



The Parents' Guide to

GETTING AHEAD

IN THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS - 2021

Contents

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go to the chapter*

The Parents' Guide to provides parents with the information they need to help their teenage teenren make the right choices to create successful futures after GCSE and sixth form.

Our online guides are designed to inform, involve and guide parental support. They include the most up to date information on topics such as apprenticeships, universities and revision techniques.

Wherever we refer to 'parents' we mean 'parents and carers.' This includes grandparents, older siblings or any other person with significant caring responsibilities for teenren.

This guide has been produced to support parents and schools during the summer holidays. We make recommendations of what we believe to be reliable sources to help you find further information but these organisations have not endorsed this guide. We're happy for you to use or share extracts of the guide, but don't forget to credit The Parents' Guide to

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Introduction

The summer holidays are almost here, and this provides a fantastic opportunity for your teen to think about their future and what they can do to start making their dreams a reality.

Depending on where they are in their academic journey, there's plenty they can do over the next few weeks to help them prepare for the next stage of their life – and they can have fun at the same time! Whether they're 15 and starting to think about what they might like to do after their GCSEs or whether they're 18 and making plans for adulthood, we've created this guide to help you inspire them with action they can take to put them on the path to success.

2021 has been another tricky year so far and your teen has experienced yet more disruption to their studies. It's hard not to worry that the lack of face-to-face schooling has set them back but remember there has been learning of a different kind from this unique experience and this will be something they can build on positively going forward. Try not to dwell on what hasn't happened and help them focus on making the best use of the present.

The brighter weather and longer summer days provides ample chance to make the most of the day and try new opportunities. This guide offers plenty of suggestions to help encourage your teen to combine enjoying their holiday with using the time selectively to work towards their goals.

For those that might be flying the nest in September, perhaps heading off to university or starting an apprenticeship away from home, we've got a checklist so you can make sure they're fully equipped with everything they'll need and make any last-minute buys over the summer.

Protecting mental wellbeing is always important, so we've included ideas on how to strengthen their resilience. There's a range of handy habits and techniques that they can master while they're not stressed, so they know exactly what to do if they do find things starting to get on top of them when the new academic year starts. There's also advice on where to get help if you're worried.

Wishing you and your family a very happy summertime. Here's to sunshine days, moonlit nights and a little less rain!

Using the summer to get ahead

Depending on their age, there's a variety of things your teen can do this summer to help them prepare for the next academic year. Here are some ideas:

Suitable for all ages:

- Expanding and developing their interests, which might be through reading, watching online talks, listening to podcasts, exploring new hobbies;
- Improving on existing sports, trying new ones or joining a local team;
- Learning more about lifeskills such as cooking, budgeting, home keeping etc;
- Taking a short course to improve their skill set – CV writing, touch typing, writing clear copy, creating presentations;
- Increasing their knowledge about what's happening in the news to find out what areas appeal to them – politics, environment, people, life stories, education, science etc;
- Reading independently around subjects they may wish to study in future;
- Exploring career options and planning out career paths for these jobs

Suitable for those in sixth form:

- Researching courses they'd like to take at university, school or college and where they might like to study;
- Finding out more about subjects they might be interested in taking in further education – especially if they have not studied them before, but even if they have, they can read additional material not covered in the school syllabus;
- If they plan to go to university, starting to prepare their personal statement and considering what they might need to do to make them stand out from others;
- Investigating what industry might be of interest for an apprenticeship or job application;
- Researching a gap year or looking for volunteer opportunities within the UK or overseas;
- Trying work experience through volunteering, interning or through connections of family and friends. Some organisations are offering virtual work experience whilst lockdown restrictions are in place



Boosting knowledge

1. Take an online course

If there's something that really interests them, why not take a course? Choosing to study outside of the school curriculum, and taking assessments/exams to prove knowledge, is very impressive. It shows initiative, commitment, and an ability to follow through – all desirable qualities whether the next stage is further education or finding a job.

This doesn't have to require massive commitment: some courses and modules are very short – others are longer. What's on offer is vast, and lots of courses are free because of restrictions imposed due to coronavirus. This sort of activity will stand your teen in good stead when asked by potential universities or employers how they used their extra time during lockdown.

Futurelearn

With over 2,400 courses and 10 million learners, there really is something for everyone! They can learn by watching videos, listening to audio and reading articles. Methods of assessment include quizzes, tests and assignments, although they will need to 'upgrade' and meet the course requirements for a certificate.

Harvard EdX

Established in 1636, Harvard is the oldest University in the United States. It offers a range of free online courses in a variety of subjects. Once finished, there is an option to receive a verified course certificate for a fee.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)

With over 2,900 courses on offer, MOOC offer an impressive range of free online courses available for anyone to enrol.

ONLINE COURSES GIVE STUDENTS FULL CONTROL OVER THEIR OWN LEARNING



Useful links

FutureLearn

Harvard EdX

MOOC

I'm interactive! Click me and I'll take you to their website

2. Stay up-to-date

It's a good idea for your teen to be able to demonstrate relevant general knowledge. They should keep an eye on the news to be aware of headline stories - this might include major sporting events. During interviews, this can very often be "elevator talk" - i.e. something that is mentioned when someone meets them at reception to take them to the interview room. It may not be part of the

interview, but it can have an influence. Not knowing anything about world events suggests a lack of interest, which may not be true but does not reflect well.

If they're not sure about news articles or are struggling to get a balanced view, they could try reading opinion articles to see what other people are saying so they can develop their own thoughts on the matter.

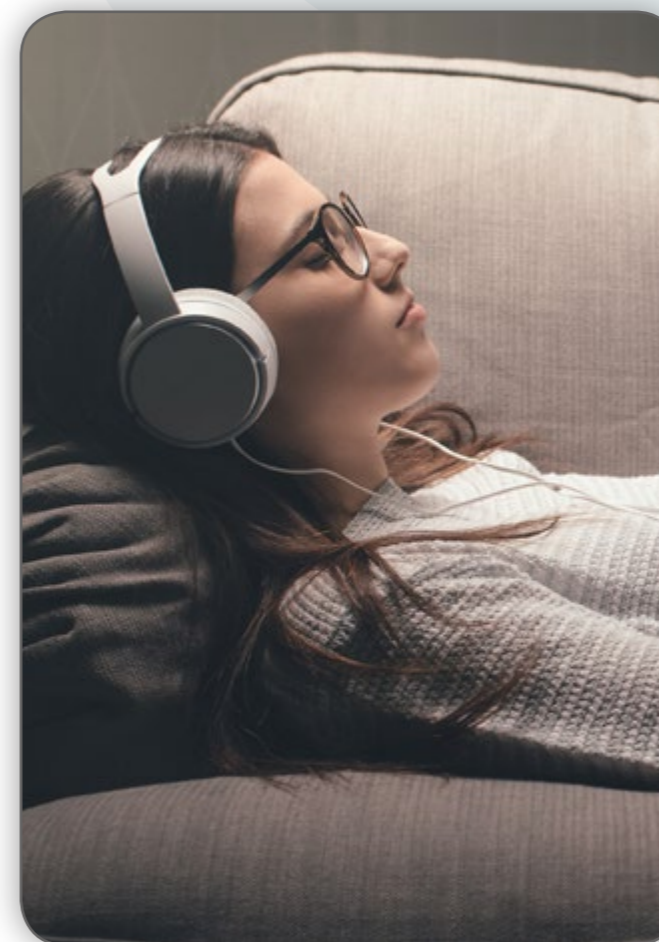
ENCOURAGE YOUR TEEN TO TAKE AN INTEREST IN CURRENT EVENTS AND NEWS



3. Listen to Ted talks

An absolute blessing if your teen has a short attention span. Most Ted Talks are around 15 minutes long, covering diverse subject ranges from science to business to global issues and feature some of the most eloquent, thought-leaders of our times. It's a great place for your teen to develop their interests without a huge time commitment.

Search by topic, speaker, most viewed or length (some are as short as 6 minutes!). There's also a wide variety of teen speakers, so great role models for your teen to identify with thought leaders of their own age.



4. Enjoy some podcasts

Not every teenager loves to read, so podcasts are a fabulous way to discover interesting themes and topics. The length of podcasts vary significantly, some are short (say 15-20 minutes) others are feature length episodes; some are so long they are split into series; others are broadcast regularly as complete episodes with an overarching theme linking them together.

