checkbox"/> doing projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> listening and talking | <input type="checkbox"/> doing tests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> touching and doing | |

MY OPTIONS

Courses 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:

MY FUTURE

Career ideas and interests:

Subjects I need to do this:

Subjects that will give me plenty of career choices in the future:

MY QUESTIONS

Things I want to find out before I make my choices:



HOT TIP

You don't have to have a career in mind at this stage – you just need to choose subjects and courses that will give you plenty of choice later on.

CASE STUDY 1



ZOE

THINKING AHEAD

Zoe is in Year 9 and has always had a keen interest in animals. She plans to work for the RSPCA in the future as an inspector or animal collection officer. She has researched the entry requirements for this type of work and has discussed the skills and experience needed with her Connexions personal adviser at school. Zoe has chosen to attend college in Year 10 to study a City & Guilds course in Land-Based Studies at Level 1, which she will combine with GCSEs in school. In order to train with the RSPCA, she knows that she needs to achieve A-C grades at GCSE and go on to study level 3 courses post-16.

From her research Zoe has found that as well as academic qualifications it is important to get as much experience with animals as possible. As a result she has spent time helping out at a local farm with the livestock and goes horse riding regularly. She has also contacted local veterinary practices to gain some work experience and is looking to do voluntary work with the RSPCA.

Zoe says of her experiences:

'For me, it was important to find out about the career I am interested in early on as I need to do certain subjects and get a lot of experience. I would say it's never too early to start talking about your ideas and doing research.'

Get help and support



CASE STUDY 2



EMMANUEL

TOO MANY CHOICES

Emmanuel is in Year 9 and looking to start his GCSE courses in September. Alongside mathematics and English, he has chosen triple science, PE and French. He has always enjoyed making and repairing things and would like a career in engineering.

When it came to choosing his options Emmanuel found it invaluable talking to his Connexions personal adviser who emphasised the importance of choosing subjects that he enjoys as well as those that relate to his career choice. This particularly helped Emmanuel focus on his decision-making as he is a student who does well in most subject areas.

'When I had to make my choices I was advised to choose carefully, to look at options I would have fun doing, not what I feel I have to do because everyone else is taking them. My Connexions personal adviser also suggested that I consider my future ambition when making my choices.'

If you are doing well in most of your subjects you may find it confusing which options to choose. Talk to an impartial adviser, such as a Connexions personal adviser, who can help you to clarify your interests and plan your future.



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

Who knows you really well?

Talk to the people who know you really well – like your family, friends, form tutor, subject teachers, mentor, coach or learning support staff. They want the best for you. They will soon tell you if they think that an option will suit you or not. They will also tell you why.

Who knows what you need to know?

Make sure that learning activities, workload and assessment do not come as a surprise. Find out what courses are really like. Go to options events. Read the information you get. Sign up for taster activities and visits. Talk to the people running the courses and the students who are doing them.

Who can give you practical help if you have trouble deciding which options to choose?

Can't decide what to do? Need balanced and up-to-date advice and information? Then talk to an expert.

Speak to your **careers co-ordinator** – the person in charge of careers work in your school. Co-ordinators 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.

Speak to a **Connexions personal adviser**. They have special training to help you tackle personal and career problems. Sometimes you can drop in to see one at break or lunch times, so watch out for information about when they are in school. Otherwise you will have to ask your form tutor or careers co-ordinator to make an appointment for you.

Get in touch with a **Connexions Direct adviser** through www.connexions-direct.com. They are specially trained to help you deal with personal and career issues. You can talk to them online, on the phone (080 800 13 2 19) and via email, text (07766 4 13 2 19) and textphone (08000 968 336).

Who can help you if you need extra support?

Are you already getting extra help with your learning, personal problems or career thinking? If so, speak to the people helping you – people like learning support staff, the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), the gifted and talented co-ordinator, mentors and coaches. Otherwise, speak to the careers co-ordinator and/or your Connexions personal adviser.



ACTION POINT 3 Plan how to get help and support

What kind of help do you need?

Who can you ask for this help?

Where can you go to get this help?

CASE STUDY 3



MICHAEL

UNSURE ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

Michael is in Year 9 and enjoys most of his school subjects. He has opted to take GCSEs in additional science, product design and food technology, but at the moment he doesn't really have a clear career plan.

To help him make his option choices Michael found it really useful to talk to a range of people in and outside of school.

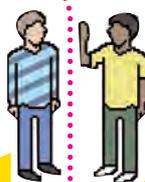
'I had the opportunity to talk to my head of year, which was great, and the Connexions personal adviser about my option choices. I also used the school's option booklet which I went through with my parents and this helped me to decide what courses would suit me.'

Michael found it invaluable talking to lots of different people about what to do after Year 9. As he doesn't have a career idea yet, decision-making can feel even more confusing. It's important to choose courses that will suit and interest you, not just because your friends are doing them, so get some advice and help from those around you.

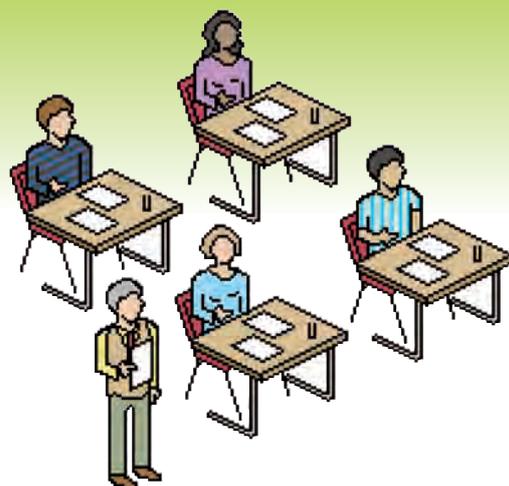


HOT TIP

Get as much information as you can so you choose well. If you have no particular career in mind, choose options that will give you plenty of choice in the future. If you have a firm career idea, research it and choose your options accordingly. Remember, no qualification is ever wasted.



Qualifications



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

The qualifications system

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 know how they fit together.

All qualifications fit into a national framework. It has nine 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 – but they increasingly want people with qualifications at level 3 and above.
- You need level 3 qualifications for most university courses – you generally need a grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics too.