Podcasts are a relatively new media and very popular with teenagers. They're also a great way to reduce screen time, because they're all about listening, not looking.

If your teen is hooked on their phone, it's a good way for them to wind down before sleep, by dimming the lights, switching off the screen and simply listening in bed.

Useful links

TED talks

Wired.co.uk
Best podcasts

I'm interactive! Click me and I'll take you to their website

5. Reading / audiobooks

Reading is a brilliant opportunity for your teen to find out more about their curriculum subjects, favourite areas of interest, idols, topics they enjoy that are not covered at school and pretty much anything else on the planet – including fiction. If your teen isn't a great reader (either of hardcopy books or online) no matter – they can listen to audio books instead.

Whether they choose to read around their set texts, in a subject they are not studying but interest them, fictional books, biographies or personal development books, they must be able to explain what they've discovered and say how it has had an impact on them. There is little point in mentioning they have read something in an application or interview if they have nothing to say about it. Your teen is looking to demonstrate that they can read, digest and summarize information, establish an opinion and express themselves.

Useful links

[Audible](#)

[Virtual work experience opportunities](#)

These are all transferable skills that are vital in the workplace and very useful in further study. It doesn't matter whether your teen concludes that they liked the book or not – it's how they say it that matters.

'Wider reading'

Many universities like to see evidence of 'wider reading' in Personal Statements as it demonstrates passion and interest for a subject. If your teen is applying to university next year, encourage them to explore books, articles and online courses on topics that relate to their chosen degree subject.



6. Explore virtual work opportunities

While the global challenges of COVID 19 on schools and businesses have meant a temporary stop to most work experience and internship opportunities for young people, many companies are offering virtual placements as an alternative option.

A virtual work placement can help your teen gain valuable work experience, develop key skills and help create networks in the industries they are interested in.

Virtual work placements and internships are a relatively new offering and places are likely to be limited and only in certain industries.

A VIRTUAL WORK PLACEMENT CAN HELP YOUR TEEN GAIN VALUABLE WORK EXPERIENCE



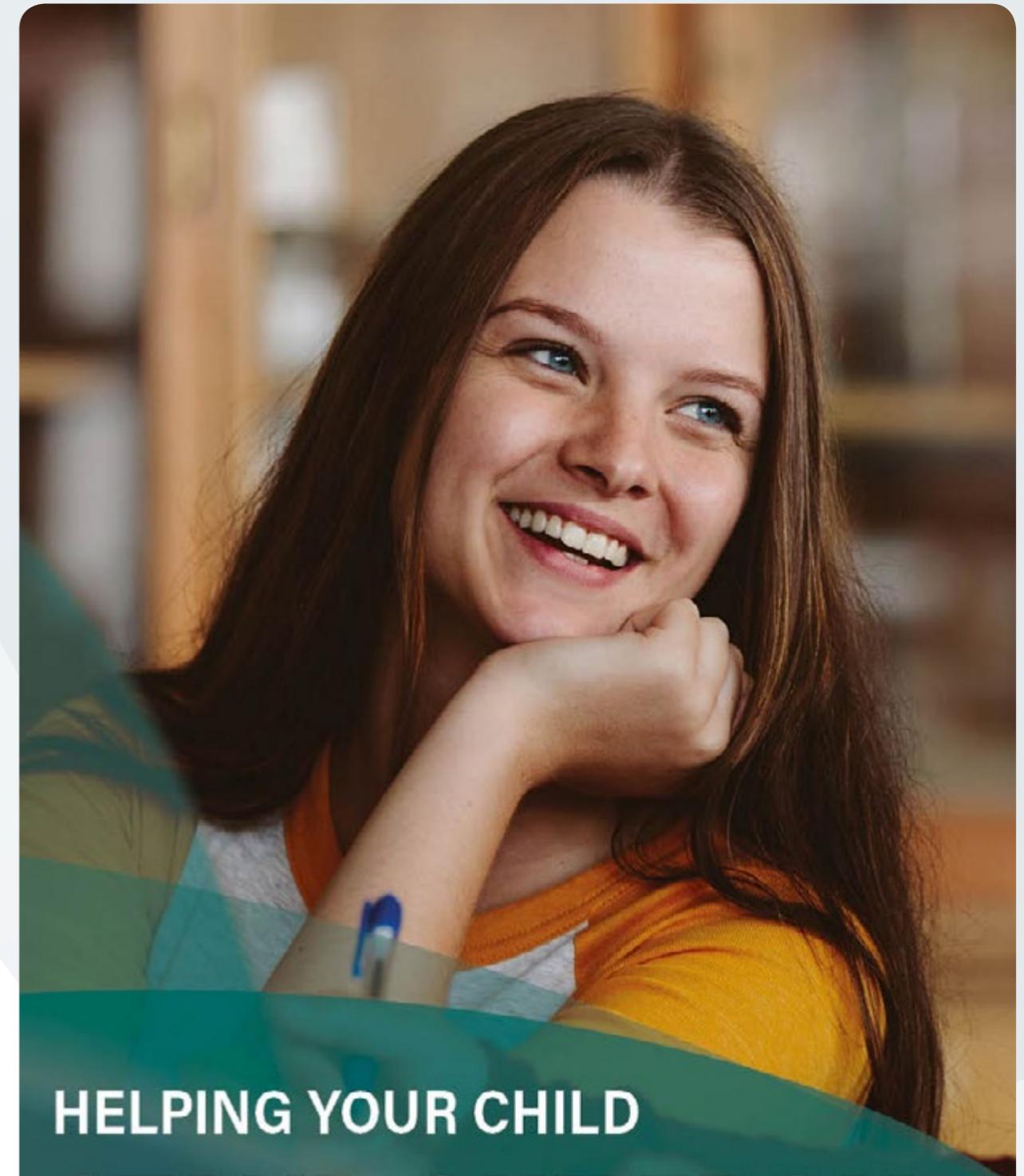
The Parents' Guide to Standing out

Applying for jobs and/or university is incredibly competitive, often with hundreds of applicants for just a few places. So how can your child stand out from others? By demonstrating interests outside their academic studies.

In The Parents' Guide to Standing out from the crowd, we explore different things your child can do to expand their interests and find out more about subjects they might like to study in future. This includes taking up healthy habits, improving their skillset and harnessing their personal strengths.

Put them onto the path to success:

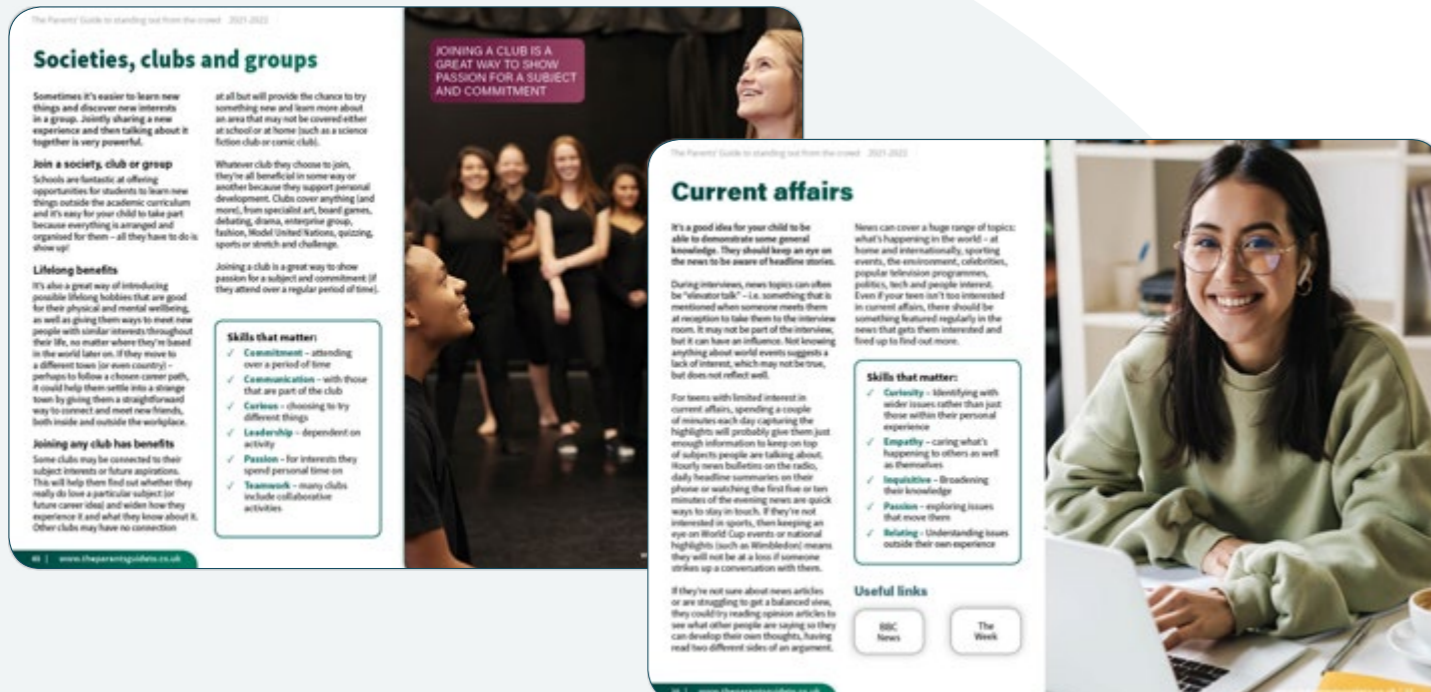
- ✓ Self-development and increasing confidence through reading, audiobooks and podcasts;
- ✓ Getting work experience (including virtual placements);
- ✓ Benefits of research and how to take a different approach;
- ✓ How different hobbies impact mental and physical health – and what transferrable skills they develop with dedicated sections on music and sports;
- ✓ Recommendations for non-curricular online courses; and
- ✓ Benefits of competitions and awards.



HELPING YOUR CHILD
**STAND OUT FROM
 THE CROWD** 2021-2022

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Researching apprenticeships

Apprenticeships vary in the qualifications that can be achieved, length of commitment and balance between work and study. They may involve moving away from home. With so many variables, it might help to think about the different elements separately to work out which type of apprenticeship suits your child best.

What level of apprenticeship is appropriate?

First, your child needs to decide which level of apprenticeship they wish to take.

This will be determined by two things:

- Having the necessary qualifications to be accepted;
- How long they intend to commit to their apprenticeship.

What sectors are they interested in?

Next, they should decide on their area of interest and see what apprenticeships are available within that sector. If they don't know where their areas of interest lie, it's time to do some research! Of course, careers advisers can help at school, but they might want to jump online themselves. If they get bored reading about a certain sector, chances are that's an indication the sector isn't for them. Getting some work experience is also a good way of deciding whether reality matches up to the theory of a dream job.

Will the apprenticeship help them get the career they want?

There's no need to be too specific about the job or role they ultimately want, but it's important that they can see a correlation between their apprenticeship, the areas of study, the experience it will give them, and where they want to be in the future (say five years' time).

RESEARCH STARTS BY DECIDING WHAT LEVEL APPRENTICESHIP YOUR TEEN WOULD LIKE TO TAKE

Useful links

[Amazing Apprenticeship](#)

[GOV UK](#)

[The Parents' Guide to](#)

I'm interactive! Click me and I'll take you to their website



Apprenticeship levels



LEVEL 2 *Intermediate apprenticeships*

Typical length
12-18 months

Entry requirements:
None or few

Qualifications obtained:
GCSE, BTEC or equivalent

Who's it for?
Mostly for 16-year-olds with limited or no academic qualifications.



LEVEL 4/5 *Higher apprenticeships*

Typical length
3-5 years

Entry requirements:
A levels or equivalent

Qualifications obtained:
Higher national diploma / foundation degree

Who's it for?
Mostly for those who want to qualify for professional career paths without attending university / college. Sometimes referred to as 'school leaver' or 'non-graduate' Programmes.



LEVEL 3 *Advanced apprenticeships*

Typical length
12-24 months

Entry requirements:
Usually 5 GCSEs

Qualifications obtained:
A levels or equivalent

Who's it for?
Mostly for 16-year-olds with reasonable academic achievements but who don't want to study in sixth form.



LEVEL 6/7 *Degree apprenticeship*

Typical length
3-7 years

Entry requirements:
At least 2 A levels or equivalent

Qualifications obtained:
A BA or BSc degree or higher

Who's it for?
Mostly for those with excellent sixth form results that want to study for a degree or similar whilst working. Aimed at attracting high-calibre candidates to bridge professional skills gaps.

Where to find the right apprenticeship

There's a wide range of ways to seek out apprenticeships and we recommend using a selection of options rather than relying on one.

Government website

Most apprenticeships are posted on the Government's website. By creating an account, your child can set up alerts and filters to see opportunities that are of most interest to them and to be emailed when new opportunities arise. However, not all apprenticeships will appear.

Industry sector

It's smart to check apprenticeships directly on company, university or college websites. If your child doesn't know which of these sites to select, then they should first do some research on which industry sector may be of interest, and then find companies within this sector.

Companies direct

Another alternative is for them to identify companies that are of interest and check those websites for apprenticeships. Not all companies offer apprenticeships,

but many do. Be warned - apprenticeships offered by well known companies such as BBC, Nestle, Virgin or British Gas are likely to be incredibly competitive.

Job boards

National job agencies will also advertise apprenticeships and options can be narrowed to review within local distances from home or specific job types. This might be a particularly good way to seek out apprenticeships in level 3-5 range.

School careers advisor

If your child is still at school or college, then getting them to speak with their careers adviser is a good move. Careers advisers are often the first to hear from companies advertising new apprenticeships

Reviews

To find out what other students have thought about an apprenticeship and how they rate them, there are reviews on *Rate my Apprenticeship*.

Useful links

GOV. UK
Search

Apprenticeship
Search

Not going to
Uni

The Parents'
Guide to



Top 10 apprenticeship employers: 2021

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 


9. 

10. 
AstraZeneca

APPRENTICESHIPS WITH THE TOP 20 EMPLOYERS WILL BE VERY COMPETITIVE



Based on 4,000 reviews - statistics compiled by www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk
For a list of the top 100 apprenticeship employers click [here](#).

The Parents' Guide to Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships can be a great route to career success, especially for teenagers who find it easier to learn through practical application rather than academic study. Apprenticeships are often termed “earn while you learn” because they combine study with paid employment resulting in a professional qualification.

Don't rule out the fact that an apprenticeship could be the right choice for your child. Find out everything you need to know in The Parents' Guide to Apprenticeships:

- ✓ The pros and cons – why apprenticeships are ideal for some teens but not others

- ✓ Types of apprenticeship – the qualifications needed to apply, what qualifications can be achieved and how long each apprenticeship lasts
- ✓ Degree apprenticeships – how they differ from full-time university degrees
- ✓ How to research an apprenticeship
- ✓ Top ten apprenticeship providers
- ✓ The application process and how it differs from applying to university
- ✓ How to help your child prepare for interview
- ✓ What you can do to get them ready Preparing for life at work



The Parents' Guide to
APPRENTICESHIPS
2021-2022

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The Parents' Guide to Apprenticeships 2021-2022

Understanding apprenticeships

Apprenticeships were developed to help address the skills shortage in UK businesses. They provide a way of combining learning with on the job training, which helps build solid, professional skills transferable from one organisation to another. Apprenticeships can last from one to five years – and may be longer if undertaken part-time. They result in a professional qualification. Employers pay a salary and tuition fees are covered by the employer and the government.

Apprenticeship levels

Apprenticeships range between Level 2 and Level 7. There is no “Level 1” – that’s because enrolling in an apprenticeship requires demonstrating a certain aptitude. Apprenticeship levels 4-6 are aimed at sixth form leavers with levels 6-7 offering degree or equivalent level qualifications. A full list of the levels and what they mean can be found on pages 12 and 13 of this guide.

Flexibility

Apprenticeships are designed to be flexible. An employer may offer a level 6 or 7 apprenticeship without it resulting in a degree – although the qualification earned would be considered equivalent to a degree. It’s important your child checks the qualifications on offer before applying for an apprenticeship.

Study at university

There is usually an element of academic learning during an apprenticeship, but degree apprenticeships are a type of apprenticeship that involves a significant amount of university study.

Who can become an apprentice?