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, universities and colleges that you have the attitudes, skills and qualities they value. They tell them what you already know and can do. They also give them an idea of how well you might do in the future.
- 5. To prove to other people that you can learn** – qualifications show people that you want to learn and that you can learn. Employers, universities and colleges need people like this.
- 6. To show yourself what you can do** – gaining qualifications boosts your self-confidence and self-awareness.

ACTION POINT 4

Explore your interests

Choose one career or job that interests you. Look it up in the **jobs4u** careers database at www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u and list the subjects and qualifications you will need to do it.

Career/job:

.....

Subjects and qualifications needed:

.....

.....

.....

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

LEVELS 4-8

.....

LEVEL 3

.....

LEVEL 2

.....

LEVEL 1

.....

ENTRY LEVEL

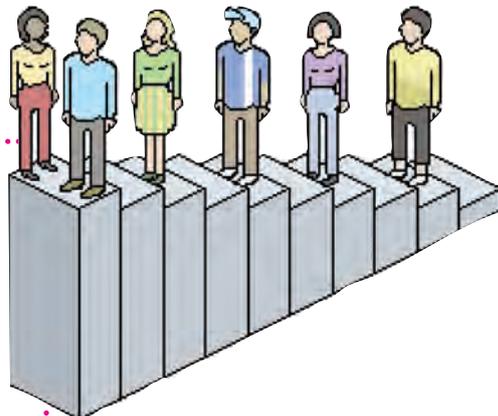
.....

Qualification levels



HOT TIP

You can use this framework to see how you can move up the levels and do different types of qualifications as you progress through learning and work.



Learning pathways

Not sure how subjects and qualifications fit together to make a learning programme? Want to know more about how they can help you in the future? Find out here.



14-19 education and training are changing. The changes are to make sure that:

- you have the skills you need for learning, work and adult life
- there is an option that suits you
- every option leads to a choice of pathways through learning and into work.

Whatever option you choose, you will be able to change direction or qualification pathway when you reach your next decision point.



HOT TIP

Did you know that employers are looking for people with science, technology, engineering and mathematical (STEM) skills? Whatever your interests there is probably a mathematics or science career that matches them – in finance, film, TV, music, gadgets, travel, health, sport, design or environment for example. Find out more about careers at www.futuremorph.org and www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u

Preparing you for work and adult life

Some subjects and skills are so important to your future that they are part of all key stage 4 learning programmes.

Personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)

These skills make it easier for you to organise yourself and work as part of a team. They help you to improve your learning and solve problems so that you perform better and achieve more. The skills are split into six groups: independent enquiry, creative thinking, reflective learning, team working, self-management and effective participation.

Functional skills

These are the practical skills of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). You use them in everyday life, in learning and at work. Everyone needs good functional skills. That is why they are included in all key stage 4 learning programmes. They are part of the Diploma and, from September 2010, GCSEs and Apprenticeships. Schools and colleges are being encouraged to enter students for separate functional skills assessments to make sure that they have the best possible preparation for progression to further study and work.

English, mathematics and science

You can do very little in life without a good grasp of these subjects. That is why you have to study them at key stage 4. Many employers require GCSEs in English and mathematics.

Learning activities that help you become confident and responsible young adults

These help you understand the world around you and develop the skills you need for adult life. They include ICT, PE, citizenship, religious education, sex and relationship education, careers education and work-related learning. Your school may offer a course that leads to a qualification in one or more of these areas.

Schools sometimes make other subjects compulsory too, so read your options information very carefully.

Personalised learning programmes

LEARNING
PATHWAYS

Do you need a bit more time to build your confidence and gain basic qualifications? If so, your school may offer you one of these learning programmes.

What do you learn?

Your school will help you pick courses that suit you. You will learn:

- practical skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT)
- the 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 could study some of the subjects you do now. You could also take some new subjects. The new subjects could show you what work is like and help you with your personal and social development.

Examples

- Art
- Business administration
- Citizenship studies
- Construction
- Drama
- Electronics
- Food
- French
- Geography
- History
- Hospitality
- Music
- Preparation for work
- Retail
- Work skills

What qualifications will you get?

Your school will pick qualifications that suit you.

Examples

- Functional skills awards or certificates in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT)
- a Foundation Diploma
- a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 1
- a BTEC Introductory Certificate
- an ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE Award)
- an OCR Certificate or Diploma in Retail Skills

What can you do next?

You could:

- take courses that help you prepare for work and/or independent living
- study for GCSEs
- do a Foundation, Higher or Advanced Diploma
- apply for an Apprenticeship
- start work in a job with training.



CASE STUDY 4

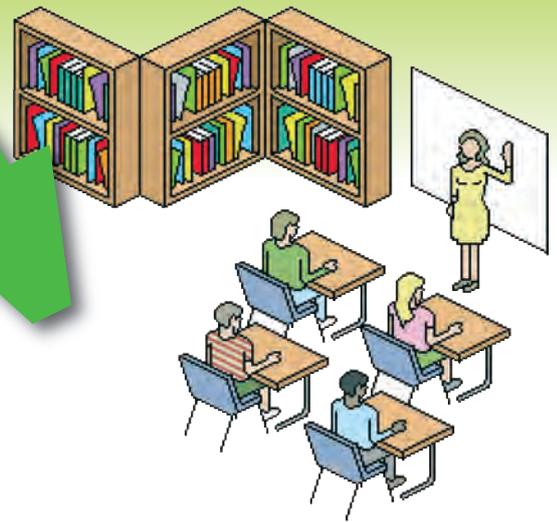


CHRISTOPHER

BENEFITING FROM WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Christopher is in Year 11 and in the second year of a work-related learning programme. He spends two days a week on a placement with an employer where he is learning how to fit carpets and wooden floors and three days in school working towards a range of GCSEs. As well as his placement, Christopher also goes to a learning provider where he has gained other qualifications such as first aid, health and safety and food hygiene. Christopher didn't enjoy school, but is now working harder in school and likes the idea of gaining qualifications whilst he is working. When he has finished Year 11, Christopher would like to join the army and gain qualifications. He has been on a two week training course to find out more about army life and help with his application. In case he is not successful, Christopher has a back-up plan. His employer has offered him a job as a trainee carpet fitter where he can continue to learn and gain new skills.