Apprenticeships are aimed at candidates between 16 and 20 years old. However, they are now open to anyone age 16 or over looking to improve their expertise. This means there’s plenty of competition from more experienced applicants, but organisations are often keen to take on school leavers in order to train them both in the job and the organisation’s values. Very often the relationship between employer and apprentice continues long after the apprenticeship is over, creating long-term work opportunities.

Useful links

GOV.UK Overview UCAS

APPRENTICESHIPS COMBINE LEARNING WITH ON THE JOB TRAINING

Apprenticeship areas and careers

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	Suggested careers: animal trainer, arborist, environment consultant, golf course manager, horticultural technician
Arts, media and publishing	Suggested careers: broadcast engineer, culture and heritage senior operations, games testing, illustrator, visual effects technical director, journalist
Business, administration and law	Suggested careers: accountant, banking relationship manager, chartered manager, company secretary, economist, finance manager, HR consultant, operations manager, project manager, solicitor
Construction, planning and the built environment	Suggested careers: architect, civil engineer, conservation officer, estates manager, town planner, surveyor, sustainability consultant
Education and training	Suggested careers: internal systems trainer, learning and development consultant, lecturer, playgroup leader, teacher, training and quality management expert
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Suggested careers: energy & resource management, engineering supervisor, mechanic, new product development manager, operations manager, photo imaging, structural engineer
Health, public services and care	Suggested careers: army services, beauty therapist, dental nurse, healthcare consultant, medical researcher, medical writer, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, veterinary receptionist
Information and communication technology	Suggested careers: accountant, digital and technology solutions specialist, flight simulator instructor, ICT network manager, IT manager, PR consultant, school technician, software programmer, technical architect
Leisure, tourism, retail and commercial	Suggested careers: cabin crew, casino director, hairdresser, hotel manager, restaurateur, retail buyer, retail leadership, travel agent
Science and mathematics	Suggested careers: aerospace engineer, laboratory assistant, medical adviser, pharmacist, research scientist, surveyor, teacher

Researching university courses

With over 30,000 courses available the right course is out there – it just might be tricky to find it! There is plenty of information about university courses available so it's worth researching diligently before making choices, rather than students relying on “my teacher recommends it”, “my parents took it”, or “I like the university”.

When to step back

This research is something that your teen should undertake – not you on their behalf. Avoid the temptation to use this as an opportunity to investigate options you would have liked to take given the chance. It may be tough with the benefit of hindsight and experience, but try not to forget it's your teen's life and their choices, not yours.

Finding focus

Thinking of favourite subject choices is a good way to narrow focus, but don't forget many of the subjects offered at degree level aren't covered in sixth form options, so don't let your teen restrict themselves to only considering topics they've already studied. Of course, if they are already set on a certain career

path, their choice of degree may be obvious, which can be helpful. If not, some thought and reflection on things they enjoy that might apply to the workplace can give direction so some research on jobs might help streamline options by providing guidance on routes into industry.

Too much choice?

If they are struggling with a starting point, investigating what's of interest to them is a good place to start. You think they spend too much time playing video games? How about a BA in Computer Games Design – it can be a lucrative business post-graduation. Not academic but loves sports? BA in Sports Management. A passion for understanding how things work? How about MEng(Hons) in Product Design Engineering? Always reading crime thrillers? Perhaps they'd enjoy a BA in Criminology.

Predicted grades

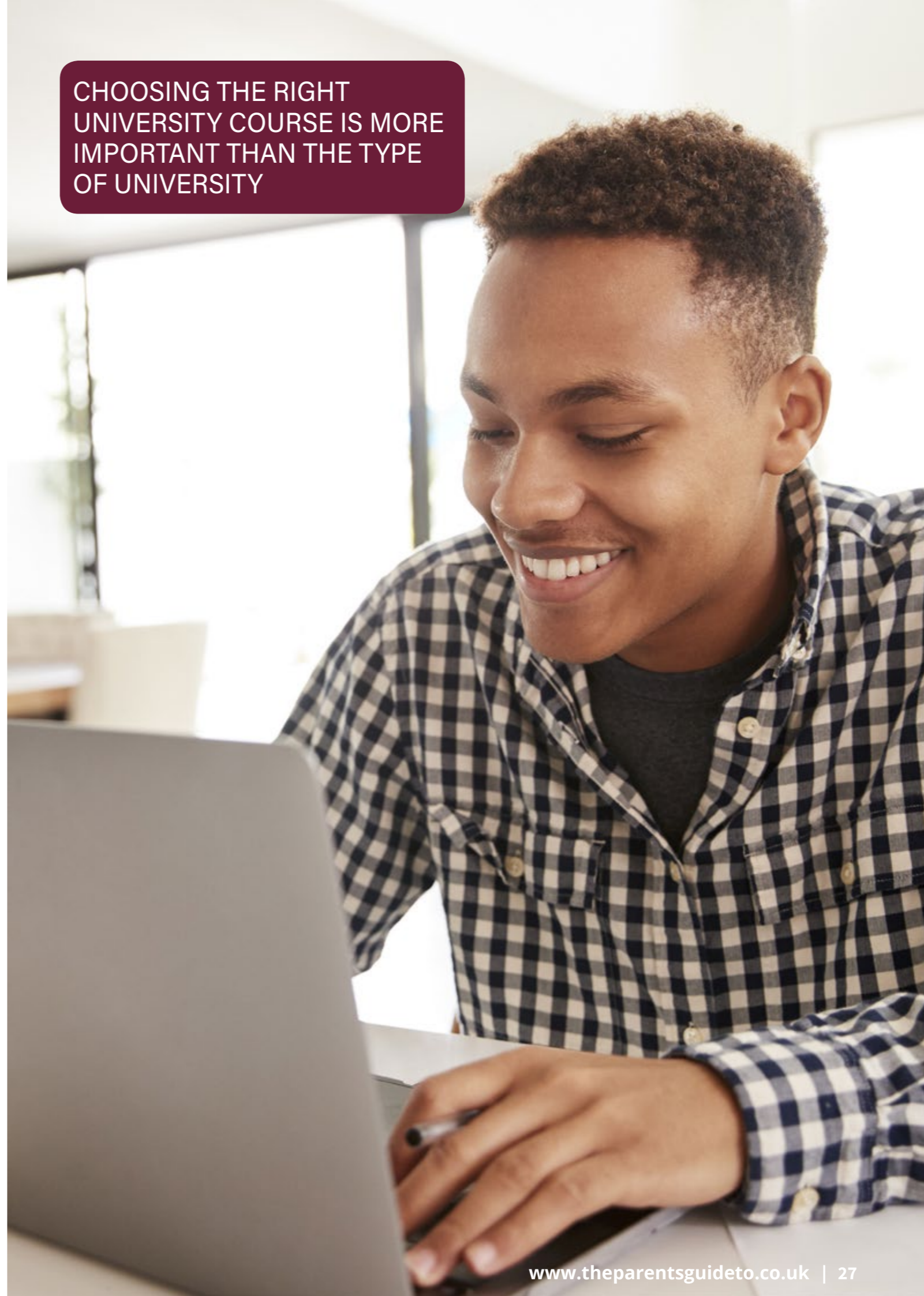
Your teen should research courses with entry requirements that are closely aligned to their predicted grades, allowing for some aspirational and safe choices either side.

Useful link

The Uni Guide
course search

*I'm interactive! Click me
and I'll take you to their
website*

CHOOSING THE RIGHT
UNIVERSITY COURSE IS MORE
IMPORTANT THAN THE TYPE
OF UNIVERSITY

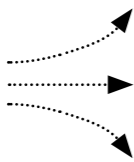


Narrowing choices

There is plenty of information about university courses available, and whilst it's up to your teen to do the research, as parents you can help guide them by checking that the courses they shortlist fit their personality. For example, a teen that likes to be active and enjoys practical studies and getting involved is

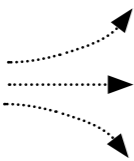
likely to do better on a course that has plenty of experiential learning rather than one that is largely based around lectures and seminars. Here are some suggestions for things to consider when deciding whether a course meets your teen's needs:

Is your child academic or practical?



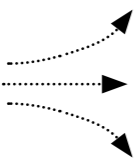
- Do they enjoy being in the classroom?
- Do they enjoy learning in a studio or outside?
- Do they enjoy writing essays and researching topics or prefer to make and produce things?

Which school subjects do they enjoy?



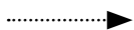
- Is there a particular part of a school subject they have enjoyed?
- Do they have a natural flair for a subject?
- If they enjoy more than one subject, are there any common themes?

What are your child's hobbies?



- Is your child particularly passionate about any music, sport or art related activities?
- Think about your child's personality traits
- Try to think outside the box - do they have a particular interest in current affairs? Gaming? Helping others?

Has your child expressed interest in a particular career?



- Try to think of subjects that will help them pursue this career without narrowing their options too much if they change their mind later



Understanding university websites

University websites may look different when comparing side by side, but the information they relay is similar and will definitely cover course content, information about the teaching style and entry requirements.

It's important to be aware that degree courses vary significantly between universities:- even when the degree title is the same! So make sure your teen pays close attention to understanding the differences in course modules, assessment methods, teaching styles and entry requirements between universities.

These differences could be deciding factors in which course (and university) is your teen's preferred option. For example, if there are two universities of similar rankings and style that they like almost equally, where one offers a course with a teaching style better suited to their personal learning preferences, or course content more closely matching their areas of interest - perhaps they are really keen to have overseas experience - this would be a significant contributor to their final decision.

Course content

Degree courses vary between universities and each degree may provide a very different experience for your teen. Thoroughly research the modules that each degree provides by comparing core modules (mandatory modules of study) and optional modules between each university degree.

Furthermore, some universities may provide additional options, such as the possibility of studying abroad (usually in a partner university) or a year long work placement. These may be important considerations in giving your teen a particular advantage when entering their chosen career.

Things to consider:

- What are the core modules that must be studied in years 1, 2 and 3?
- Which optional modules are on offer?
- Is there an option to study abroad?
- Is there an option to spend one year in industry?
- Is there an option to combine this subject with another subject?

Teaching and learning

Not all students learn in the same way so it is important to research how each degree is delivered and assessed. If your teen is particularly anxious when it comes to examinations, then choosing a degree which is mainly assessed through coursework or presentations may increase your teen's chances of success.

Moreover, think carefully about your teen's learning needs. Will they thrive in small classroom based environments (seminars), lectures or more practical learning environments?

Things to consider:

- Does teaching mainly consist of large lectures or seminars?
- Is the course largely exam based or coursework based?
- What are the facilities like?
- Is a dissertation in year 3 required?
- For practical subjects such as Media Studies, how much of the course is theoretical and how much is practical?

Entry requirements

Each university sets its own entry requirements so make sure your teen is accessing courses based on their ability and potential. Entry requirements provide a good indication of the difficulty of each degree course and so it is important to be realistic in what your teen can access when moving into higher education.

Remember, your teen can only apply to a maximum of five universities through UCAS, so carefully note all the entry requirements for each university before applying to check whether your teen is likely to meet these.

Things to consider:

- What are the minimum entry requirements?
- Does the course require a grade in a particular subject?
- Will the course accept BTECs or alternative qualifications to A Level?
- Do they require a minimum Level of Maths or English?
- Does the course require a portfolio or an interview prior to making an offer?

Personal statements

As part of the university application, your child will need to submit a personal statement. Effectively, this is a short advert that lets your child showcase why they would make a great student and must not exceed 4,000 characters (about 500 words).

Your child can only submit one personal statement, even though they can apply to up to five different universities. This means they need to be careful that they are making themselves attractive to all the universities and not just their favourite.

Why it's important

Alongside your child's predicted sixth form qualification grades and their teachers' references, the UCAS personal statement will help university admission tutors decide on whether to offer your child a place to study with them. This is particularly important when interviews are not held as the personal statement may be the only opportunity your child has to showcase their talents, accomplishments and interest in applying for the course.

Useful links

How to help your child stand out

What should be included in a personal statement?

The personal statement is an opportunity for your child to provide the admission tutor with an insight into what they are like as an individual and why they are the right fit at their university. Admissions tutors want to make sure that both the course and university is the right choice for your child to excel.

Broadly speaking, a personal statement should demonstrate:

1. Your child's passion for wanting to study their chosen subject or field;
2. What they've done to engage with this subject inside and outside of the curriculum;
3. Their interests and hobbies and how these relate to their chosen course;
4. What relevant experience they have;
5. What makes them unique – some hobbies may have nothing to do with the course, but tell a lot about their personality.

If your child is struggling to think of reasons for wanting to study this course, it might be a good idea to talk with them about whether this is the right course for them. At this stage, it's OK to go back to the drawing board and start researching alternative course options as it's important to get this right.

Why it's good to start early

Content for a personal statement isn't something that can be created overnight. It takes time to assimilate ideas and finesse them, so it's good to encourage your child to start thinking about this well ahead of submission time. This doesn't necessarily mean a heavy-handed desk bound session, but prompting them with questions on a regular basis to help them clarify why they like something or what makes an experience pleasant / unattractive for them will help them consolidate their

thoughts and prompt an understanding of ways to describe clearly what they like and dislike and why.

Prepare your child for a pretty long cycle of reading, editing and rereading their personal statement until it is ready to be submitted. If your child is in Year 12, it's a good idea to return to school in September with a first draft of their personal statement completed. If they don't yet know which course to study once they leave school, they can focus the draft on their skills, achievements and hobbies.

YOUR CHILD'S PERSONAL STATEMENT SHOULD BE STARTED EARLY



Getting started

Most students find that starting their personal statement is the hardest part. If your child is struggling to get motivated, encourage them to make a list of all the things they might want to include without worrying whether or not these will be included in the final version. Don't let them get caught up in trying to think of a catchy opening line - this can be left until much later in the process.

A good way to approach the personal statement is to break it into more manageable chunks. This will make it less daunting and might even help them to structure it. Try using mind-maps, notes, spider diagrams, bullet points (or whatever works best for your child) to help them put pen to paper and get the ideas flowing - no one is expecting a perfect first draft.

Ideas to inspire them:

Get your child to look at the university's website to find out more about the course they are applying for. Help them identify the qualities and experience they will need to do well on the course as this can often help them decide what to write about.

Ask your child why they are applying for that course. Get them to expand on their reasons by asking them what excites them about the course, which modules they are particularly keen to learn more about and where they want the course to take them in their professional journey.

Mind-map their interests, hobbies, talents, skills, achievements and any involvement in clubs or societies. This exercise will help your child see what they've done so far and helps them identify examples to include in their personal statement.

Demonstrating passion

With relatively few words allowed, it is essential that the university understands why this is the right course for your child. Wider reading and relevant work experience associated with their degree choice (even if it is for a day) will help illustrate their interest.

Addressing different course choices

If they have chosen several different types of courses, they will need to focus on themes (i.e. creativity, communications, organisation, mechanics, research etc) rather than specifics (i.e. anything unique to one of the course titles). If possible, they should seek out the themes common to all the courses. Notwithstanding this, they should try hard to articulate their suitability and passion for their chosen courses, even if this means articulating in general terms rather than specifics.

It is worth noting that more academic universities will seek greater evidence of your child's passion for the subject versus their skillset, less academic universities will place more weight on skills.



Setting the right tone

Let's start with three tips for creating a favourable first impression:

1. Write in clear English. There is no need to try and impress with elaborate and flamboyant language – this is likely to have the opposite effect. They should use a simple style to express what they mean.
2. Use a sensible email address (if they are not using their school email)
3. Focus on positives (what they do like and how they would like to contribute/develop, not what they don't like and want to avoid).

Don't be modest

Sequence, paragraph order and a broad remit covering a variety of aspects of their personality are important. This is no time to be shy or secretive. Your child should share drafts to get feedback and input from a range of people that have unique insight into their different strengths so they can confidently express what they're good at.

Tired Phrases

Like CVs, there are certain descriptors that can be over-used (creative, great communicator, diligent, willing to learn, team player, problem solver to name but a few). It's fine to use these expressions, but the focus should be on why this applies (and examples to prove or demonstrate why) rather than listing them without qualification.

Getting personal experience

A key way to stand out from others is to gain some experience, either by volunteering, working or enjoying hobbies. Universities will take into account limitations caused by Covid restrictions; however, they will still expect applicants to have shown resourcefulness in developing and pursuing their interests. This will resonate all the more if your child can reflect on what they've learned and how it's impacted them. This has special merit if it's in a related area to subjects they're applying for, such as someone applying for a medical degree might demonstrate a caring personality by volunteering at a local hospital, charity or hospice.