'Work-related learning gives you a good experience of work. It gives you the chance to learn new skills and to work in a team with other people. Also, you can find out if it is something you want to do when you finish school.'



Do your options include GCSEs? Find out more about them here.

Most people take GCSEs at key stage 4, often with one or two other qualifications. You can also do GCSEs as part of the Diploma.

Fact file

GCSE

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Qualifications

- GCSE – one full GCSE
- GCSE Short Course – half a full GCSE
- GCSE Double Award – equivalent to two full GCSEs.

Subjects

Schools decide what subjects to offer. They can choose from over 50 different subjects. These range from English, mathematics and science to archaeology, citizenship studies and engineering.

Learning

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

Assessment

- Mix of written examinations and internal assessment.
- Achievement is graded A* to G.
- Some subjects have two tiers of assessment: Foundation and Higher. Your school will decide which tier you should do. Foundation tier leads to grades C to G. Higher tier leads to grades A* to D.

Where they lead

GCSEs will help you whatever you plan to do after key stage 4. You can use them to meet the entry requirements for General Certificate of Education courses (A/AS Levels), the Advanced Diploma, an Apprenticeship and jobs with training. Having GCSEs at grades C and above in English, mathematics and science gives you a much bigger choice of opportunities in the future.

ACTION POINT 5 Explore GCSEs

Choose a GCSE subject that interests you from the options your school offers.

Look this GCSE up in your school options information and in your local online 14-19 prospectus. What does the course involve? (You can find the prospectus by going to www.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus, putting in your postcode and following the link.)

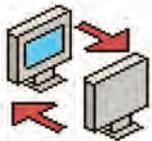
Now visit www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u. Type the subject into the job search box and see what careers this GCSE could help you with.

A taste of GCSEs ...



Astronomy

Learning about the Earth, moon and sun, the solar system, stars and galaxies and space exploration. Undertaking practical sky observation.



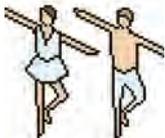
Business and communication systems

Learning about business communication and money transfer systems. Finding out how business gathers, records and presents data. Exploring the constraints and influences on business systems.



Classical civilisation

Learning about Greek and Roman civilisations, their literature and their historical context.



Dance

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



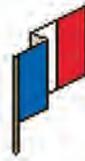
Economics

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



Engineering

Learning about engineering products, systems and services. Working with design briefs.



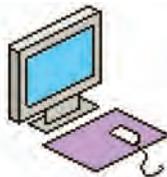
French

Developing reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Using these skills in different situations such as being on holiday or travelling on business to France, or welcoming French visitors or business people to England.



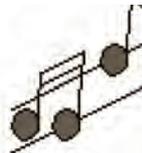
Geography

Learning about the relationship between people and the climate, environment, water, landforms, places, work and development.



Information and communication technology (ICT)

Learning how ICT systems work, how to store information and how to help people solve problems. Exploring new developments in technology and different ways to use ICT.



Music

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



Sociology

Learning about human society and social structures and systems. Exploring social issues to get a better understanding of the society in which you live.



HOT TIP

Find out more about the different GCSE subjects you can do. Look at the subject file in the online version of **Which way now?** at www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow





The Diploma

Do your options include the Diploma? Find out more about it here.

The Diploma is a new qualification that schools, colleges, universities and employers helped to develop. It is not yet available in every area but it will be soon. It is a large qualification so you could spend up to two days a week working towards it. For the rest of the time you will study the compulsory part of the school curriculum and work towards GCSEs and other qualifications.

ACTION POINT 6 Find out more about the Diploma

Using your school options information and your local online 14-19 prospectus, find out which Diplomas you can do in your area. (You can find the prospectus by going to www.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus, putting in your postcode and following the link.)

Tick the subjects you can do locally.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business, Administration and Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Information Technology (IT) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construction and the Built Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing and Product Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative and Media | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental and Land-based Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Society, Health and Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hair and Beauty Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Sport and Active Leisure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel and Tourism |

Diploma subjects that interest me:

.....
.....
.....

The Diploma I will get:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foundation | <input type="checkbox"/> Higher |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|

The qualifications I will get from the optional part of the Diploma:

.....
.....

Fact file

Qualification

At key stage 4, you can do a:

- Foundation Diploma – this is a level 1 qualification equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grades D to G
- Higher Diploma – this is a level 2 qualification equivalent to 7 GCSEs at grades A* to C.

Subjects

Local partnerships of schools and colleges decide what subjects to offer. They can choose from 14 subjects ranging from Travel and Tourism to Engineering.

Course

The Diploma has three parts:

- learning about your Diploma subject
- the essential skills you need for everyday life, in learning and at work – including functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills (see **page 10**)
- a choice of other subjects that help you understand more about your Diploma subject or that fulfil a personal interest – options can include GCSEs and vocational qualifications like BTEC awards.

Learning

Mix of classroom learning, practical hands-on experience and project work. Includes at least 10 days working with an employer. May also involve study at another school or a college.

Assessment

- Mix of written examinations and internal assessment, including practical tasks.
- You must pass all parts of the 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 it leads

The Diploma does not qualify you to do a specific job. It does give you a fully-rounded education so that you can go on to:

- a higher level Diploma in the same or a different subject
- AS and A Levels
- an Apprenticeship
- an industry training scheme or another job with training
- a vocational course that will qualify you to do a specific job.

A taste of the Diploma ...



Business, Administration and Finance

Learning what the industry is about and how it works. Developing essential skills such as business enterprise, business communication, business finance and customer service.



Construction and the Built Environment

Learning how the different industries in this sector work together to design, create, manage and maintain the built environment. Developing practical skills and exploring how built structures affect the communities that use them.



Creative and Media

Learning to think and work creatively. Developing the practical skills to bring ideas to life. Understanding and learning the skills to succeed in a creative business working environment.



Hair and Beauty Studies

Learning what the industry is about, how it works and what makes a successful employee. Developing essential skills such as communication, customer service, basic business operations and creative thinking.