If a gap year is planned, it's worth including an outline of how it is hoped this will expand their experience and knowledge in the personal statement.

Practical advice

The personal statement can be cut and paste from another source. To get a good statement, it will probably need to go through many iterations, so best not to type it directly onto the application form!

How to support your child with their personal statement

DOs

- ✓ Start early - the personal statement will need a number of redrafts;
- ✓ Create a plan - encourage your child to make a list of all their achievements - academic, work-related, sport, music and art successes;
- ✓ Check the university websites to see what qualities and skills they want to see: an aptitude for maths? Creativity?
- ✓ Leave time for feedback - teachers, tutors, family members;
- ✓ Check for spelling and grammatical mistakes;
- ✓ Relate experience, study and hobbies to the course or to what university life entails;
- ✓ Write with passion and enthusiasm - can your child demonstrate wider reading? Additional courses completed? Work experience in a relevant field?

DON'Ts

- ✗ Plagiarise or copy any other source - UCAS will check for this and it may have an impact on your child's overall application;
- ✗ Exceed the 4000 character limit / 47 lines of text
- ✗ Mention a university or course by name (if your child is applying to different universities or for courses with different titles);
- ✗ Demonstrate uncertainty or excuse potential bad results;
- ✗ Try to be overly funny or waffle.

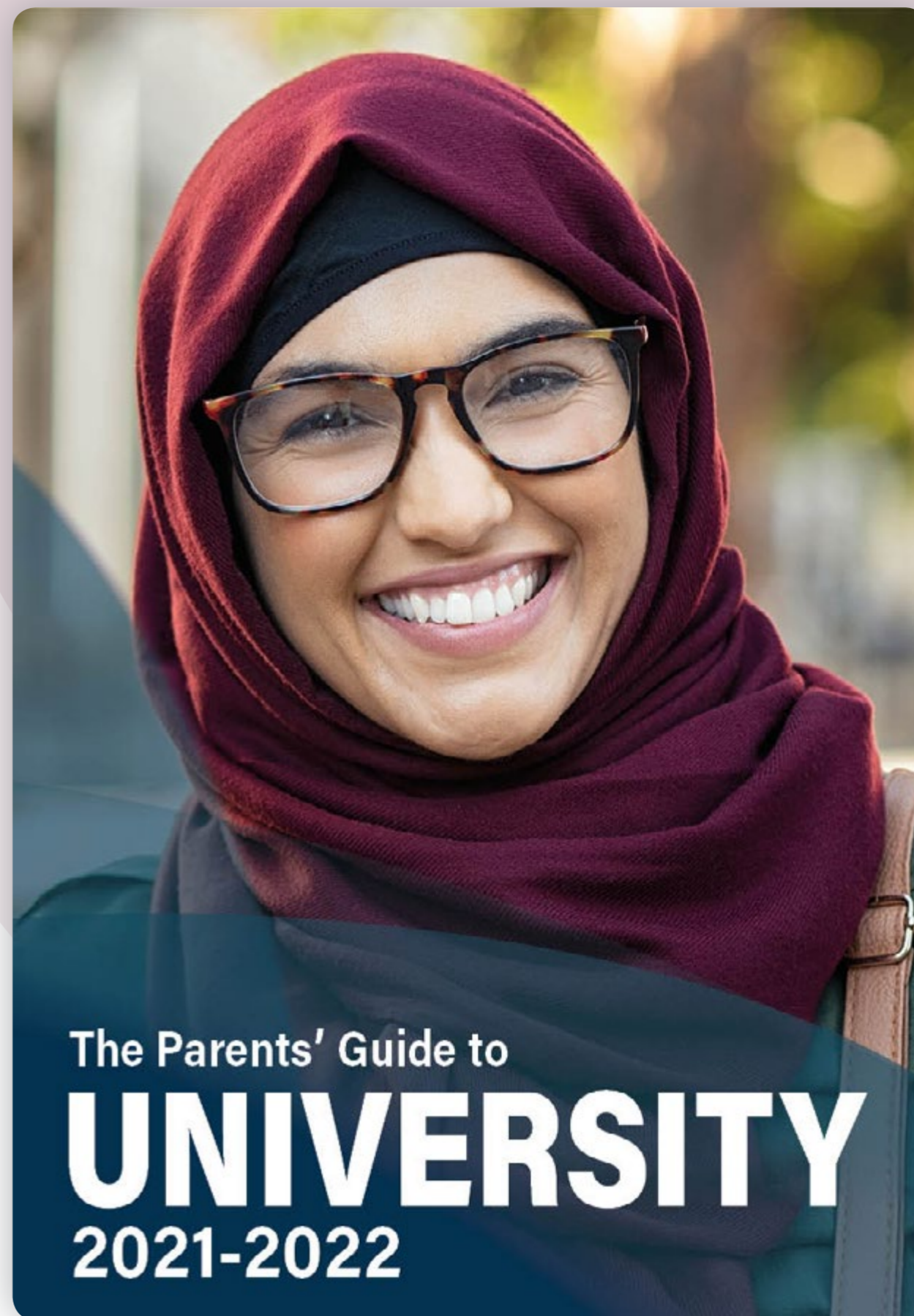
The Parents' Guide to University

Is your child interested in applying to university? Find out what's involved, what they should consider in selecting a course and choosing where to study, and why the most well-known universities aren't best for all students.

This guide includes advice and practical information on how you can help them make informed choices to put them on the path for greater success and happiness to fulfil their ambitions. It covers:

- ✓ Types of universities – what's the difference and which is best?
- ✓ Types of courses – and how the teaching style impacts different types of learners

- ✓ Open days – why it's important to visit, even if it's just virtually
- ✓ League tables – do they matter and what should you look out for?
- ✓ Tuition and maintenance loans – how it impacts them and you
- ✓ UCAS and the application process – including 2021/2022 deadlines and how to help them prepare their personal statements
- ✓ Results day – how you can help if they don't get the results they need
- ✓ Other options if they don't get a university place
- ✓ Preparing for university life and how you help them once they leave home



Click me to buy now!

Buy now

Leaving home

If your teen's leaving home in the autumn, you'll want to make sure they have everything they need, from comfy bedding so they can get a good night's sleep to pots and pans so they can cook up a storm.

What to pack

Help your child to organise what they'll need to take with them. This means everything from course materials (if they are going away to study), laptops, phones, bedding, cooking equipment and clothes plus all the appropriate paperwork such as bank accounts, TV licences, insurance, new travel passes and parking permits. It will make their life easier if they know how to plan ahead and it will make you feel more comfortable knowing they are well-prepared.

Bedding

Knowing exactly what to pack will largely depend on the type of accommodation your child has applied for. Although most halls of residence provide students with single standard size beds, some private accommodation or alternative arrangements may differ - so it is always worth checking before purchasing any bedding.

Useful links

Best-buys

Toiletries

Have they always relied on you to replenish the shower gel, shampoo, moisturizer and shaving foam? It might take some time for them to get used to thinking for themselves!

Bright colours

Try to keep to the basics when it comes to kitchen utensils and try to purchase items, which are easily identifiable - bright colours or patterns will help your child keep track of their items.

Last minute arrangements

If you are helping your child move into their new university accommodation, then it may be a good idea to factor in some time for a trip to the local shopping centre for any last minute purchases.

Important documents

- Passport
- Driving licence
- All university and accommodation
- correspondence
- Insurance documents
- Bank details
- Parking permits



Leaving home shopping list - [click here for our best buys](#)

I'm interactive!
Click each item for
inspiration!