Hospitality

Learning about the opportunities and occupations in the industry. Understanding and developing essential work skills such as safe working practices, customer service, finance and business planning.



Information Technology (IT)

Learning about the IT business, the people in it and how to use technology to solve business problems. Developing essential skills like team work.



Travel and Tourism

Learning about travel, forms of transport and local, national and international destinations. Exploring careers in the industry. Developing the skills to create and deliver new products or services and provide good customer service.

CASE STUDY 5



HOLLY

THE DIPLOMA EXPERIENCE

Holly is in Year 10 and is taking the Creative and Media Higher Diploma course. She spends one day a week at a local college and another in school working specifically on aspects of the Diploma. Apart from exams in the functional skills of ICT, English and mathematics, there are no other formal exams within the Diploma which is assessed through evidence collected over the two years of the course.

Holly has worked on a project with an acclaimed local gallery to set up an exhibition of work including photography, music, performances, and 2D and 3D art. It also included working to develop educational activities and workshops for visitors and local schools.

'I chose the Diploma because it was completely different from the other options as it offered me different ways of learning creative skills and about the media. I find learning much easier now as it is all connected and therefore easier to understand. The gallery project was a lot of fun, but also gave me real experience of work.'

'In Year 12, I can choose to do an Advanced Diploma and/or A Levels. The Diploma has taught me how to learn independently and has given me real skills that can be used in the media industry. It will also allow me to go on to university.'



HOT TIP

Find out more about the different Diploma subjects. Look at the subject file in the online version of **Which way now?** at www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow and check out www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas

CASE STUDY 6



EMMA

THE YOUNG APPRENTICESHIP EXPERIENCE

Emma is in Year 10 and interested in careers related to fashion and textiles. Alongside her GCSEs in mathematics, science, English, art and design, French and business studies, Emma is on a Young Apprenticeship course.

'When it came to choosing my Year 9 options I chose the Young Apprenticeship course in Business and Administration as it sounded very different to anything else I had come across before.'

Emma was also attracted to the style of learning as it is more of an independent way of studying and includes 50 days' work experience with a local employer. At the end she will also gain a qualification, an NVQ at Level 2 in Business and Administration.

'I thought this would be a great opportunity to get more of a grasp of the working world so that I have a better idea of what it's like when I leave school. This course is also motivating me to work really hard as it is equivalent to four or five GCSEs.'

If Emma does well, she may even consider taking it further and studying for the Advanced Apprenticeship after Year 11. With her GCSE subjects as well, she has kept open her post-16 options.

Is a Young Apprenticeship one of your options? Find out more about it here.



A Young Apprenticeship gives you a 'real taste of work' while you learn. You will spend the equivalent of two days a week working on your Young Apprenticeship. For the rest of the time you will study the normal school curriculum and work towards GCSEs and other qualifications. Young Apprenticeships are not available in all areas.

Fact file

Subjects

Local partnerships of schools, colleges, work-based learning providers and employers provide Young Apprenticeships to meet local needs. The industry sectors they cover include:

- Art and Design
- Business Administration
- Construction
- Energy (electricity & gas)
- Engineering
- Food and Drink Manufacturing
- Hairdressing
- Health and Social Care
- Hospitality
- The Motor Industry
- Performing Arts
- Retail
- Science
- Sports Management, Leadership and Coaching.

Qualifications

You gain a level 2 vocational qualification that is broadly equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grades A* to C. You may also gain other awards. For example, if you do a Young Apprenticeship in Hospitality, you may gain a BTEC First Diploma or NVQ Level 2. You may also gain a level 1 certificate in Health and Safety in the Workplace and level 2 awards in Food Safety and Practical Food Safety in Catering.

Learning

Mix of classroom learning and practical hands-on experience in various settings – for example, a school, college, training centre or workplace. Includes 50 days on work experience spread over two years.

Assessment

Mix of examinations, assessment of a portfolio of evidence and observation by an assessor.

Where it leads

As a Young Apprentice, you can go on to study level 3 vocational qualifications, the Advanced and Progression Diplomas and AS and A Levels. You could also apply for an Advanced Apprenticeship, an industry training scheme or a job with training.



HOT TIP

Interested in doing an Apprenticeship post-16?
Look at www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Vocational qualifications

LEARNING
PATHWAYS

Do your options include qualifications like BTECs and OCR Nationals? If so, find out more about them here.

These are work-related qualifications that cover a broad area of work. Your school may offer you a vocational qualification alongside your GCSEs, as part of a personalised learning programme or as part of the Diploma.



Subjects

Schools decide which subjects to offer. They have a wide choice ranging from ICT and business to sport and media.

Learning

Mix of theory and practical activities.

Assessment

Generally includes the observation of practical work, a portfolio of evidence and examinations. Achievement is graded pass, merit or distinction.

Where they lead

You can use these qualifications as a stepping stone to higher level study and employment with training.

Get to grips with assessment

Assessment is part of all courses that lead to a qualification. Knowing what to expect and how best to approach it can help you to choose your options and to get higher grades.

At key stage 4, you will come across three main types of assessment:

- **internal assessment** – often called coursework, this includes research and other projects
- **portfolios of evidence** – collecting evidence that demonstrates your knowledge and skills
- **examinations** – tests that take place at a set time and assess how much you know about a subject.

Tips for managing internal assessments

- Choose a task or topic that interests you so that you stay motivated.
- Read all the instructions carefully and check that you understand what you have to do. If you don't understand, ask for help!

- Make a note of important times and dates, including any deadlines for handing in work.
- Organise your work and keep it organised so that it is easy for you to use.
- Don't copy straight from the internet, books or other people – the examiners want to know what **you** know. (It's also illegal to copy stuff and you could be barred from getting a grade for the course!)
- Make sure you plan your work carefully and present it well.
- Double check your spelling and grammar carefully before handing in written work.
- Check that there are no important details missing – like your name!

Tips for coping with exams

- Don't panic!
- Give yourself plenty of time to revise.
- Make a revision plan and keep to it. Study for a set time each week and

build in some time to relax and do things you enjoy.