BEDROOM

Essentials:

- Alarm clock
- Bin (small)
- Books
- Coat hangers
- Mirror

Extras:

- Beanbag
- Cushions
- Door wedge
- Extra storage
- Family photos
- Over door hangers
- Plant
- Rug
- Wall art / posters

BATHROOM

Essentials:

- Bath towels
- Deodorant
- Hairbrush
- Hand towels
- Nail clippers
- Razor
- Sanitary towels
- Shampoo
- Shower gel
- Toilet roll
- Toothbrush / paste
- Wash bag

Extras:

- Bath mat
- Flip flops
- Hair dryer
- Make-up
- Moisturiser

KITCHEN

Complete sets

Essentials:

- Baking tray
- Bowls
- Cheese grater
- Chopping board
- Cling film
- Corkscrew
- Cutlery
- Glasses
- Knives
- Mugs
- Plates
- Pots and pans
- Scissors
- Tin foil
- Tin opener
- Tea towels
- Wooden spoons

Extras:

- Casserole dish
- Colander
- Masher
- Measuring jug
- Plastic bag sealers
- Recipe books
- Scales
- Shot glasses
- Slow cooker
- Spice jars
- Tupperware
- Vegetable peeler
- Whisk
- Wok

CLOTHING

Essentials:

- Casual clothes
- Evening clothes
- Fleece
- Gym clothes
- Smart clothes
- Pyjamas
- Smart shoes
- Sports equipment
- Socks
- Rain jacket
- Swimwear
- Thermals
- Trainers
- Underwear
- Winter clothes

STUDY

Essentials:

- A4 folders
- File Dividers
- Highlighters
- Notepad / paper
- Pens and pencils
- Plastic wallets
- Post-it notes
- Stapler
- White-tac

Extras:

- Calculator
- Desk lamp
- Diary / planner

ELECTRICS

Essentials:

- Batteries
- Chargers
- Extension lead
- Laptop
- Laptop case
- Multi plug adaptor

Extras:

- Mouse
- Keyboard
- Printer
- Printing ink
- Speakers
- Television

SLEEP

Essentials:

- Bed sheets
- Duvet
- Duvet set
- Mattress protector
- Pillows
- Pillow cases

Extras:

- Diffuser / oils
- Mattress topper
- Night lamp
- Warm blanket

FIRST AID

Complete sets

Essentials:

- Antibacterial wipes
- Antiseptic cream
- Hot-water bottle
- Hydration salts
- Painkillers
- Plasters
- Sewing kit
- Torch
- Tweezers

HOUSE KEEPING

Essentials:

- Coat hangers
- Door wedge
- Iron
- Laundry bag
- Washing powder
- Wet wipes

Extras:

- Drying rack
- Mini vacuum
- Laundry basket

DOCUMENTS

Essentials:

- Bank accounts
- CV and references
- Discount cards
- Exam certificates
- NHS number
- NI number
- Passport
- Passport photos
- Uni paperwork

Extras:

- TV licence

FUN & GAMES

Extras:

- Bicycle
- Board games
- Computer games
- Dress-up costumes
- Fairy lights
- Games console
- Gym equipment
- Photo albums
- Playing cards
- Polaroid camera
- Projector
- Recipe books
- Sports equipment

Protecting mental wellbeing

It's important to remember that the aim is not for you to eliminate stress from your teen's life, that's impossible! It is to help them manage stress and become more resilient.

This means they will be more able to control how they experience stress, reduce any symptoms they get, minimise bouts of prolonged stress and be able to bounce back more quickly from life's challenges.

Is stress always a problem?

In small doses, stress can be a good thing: sharpening focus, motivation and even improving memory recall. The problems set in when we experience high levels of stress over extended periods of time. That can be damaging, both to mental and physical health because it's like running on high alert all the time.

Left unchecked, stress can have very serious outcomes and is a contributory factor towards high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, diabetes and substance abuse, not to mention the negative impact on mental wellbeing. If you're worried your teen is suffering from too much stress, don't hesitate to get professional help. This could be through teachers, counsellors, peer support networks, charities or your GP (we give more info on where you can go for help later).

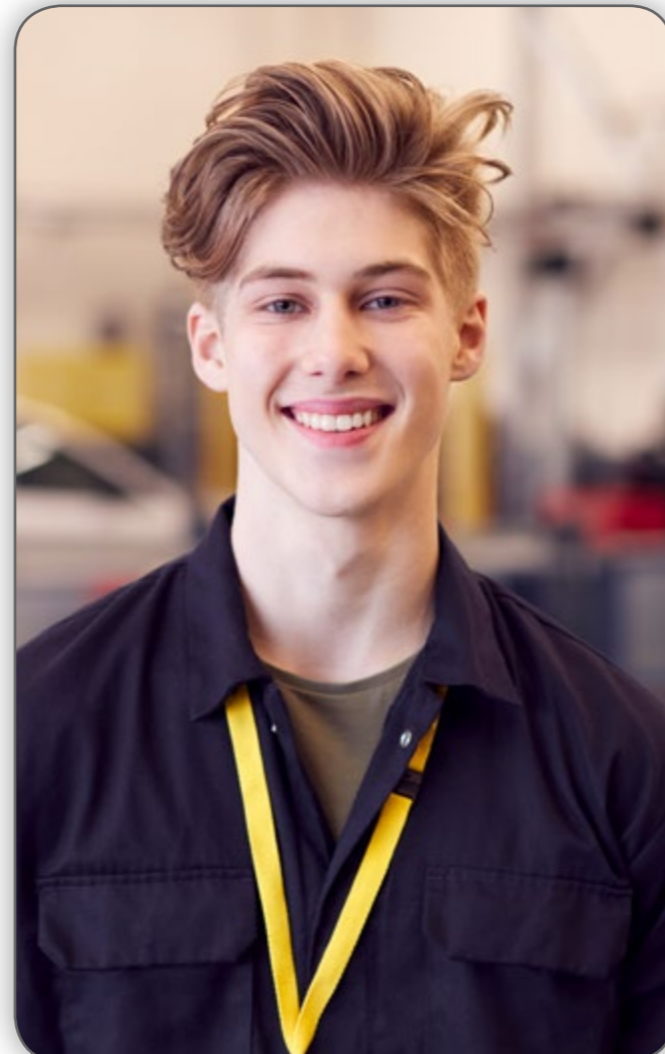
What can we do to help?

There are lots of ways that you can help your child cope with stress by teaching them healthy habits that are proven to be effective in building mental resilience. These cover two bases:

1. reducing physical symptoms of stress; and
2. managing how they think to avoid getting stressed in the first place.

It is interesting that a stress response can occur by thinking about something stressful as well as physically experiencing it. Replaying stressful thoughts, like a video on loop in the mind, only increases stress levels. That is why it is a lifelong gift to learn how to control our thoughts and adjust instinctive thinking patterns from a series of negative connectors to positive ones. It just takes a little practise.

Let's start by looking at how you can tell if your teen's overly stressed.



Useful links

Mind
What is stress?

NHS

Spotting the signs of anxiety and stress

Teens aren't always the best communicators and they might not tell you if something's worrying them so it's good to be aware of the signs of anxiety and stress so you can watch out for them. A change in behaviour for a day or two might be nothing to worry about, but if you notice a regular change, then it's usually a sign that something is wrong.

Some of the more common signs of anxiety include:

- Losing interest in things they've previously enjoyed;
- Behaving in the opposite way to usual – quiet children can become very chatty, chatty children can get withdrawn;
- Being grumpy and irritable;
- Lots of headaches and digestive problems (stomach aches, diarrhoea, constipation, vomiting etc);
- Worrying all the time, this can show itself in only picturing negative

outcomes (what if I fail, I'm going to fail, I can't do this);

- Talking over and over the same concern and being unable to either stop thinking about it or to find relief;
- Physical symptoms (sweaty palms, shaking, fast heartbeat, aching muscles);
- Restlessness and being unable to stay still;
- Inability to concentrate (such as taking in what's happening in a TV programme);
- Panic attacks;
- Not sleeping.

Remember to keep perspective. If they have had several late nights, they are likely to be tired and this increases irritability. If they've been exercising, they might have aching muscles. If they've just run to meet you, they'll have a fast heart rate. Individual or a short-term combination of the above symptoms are normal.

BREATHING EXERCISES CAN HELP RESTORE BALANCE AND MAKE YOUR TEEN FEEL CALMER



Techniques to manage stress

These are all proven techniques that help reduce anxiety. It's a really good idea for your teen to practise some of these methods when they're not anxious, so they can familiarise themselves with the approaches and get comfortable with the experience and how it makes them feel. Then, should anxiety strike, it's something they're relaxed about doing. Regularly practising relaxation techniques helps keep anxiety at bay too.

Breathing

Stress can cause unhealthy breathing, so teach your teen some breathing techniques to help them instantly restore balance, reduce their heart rate and feel calmer. Simply breathing in through the nose for five seconds and then out through the mouth for five seconds can help – repeat this for two or three minutes.

Apps

Take advantage of the whole range of apps online so your teen has one they like loaded on the phone ready to access and help them in any place at any time. One of favourites is Headspace.