- Revise using memory aids that fit your learning style – graphics, flowcharts, highlighted text, summary notes, cartoons, sound recordings, key points cards. You could revise with your friends too.
- Go to revision classes and clubs.
- Check the dates and times of your exams very carefully.
- Sleep and eat well before an exam. Prepare any equipment you need beforehand – do not leave it until the last minute.
- Try to stay calm during the exam. If you feel worried, take some deep breaths.
- Once the exam is over, try to put it out of your mind and concentrate on the next one.
- Try to learn from your mistakes. Work out what you could have done better and aim to change things next time.

CASE STUDY 7



MICHELLE

BENEFITING FROM SUPPORT

Michelle is in Year 10 and has a specific learning difficulty as well as difficulties with communication. She attends a mainstream school where she has support in lessons. She finds the theory work very difficult and uses support from learning support assistants for reading and written work. Despite her difficulties Michelle is extremely hard-working and determined and has already begun to plan her career. She is interested in catering and hospitality work and would like to manage her own bar in the future. To this end, she is studying a GCSE in food technology and also spends one day per week at college doing the ABC Level 1 Certificate in Hospitality which she really enjoys.

'I really like all the practical work we do at college. It's good to have the chance to show what I can do that doesn't involve writing.'

Michelle plans to study catering at college post-16 and will continue to receive support with the theory work when she is there.

Having a learning difficulty and/or disability does not stop you choosing subjects or planning a career. If you need it, support is available.

Get to grips with assessment CONTINUED

ACTION POINT ? Think about assessment

What type of assessment suits you best?

- internal assessment
- building a portfolio of evidence
- examinations

Look at the key stage 4 options that interest you then fill in this table.

Option	Type of assessment	Suits me	Does not suit me

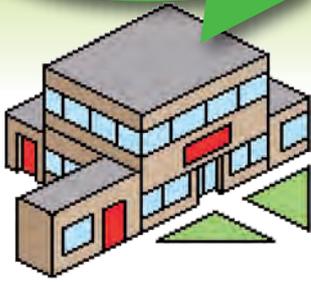
List three things you can do to organise yourself so that you cope well with internal assessments and portfolios of evidence

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

List three memory aids that suit your learning style

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Local choices



No two schools are the same, so every school offers a different set of options. Make sure you know exactly what you can do at your school, and then research the options that interest you. Use our checklist to make sure that you don't forget anything.

ACTION POINT 8 Research checklist

To do Done

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read all the options information I get from school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Check what subjects are compulsory – the ones I have to do |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Talk to the teachers to see if they think that it is a good idea for me to do their course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Talk to my parents/carers and find out what options they think I should do and why |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Go to information events and planning and review days with my parents/carers |
| <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 Connexions Resource Centre and on jobs4u (www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u) and find out what subjects, qualifications and grades I will need for these careers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Use the local online 14-19 prospectus to get more information about local opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Speak to the careers co-ordinator or Connexions personal adviser or visit the Connexions Direct website at www.connexions-direct.com to talk about my option choices and career ideas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ask the careers co-ordinator or Connexions personal adviser who I should speak to if I think that I will need extra help with my key stage 4 courses |

HOT TIP

Every area has a local online 14-19 prospectus to help you with your option choices

Ask your careers co-ordinator, Connexions personal adviser or Connexions Resource Centre staff for the name and website address for your local prospectus. Alternatively, go online and look up www.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus. Fill in your postcode and then follow the link to your prospectus.

ACTION POINT 9 Explore your local 14-19 prospectus

What is your prospectus called?

What is the website address?

What information is in the prospectus? (tick all that you find)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14-19 courses and where you can do them | <input type="checkbox"/> local events and opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> course details and entry requirements | <input type="checkbox"/> open days |
| <input type="checkbox"/> common application form | <input type="checkbox"/> career opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> useful links |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other | |

What topics does the prospectus offer advice on? (tick all that you find)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> making choices | <input type="checkbox"/> where you can get extra support if you need it – for example, young parents, young people in or leaving care, young offenders, young people with special educational needs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> money matters | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> transport | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> volunteering | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work experience | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> getting a job | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> how parents and carers can help you | |

Finding good information sources



Good information is the key to choosing well. Do you know where to get good information? Find out here.

Where to look

A great place to start looking for information is your school's Connexions Resource Centre. It should have:

- people who can tell you where to find the 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 use the online version of **Which way now?** (www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow) and websites like www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u, www.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus and your local online 14-19 prospectus.

Use the icons

The **jobs4u** website and Connexions Resource Centre use colour coded icons to make it easy for you to find the information you want.

-  **Choices** (option choices, post-16 choices)
-  **Education** (further and higher education, qualifications, study skills, studying abroad)
-  **Free Time** (sport, leisure, voluntary and personal development activities)

-  **Health** (healthy eating, sexual health, mental health, personal safety, drugs and alcohol)
 -  **Housing** (housing advice, leaving home)
 -  **Law, Your Rights and Citizenship** (you as a citizen and you as a customer)
 -  **Money** (financial support for learning, managing money, tax, national insurance and wages)
 -  **Relationships** (bereavement, bullying and abuse, family, personal relationships, parenting, leaving care)
 -  **Travel and Transport** (driving, travelling and timetables)
 -  **Where to Get Help** (local and national helplines and organisations offering general and specialist help)
 -  **Work and Training** (careers, training, work experience, part-time work, job hunting, your rights)
- You can find information about jobs and occupations in the  **Work and Training** section of the Connexions Resource Centre. The information is organised into 23 job families:
-  **Administration, Business and Office Work**
 -  **Building and Construction**
 -  **Catering and Hospitality**
 -  **Computers and IT**
 -  **Design, Arts and Crafts**
 -  **Education and Training**
 -  **Engineering**
 -  **Environment, Animals and Plants**
 -  **Financial Services**
 -  **Healthcare**
 -  **Languages, Information and Culture**
 -  **Legal and Political Services**
 -  **Leisure, Sport and Tourism**
 -  **Manufacturing and Production**
 -  **Marketing and Advertising**
 -  **Media, Print and Publishing**
 -  **Performing Arts**
 -  **Personal and Other Services, including Hair and Beauty**
 -  **Retail Sales and Customer Services**
 -  **Science, Mathematics and Statistics**
 -  **Security and Armed Forces**
 -  **Social Work and Counselling Services**
 -  **Transport and Logistics**

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?

ACTION POINT 10 Explore information sources

Where is the Connexions Resource Centre in your school?

When is it open?

Who is there to help you?

What is the name of your careers co-ordinator?

What is the name of your Connexions personal adviser?

When is your Connexions personal adviser in school?

Go online and browse the **www.connexions-direct.com** website. Is the information on the site trustworthy, unbiased, accurate and up to date? Why do you think this?

What information in the Connexions Resource Centre and on **www.connexions-direct.com** could you use to help you with your options choices?

CASE STUDY 8



KHEYA

RESEARCH YOUR OPTIONS CAREFULLY

Kheya is in Year 12 and taking AS Levels in biology, chemistry, art and design, and geography. Looking back, she realises it was an easy decision to take GCSEs in triple science as she always had a strong interest in this area. However, choosing the other options was more difficult, because she is creative too.

Kheya had no particular career ideas, but she valued the help and support of those around her. She talked to other people about her ideas and strengths.

'I struggled in choosing the other subjects, so I talked to various teachers, my family and my Connexions personal adviser. I gained advice and information about the subjects and in the end opted for GCSEs in geography, history, art and design, and product design.'

Kheya is pleased that her choices in Year 9 still kept her post-16 and future career options open.

'My key stage 4 choices helped me choose what I would study for AS Levels as I was able to identify what I was good at and what I was struggling with. This year I realised that most of all I enjoy the science-based subjects and have decided to go on to study at university – something related to biology or medicine.'

Taking control of your decisions

CASE STUDY 9



ETHAN

FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS

Since he was six years old, Ethan has loved performing and he joined his first dance school at the age of ten. Even at such a young age it was clear he was talented and in Year 8 he transferred from his local secondary school to a full-time school for performing arts. Now in Year 10, he studies acting, singing, music and dancing alongside a range of GCSE subjects.

When he first became involved in dancing and singing Ethan was teased a lot by some of his peers. However, this didn't deter him and he thinks it has made him more determined to succeed. He has had a lot of support from his family and from his teachers and tutors who have given him guidance about his future.

Ethan's dream is to perform in the West End in musical theatre, but he knows how competitive this type of work is. As a result, he is considering his back-up plans, including music production and recording, which he also has a flair for. After Year 11 he plans to study A Levels at college in order to have other qualifications to fall back on, and then hopes to audition for a place at a performing arts or music college. Ethan offers the following advice:

'Don't give up. Whatever gets in your way you need to do what makes you happy. Also, don't assume you'll make it big – make sure you have something else to fall back on.'

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 with a learning programme that suits them better than it suits you. Use these tips to make sure that this does not happen to you.

Choosing an option

- Research all your options before you make a decision.
- Don't fall into the trap of thinking that some subjects are only for boys and some only for girls – this is not true.
- If you have a firm career idea, choose the options you need to meet the entry requirements for the post-16 opportunities that interest you – further education, higher education, an Apprenticeship, a job with training.
- If you don't have a firm career idea, choose options that will give you plenty of choice post-16.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help and advice from your family, friends, teachers, careers co-ordinator, Connexions personal adviser and others.

Do choose a course because:

- you are good at and think you will enjoy the subject
- it links to a career idea
- it goes well with your other choices
- it helps to give you plenty of choice post-16
- you think you might want to continue studying it post-16
- your research shows that it will interest you and motivate you to learn.

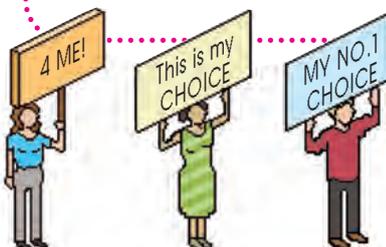
Do not choose a course because:

- your friends have chosen it
- you think it will be easy
- you think it is a good course for a boy/girl to do
- someone else thinks that it is a good idea
- you like the teacher you have now
- you didn't have time to research your options properly.



HOT TIP

Your choices don't have to be job-related. It's fine to choose some simply because you enjoy or are good at them. You can make few choices now that will stop you from changing direction or qualification pathways post-16.



HOT TIP

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



Deciding what to do

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

ACTION POINT 11

Double check that you have not overlooked any choices that might suit you now and in the future

I have looked at all my options:

- Personalised learning programmes
- GCSEs
- The Diploma
- Young Apprenticeships
- Vocational qualifications

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

ACTION POINT 12 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:

I would choose these because:

The courses I can actually do are:

I can bring my dream and reality closer together by:

ACTION POINT 13

What I want to do at key stage 4

First choices

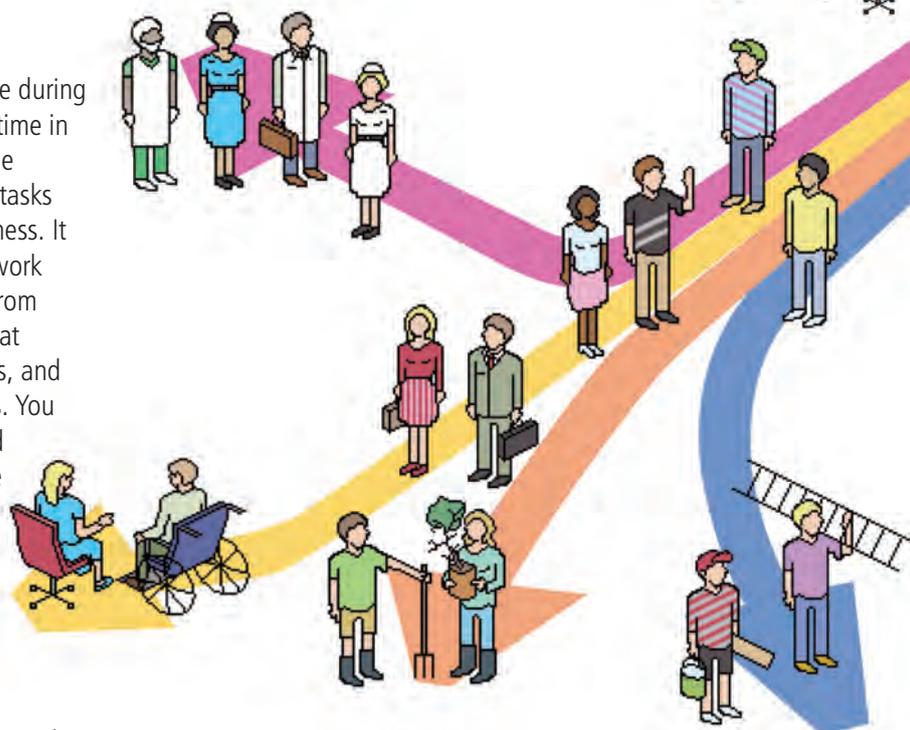
Reserves in case I don't get my first choice

The world of work

How can you get the experience and skills that employers look for? One of the best ways is to get first hand experience of work. Read on to find out how you can do this.

Work experience

Most people go on work experience during key stage 4. This means spending time in a real workplace, working alongside employees and learning about the tasks involved in a particular job or business. It is a great opportunity to see how work differs from school. You can learn from experts, see for yourself exactly what employers look for in job applicants, and strengthen your employability skills. You can even test your career ideas and improve your self-confidence at the same time. Ask your teachers about the work experience you can do.



Enterprise activities

Enterprise activities help you understand what running a successful business involves and what skills, qualities and attitudes employers and employees need. It can also teach you a lot about how to decide if a risk is worth taking. Most subjects include enterprise activities and many schools offer extra ones like Young Enterprise. Ask your teachers what you can do in your school.

Volunteering

So you don't get paid, but giving up some time to help your community 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. Find out what you can do. Speak to your careers co-ordinator or Connexions personal adviser. Alternatively, go online and visit:

- www.direct.gov.uk/youngpeople – look at the 'Work and careers' section
- www.vinspired.com
- www.do-it.org

Part-time, temporary and holiday jobs

These are a good way to earn some money and gain experience of work while you are still at school or college. If you get a job with a business, you must have a work permit before you start work. Speak to your careers co-ordinator or Connexions personal adviser about this.

The law limits the hours you can work and the kind of work that you can do. You can only do 'light work', for example, 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.



HOT TIP

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

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

Age	Term time	School holidays
14-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours on weekdays and Sundays • 5 hours on Saturdays • Maximum of 12 hours a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 hours on weekdays and Saturdays • 2 hours on Sundays • Maximum of 25 hours a week
15-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours on weekdays and Sundays • 8 hours on Saturdays • Maximum of 12 hours a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

ACTION POINT 14

Think about how you can get the experience and skills that employers look for

Look at your school options information, your school prospectus and your school website then say:

- what work experience you can do at key stage 4

- what enterprise activities you can do at key stage 4

	What interests you?	Who could help you find a suitable opportunity?
Volunteering		
Part-time, temporary and holiday work		

CASE STUDY 10



ANUSHKA

THE VALUE OF WORK EXPERIENCE

Anushka has always enjoyed sciences. For her post-16 options she chose A Levels in biology, chemistry and mathematics; subjects she enjoyed and was strong at.

During Year 12, Anushka started researching careers using sciences, and decided that dentistry appealed to her. She started to research degree courses and managed to arrange a work shadowing placement. However, rather than confirming her career choice, this put her off dentistry.

Anushka realised that she would need to start researching alternative degree courses. She looked at why she had not enjoyed her work experience, and realised that the area of science she enjoyed most was research. She met with her careers teacher at school and started to look at careers in scientific research. Anushka finally decided that biochemistry would be perfect for her.

Anushka now has a place to study biochemistry at university. She is really glad that she did work experience with a dentist.

'I could have easily gone into dentistry without knowing fully what the job entailed. It would have been wrong for me. I'd recommend anyone who has a job idea to try to get some work experience. It will help you find out if it's something you really want to do, and if not, give you time to look at alternatives before making your decision.'

The labour market

CASE STUDY 11



RICHARD

HAVE A BACK-UP PLAN

Richard is in Year 10 and keen to pursue a career in medicine. Alongside his core GCSE subjects in English, mathematics and science, Richard has chosen the options of a BTEC First Diploma in Public Services, religious studies and business studies.

After Year 11, Richard plans to continue in full-time education and further develop his studies at either sixth form or college. Richard has done some research into medical careers and is aware that this can be a highly competitive career area, requiring high GCSE grades.

As a result, he has a back-up plan of a job working within the emergency services. In Year 9, he chose options that could also help him move forward in all these areas.

'If I do not make my career within medical practice, my other subjects will also be useful for a career working, for example, as a police officer, firefighter or paramedic. It's a good idea to have a back-up plan, especially if it could be hard to get into your chosen career.'

When you start looking for a job, you are joining the labour market – the place where workers compete for jobs, and employers compete for workers. Do you know how to use labour market information to get ahead of the competition? If not, find out here.

What is labour market information?

Labour market information is data, statistics and research about the world of work and the job market. It tells you:

- where the jobs are – places, industries and occupations
 - what types of job are available – full or part time, permanent, temporary or seasonal
 - the skills and qualifications people need to do these jobs
 - the number of people looking for work
 - how the job market is likely to change in the next few years
 - the skills and qualifications that people will need to get and keep a job in the future.
- there are very few 'jobs for life' – most people change jobs several times in their working lives
 - all industries will recruit new workers in the future – to replace people who retire or change direction
 - employers want fewer unskilled, unqualified workers
 - employers want more skilled workers – qualified to at least level 2 (GCSEs at grades C and above) and preferably to level 3 and above (see **page 9**)
 - training is part of most jobs so employers want people who are willing and able to learn.

How can you use labour market information?

You can use labour market information to check that you have realistic career ideas and plans. This is because it tells you:

- if the job or career that interests you is likely to exist in the future – so you can change your plans if necessary
- what employers are looking for – so you know more about the attitudes, skills and qualifications you need
- where the jobs are – so you can find work.

What is labour market information telling us now?

The number of jobs for young people without skills has declined rapidly in recent

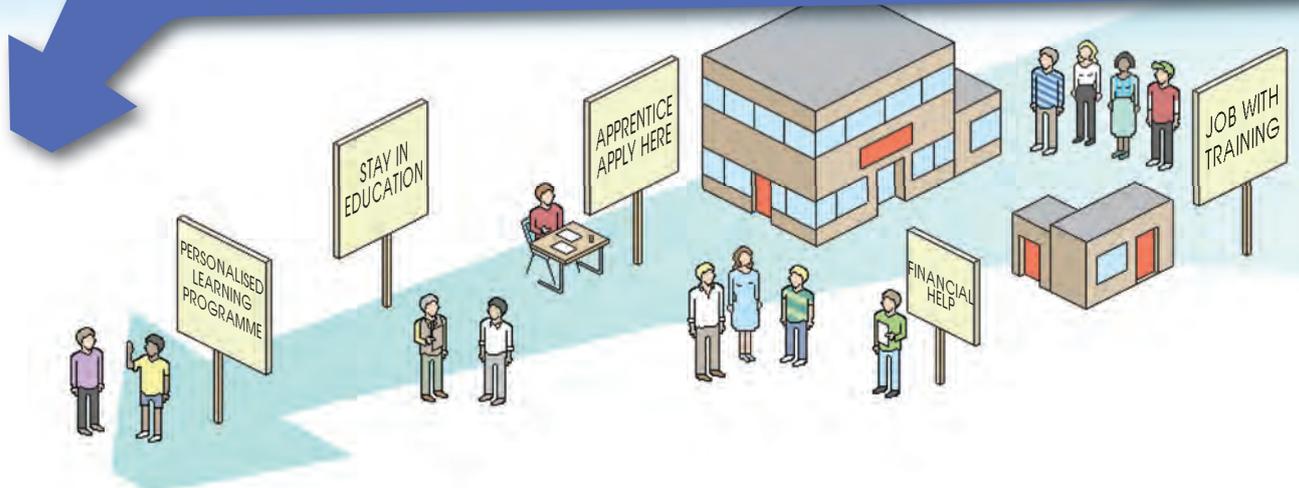
years, and is expected to decline further. The recent 'credit crunch' has led to fewer job vacancies and higher unemployment. If you want to get a job, you need to look at the long-term trends. These show that:

How can you get ready for the labour market?

Labour market information shows that employers want all their staff to have the right attitudes and good employability skills. They want people who:

- have a positive attitude and are willing to learn
- can organise themselves and work in teams
- have good communication, number, IT and problem solving skills
- understand what makes a business successful and why good customer care is important.

The future



The future is closer than you think! Are you ready to make more learning and career choices in a couple of years' time? You will have even more options then so it is a good idea to start thinking about them now. Find out more here.

The options

At the end of key stage 4 you can choose to:

- stay in education and follow a personalised learning programme
- stay in education and study for qualifications like the Diploma, A and AS Levels, BTECs and other vocational qualifications
- apply for an Apprenticeship
- start work in a job with training
- work for yourself – not many people do this at the end of key stage 4 so if this interests you, get expert advice as soon as possible.

And after that you can choose to:

- study for higher level qualifications at college or university
- apply for an Apprenticeship
- get a job with training
- work for yourself – this is a tough option so if this interests you, get expert advice as soon as possible.

Money matters

Staying in learning is a career investment and will bring future rewards. But like all investments it involves spending money – on things like stationery, field trips, visits, specialist equipment, food and travel.

Before you decide what to do at the end of key stage 4, check out what financial help you may be able to get post-16.

- Start by finding out about the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). EMA is a government-run scheme that gives many young people up to £30 a week to help them stay in learning. The amount you can get depends on your personal circumstances. Find out more at www.direct.gov.uk/ema
- Look at www.direct.gov.uk/moneytolearn if you want to know more about other financial help.
- Look at www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance if you want to know what financial help you can get if you decide to go on to higher education.



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.

Learning is vital to your future success so make the most of the **September Guarantee**. This entitles all 16 and 17 year olds to an offer of post-16 learning that meets their needs, and they also receive help to choose well.

Most young people choose to continue in education or training when they leave school and many get financial help through the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) (see 'Money matters' on this page).

Where can you find out more?

Find out more from your careers co-ordinator, Connexions personal adviser, local Connexions website and the **jobs4u** careers database at www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u

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, 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 the right options.

I like sports/creative subjects best – can I do just these?

No. You must study compulsory subjects such as English and mathematics and most schools will give you option blocks to choose from. For example, you may have to choose one technology, one creative/sport and one language subject, as well as having one free choice.

I have a definite idea about the career I wish to follow and it is strongly linked to mathematics and science. Can I take more than one science?

Yes. In most schools you can take a combination of one, two or three separate science GCSEs. Talk to your science teachers, careers co-ordinator and/or Connexions personal 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?

Yes. Most schools offer a range of practical, work-related courses. Some offer the Diploma, which is a new qualification based around work. Remember though that you will still have to study compulsory subjects such as English, mathematics, science and ICT.

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. Make an appointment with your careers co-ordinator or Connexions personal 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 you are interested in.

The entry requirements for one of the post-16 courses that interests me are four GCSEs at grade C or above or equivalent. Does a Higher Diploma count as an equivalent?

Yes. A Higher Diploma is equivalent to 7 GCSEs at grades A* to C so it meets the entry requirements. If you are still a bit worried, speak to your careers co-ordinator or Connexions personal adviser. You could also contact the course provider and ask exactly what qualifications are acceptable.

Your action plan

Use this plan to help you finalise your key stage 4 option choices. You can copy the form or use the interactive version at www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow

Where I am now: (eg thinking about my options; speaking to family and teachers; almost ready to choose)

Who can help me and how: (eg parents/carers; teachers; careers co-ordinator; Connexions personal adviser; Connexions Direct adviser)

What I need to do and when: (eg read my school's options booklet; look at my local online 14-19 prospectus; talk to my parents/carers, teachers and Connexions personal adviser; go to options evening; complete and return my options form)

Actions	By what date	Completed (Y/N)?

CHECKLIST

I have now

- Looked at the options information
- Been to the options events
- Studied the options form
- Done my research
- Asked people for advice
- Made my choices
- Returned the options form

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

Further copies of this booklet are available from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) at:

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