Yoga

Practising yoga regularly has been proven to improve the heart rate as well as physical strength. It takes a lot of concentration to get the positions right, which prevents the mind from thinking about other things. All the stretching is a great way to relieve tension in the body.

Meditation

Meditation transports the mind to a completely different place and experience. There are many different types of meditation including auditory (describing experiences) and visual (looking at something).

Herbs and smells

For centuries we've used herbs and smells to invoke different atmospheres. Essential oils can be burnt in diffusers, added to baths, placed on candles, mixed with water as a spritz or poured on a tissue (great for on the go and to pop in a pocket) and are inexpensive to buy.

Some useful staples are: lemon (promotes concentration and calming); lavender (reduces stress and can help sleep), jasmine (uplifting and calming), peppermint (invigorating so helps to clear the mind) and rosemary (acts as a pick-me-up).

Five habits to increase resilience:

1. Getting enough sleep – number one factor in health;
2. Eating well, with a balanced varied and regular diet;
3. Being active and doing some sort of physical activity every day;
4. Staying connected – spending quality time with family and friends;
5. Not thinking over and worrying about things you can't influence of change.

Useful links

[Headspace](#)

[Yoga for anxiety](#)

[Kids Health Breathing exercises](#)

[Mindfulness meditation](#)

[Engaging the senses](#)



Instant ways to reduce stress

We're all for nurturing healthy habits long term as the best way to build mental resilience, but there are times when all of us succumb to a moment of stress and what's needed is a quick fix. With that in mind, here's six instant ways to reduce stress. They're easy to put into action and they will all have a positive impact in minutes.

1. Get laughing!

Laughter literally changes the chemical composition in the body. Put on a favourite comedy show, sit back and watch. Great if both concentration and energy levels are low, as it requires minimum effort. Half an hour is ideal, but there are lots of short clips on YouTube and a burst of laughter will reduce stress instantly.

2. Look at something inspiring

Whether it's a photo, picture, painting, fabric, building or statue, looking at inspiring things will give you a lift. Encourage your teen to keep photos of anything that sparks joy in them on their phones so it's easy to look at; each time they do, they'll get a boost of feel-good hormones.

3. Snuggle up with your pet

Having a cuddle with our furry friends can be very soothing and help relieve anxiety.

4. Take a brisk walk outdoors

Being physical is fantastic for both physical and mental health. This needn't be a great long trek – just ten minutes of brisk walking can get the circulation flowing, activate muscles, clear the head and stimulate the mind with more positive thoughts.



5. Play some music

There is no quicker and easier way to completely change your mood than listening to a piece of music. Make sure your teen's playing a feelgood vibe if they need uplifting, or a calming tempo if they're trying to relax.

6. Look at something inspiring

Whether it's a photo, picture, painting, fabric, building or statue, looking at inspiring things will give you a lift. Encourage your teen to keep photos of anything that sparks joy in them on their phones so it's easy to look at; each time they do, they'll get a boost of feel-good hormones.

LISTENING TO MUSIC IS AN INSTANT MOOD-CHANGER



When to get support

Don't be tough on yourself and expect to have all the solutions for your child's needs. It's absolutely fine to call on professionals to help you help them. Professional support includes more than counsellors and psychiatrists (although both these approaches can be helpful). There's a range of professional options available including:

1. Teachers at school – both in an academic capacity to help understand subjects better, as tutors to help create better ways of working outside school and pastoral experts who can help with emotional issues;
2. Some schools have an independent counsellor available with whom your children can talk in confidence (i.e. they will not relay the information to the school);
3. Peer support networks – these can be very helpful as speaking to someone of a similar age can sometimes feel easier than speaking to an adult, or speaking to someone just slightly older, who has more recently been through a similar experience can be very reassuring;
4. Charities – most now offer both online and telephone support. This anonymity (i.e. not being face-to-face) can make talking over problems and worries easier.

Too much anxiety

If your child is showing several signs of anxiety on a regular basis (several days each week) over a prolonged period of time (several weeks) then do seek help from external support services and a good place to start might be visiting your GP.

AnxietyUK





Visit **The Parents' Guide to** website for more support and resources:

Parent Guides

Our range of interactive guides provide you with easy to follow advice, hyperlinks to reliable sources and the most up-to-date information.

Support articles

Browse through our collection of online articles covering a range of topics from supporting your teen with their revision to helping them apply to university through UCAS.

Parent Q&A

Almost every parent has questions about their teen's education. Read through answers to commonly asked questions or ask your own.

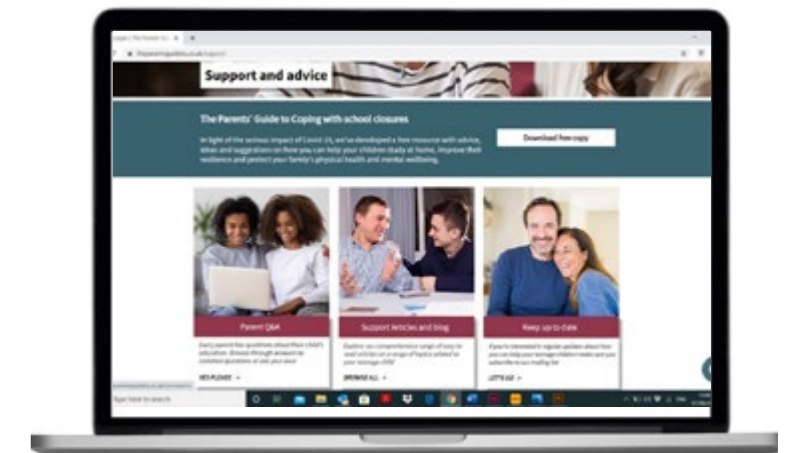
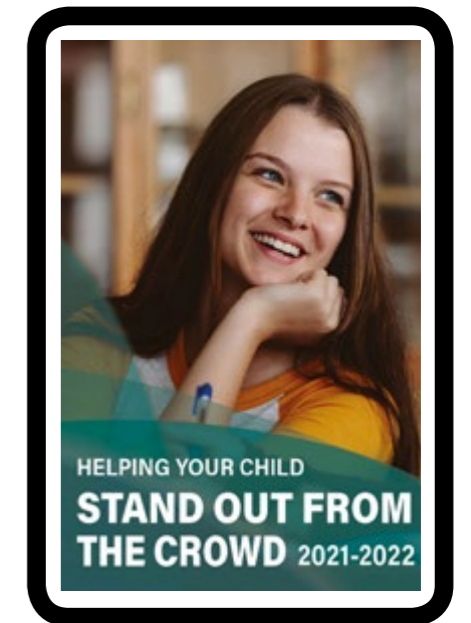
Blog

Our blog provides reliable and timely advice and support to changes taking place across UK schools and colleges.

Parent newsletter

Sign up to our parent newsletter and receive free support, advice and resources on how you can help your teenage teenren straight to your inbox.

All our resources are ready for immediate download



www.theparentsguideto.co.uk/parents



Final Words

The summer holidays should be fun and about having more time to do the things we enjoy. At the time of writing this guide, it's not clear how quickly or widely lockdown restrictions will be lifted. So don't make the summer holidays a drudge for you and your teenager by creating an agenda for them and then getting cross if they don't fulfil it – we are all facing enough frustrations at the moment!

That said, there are plenty of suggestions that you can make to help guide your teenager in helping them take positive steps to plan and prepare for their future. There are lots of ideas which they may not have thought about themselves and this is where you can play a vital role in guiding them.

Whether your teen is at GCSE level or older, they may have no firm idea

on what they want to in the medium or long-term future and don't see that as a problem. Expanding their areas of knowledge and experience is always useful, even if it means taking a direction they later choose not to continue. Gaining an understanding of what they don't like is equally as useful as finding out what they do like.

Education routes, opportunities and career changes are much more varied than when we were their age. Unless they have a specific, specialist career in mind (such as practising medicine), there are many routes to a successful future and very few choices that will close doors. What's more important is them finding out the best way for them to develop so they can flourish. That will allow them to feel happy and fulfilled in whatever choice they pursue, and that's going to make you feel good too.

Join us

If you're interested in regular updates about other ways you can help your teenage children, [click here](#) and join our online community.

[Sign up here](#)



The Parents' Guide to

GETTING AHEAD

DURING THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS