

SUMMER 2020

The Parents' Guide to Getting ahead during the summer holidays

2020 - 2021 ©

THE PARENTS'
GUIDE TO

GETTING AHEAD
DURING THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS

*I'm interactive!
Click me if you want
to go to the chapter*

Contents

The Parents' Guide to provides parents with the information they need to help their teenage children 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 children.

This guide has been produced to support parents and schools during the coronavirus outbreak. 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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Find out what's new

If you're interested in regular updates about how you can help your teenage children, www.theparentsguideto.co.uk/join-us

Chapter 1: Introduction

2020 has been an extraordinary year so far and your child has experienced significant disruption to their studies. School closures (for most students), online learning and schooling from home have presented challenges for both parents and children and there is still uncertainty about what will happen in September.

It can be hard not to worry how this has impacted your child and whether they are as far ahead in their studies as they would have been under normal circumstances. However, there has been learning of a different kind from this unique experience and this will be something they can build on positively going forward.

July marks the end of the academic year and the school summer holidays will start. This is a chance for your child to enjoy the better weather, make the most of outdoors, have additional free time to do the things they enjoy and to think

about their future and what they might like to do next.

Depending on where they are in their academic journey, there's plenty they can do over the holidays that can help them prepare for the next stage of their life – and it can be fun too! Whether they're 15 and starting to think about what they might like to do when next year's GCSEs are over or whether they're 18 and making plans for adulthood, we've created this guide to help you understand what choices they have and what action they can take over the next six weeks to help them make their dreams a reality.

This guide is not written so you do the work for them! It's a source of ideas so you have plenty of suggestions to help encourage and direct your child when they are not sure what to do next. Every great journey starts with a first step.

Using the summer to get ahead

Depending on their age, there's a variety of things your child 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 (once lockdown allows);
- 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 in what's happening in the news to find out what areas appeal to them – politics, environment, people, life stories, education, science etc;
- 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.



BBC
careers

Life skills

Futurelearn

The Parents'
Guide to

Chapter 2: Ways to help your child stand out

It doesn't matter if your child is applying for a job, an apprenticeship, a university or college place, training or an internship – the bottom line is always the same: they're more likely to get the interview if their application stands out from others and they'll get the place if they are likeable and impress their interviewer.

It's personality that differentiates one person from another. Positive, proactive,

committed, resilient individuals make good students and great employees – they're quick to learn, quick to forgive and pleasant to be around. And that makes them attractive.

Preparation is key; nothing beats preparation in improving confidence and having the skills to stand out from others. Here are some practical ways to help your children prepare for their future, while they are home.



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 child 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.

FutureLearn

Harvard
EdX

MOOC

ONLINE COURSES GIVE STUDENTS FULL CONTROL



2. Stay up-to-date

It's a good idea for your child 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 CHILD TO TAKE AN INTEREST IN

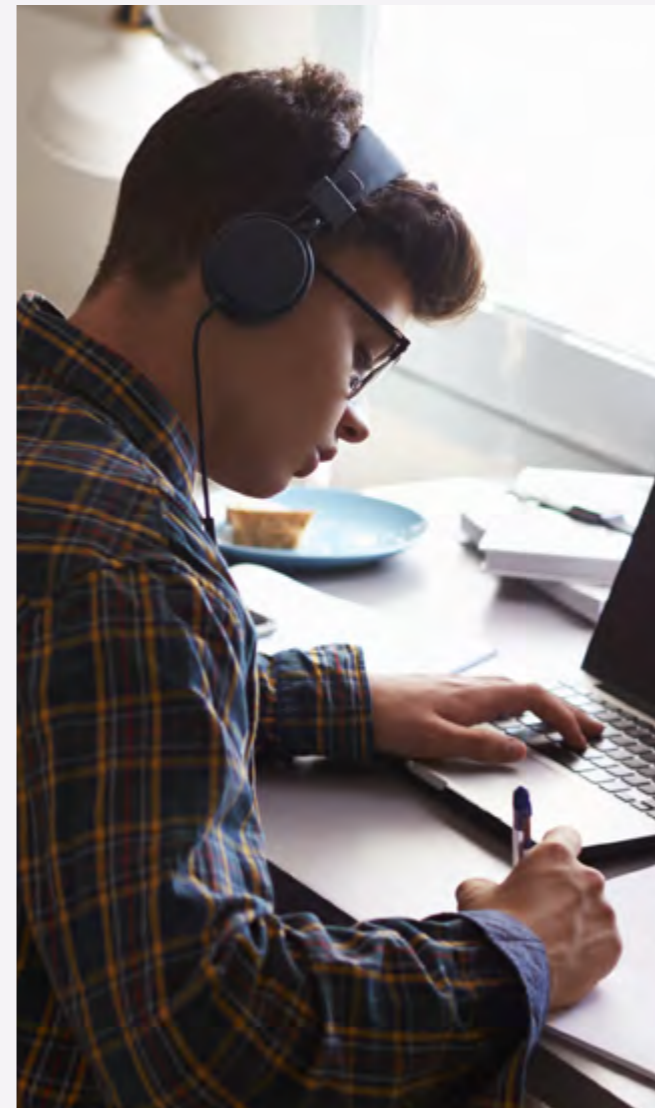


3. Listen to Ted talks

An absolute blessing if your child 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 child to develop their interests without a huge time commitment.

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 from 15-20 minutes to feature length episodes; some are very long and split into series, others are broadcast regularly as complete episodes but an overarching theme linking them all together. Podcasts are a relatively new media and very popular with teenagers.



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 child 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 child 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 child 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 child 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 child 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 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 child 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.

For more information on how your child can stand out from the crowd, with sections on things they can do at home and what they can do once lockdown is lifted, you may be interested in [The Parents' Guide to helping your child stand out from the crowd 2020-2021](#).

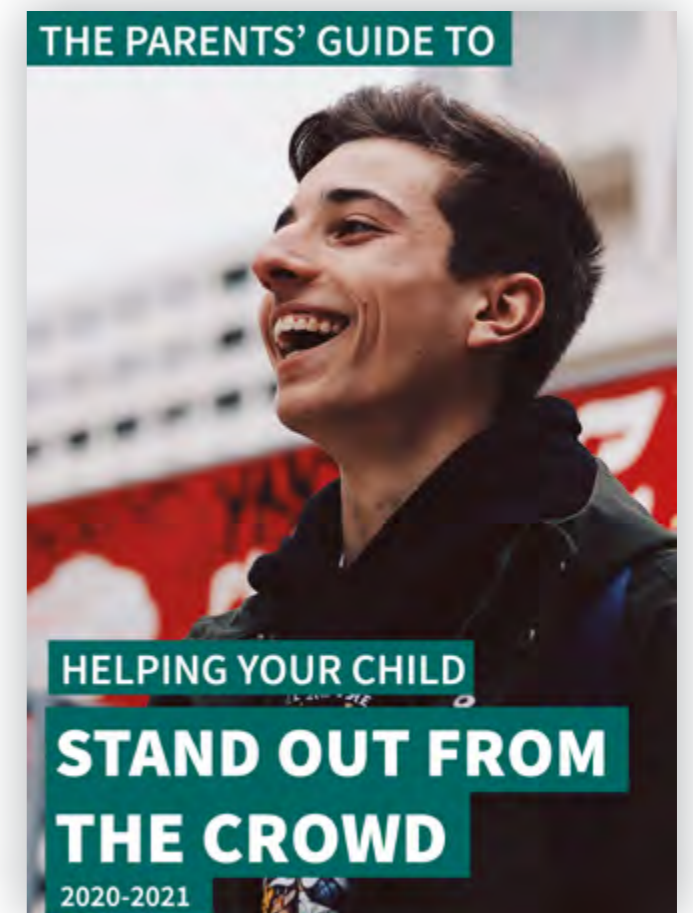
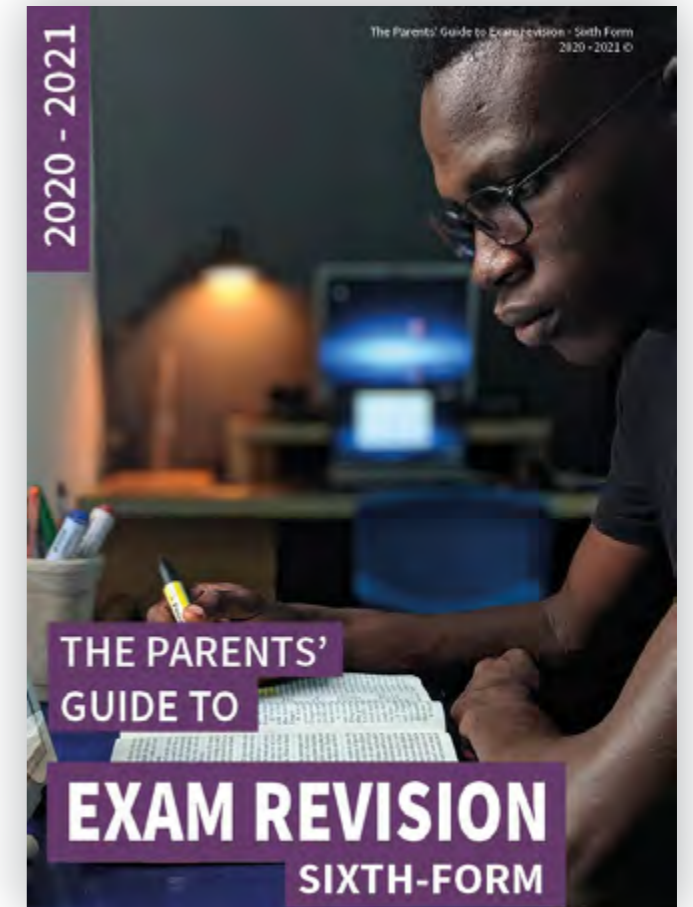
A VIRTUAL WORK PLACEMENT CAN HELP YOUR CHILD GAIN



You may also be interested in



WWW.THEPARENTSGUIDETO.CO.UK



Chapter 3: Apprenticeships

What your child chooses to do after GCSE or sixth form is both exciting and daunting. There are lots of options available and understanding the pros and cons between different choices can be challenging. Apprenticeships should not be over-looked; they offer the opportunity to combine study with paid employment resulting in a professional qualification. There are no tuition fees (these are covered by the employer and the government) and the salary can cover living expenses.

Apprenticeships used to be associated with trade industries (such as electricians, mechanics or plumbers). Nowadays, apprenticeships can be taken in a wide range of industry sectors and provide entry to all types of careers, including accountancy, banking, IT, law, management and television.

Relatively new to the apprenticeship suite are “degree apprenticeships”, offering an earn while you learn route to BSc or BA status. In other words, the end qualification

is the same as if your child had attended university full time, the difference is that they will not have incurred any debt in tuition fees and will finish their degree with robust and transferable workplace skills.

Taking an apprenticeship is not an easy option and competition can be fierce. It takes organisation and dedication to balance work, where your child will be expected to contribute to the same standards as everyone else, and study. Holidays are far fewer than at college or university. However, if they have a more practical, work-related bias towards learning this will suit them well and they will obtain valuable experience which will strengthen opportunities in finding rewarding work when the apprenticeship is over.

Selecting the right apprenticeship will require your child to have reasonable confidence in the type of career they wish to follow although there is some flexibility. So how do you help them decide? We'll guide you.

Useful links

GOV. UK
Overview

UCAS

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 or 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.

Is an apprenticeship the right choice?

ADVANTAGES

Apprenticeships provide focused and applied training for those who already have a strong interest in a job or industry.

Not everyone is suited to academic style learning and apprenticeships provide a practical approach to obtaining qualifications.

Apprenticeships provide paid employment. In addition, your child will leave debt free.

Apprenticeships develop key transferable skills which are considered lacking in the labour market.

Apprenticeships may provide future employment within the company and working within an organisation may reveal job roles they did not know existed.

Gaining work experience and on the job training may provide your child with a competitive advantage when applying for full time employment.

Some students flourish with the responsibility and structure of an apprenticeship.

Degree apprenticeships offer the chance to gain a BA or BSc without incurring the debts associated with studying at university.

CONSIDERATIONS

Apprenticeships may narrow options early on. Your child will need to have a fairly clear idea of the type of career they wish to pursue.

It may be difficult for your child to combine studying with working.

The salary of an apprentice can be quite low and your child will also need to consider financing their travel and living expenses if they are not living at home. Furthermore, your child may need to pay back their course fees if they choose to leave their apprenticeship early.

Your child may feel that they are missing out on the 'student life' offered at universities. However, some universities and colleges still offer their degree apprentices a strong student experience.

Student fairs and networking events at university enable students to explore different career routes that they were not aware of when leaving school.

Many companies provide graduate schemes for university leavers on completion of their degree.

Entering the work place at an early age may lead to fatigue.

Degree apprenticeships are still quite new, so there is only a limited number of vacancies available at the moment.

Questions to ask:

- Does your child have a clear idea of the type of career or job they want to pursue?
- Is your child more suited to an applied and hands-on working environment?
- Is your child organised and able to balance work with academic study?
- Will your child perform better under the guidance of a supervisor in a work environment?
- Will your child enjoy the combination of different learning environments?
- Does your child enjoy practical / active homework assignments?
- Has your child undertaken any paid or voluntary work and did they enjoy this?

Don't worry if your child is still unsure which option is right for them. Students can apply for degree and higher apprenticeships at the same time as applying to university through UCAS.

Researching apprenticeships

Apprenticeships vary in the qualifications that can be achieved, length of commitment and balance between work and study. With so many options, it may be helpful to consider the various elements independently.

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 required level of 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).

Useful links

[Amazing Apprenticeship](#)

[GOV UK](#)

[The Parents' Guide to](#)

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



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 and can be found using the 'search' function. 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.

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.

Useful links

GOV. UK
Search

Apprenticeship
Search

Not going to
Uni

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's school has a careers department, then getting them to speak with their careers advisor is a good move. Careers advisors are often the first to hear from companies advertising new apprenticeships.

For more information on apprenticeships and how to help your child research, apply and prepare for one, you may be interested in [The Parents' Guide to Apprenticeships 2020-2021](#).

APPRENTICESHIPS COMBINE
LEARNING WITH ON THE JOB



Top 10 apprenticeship employers: 2020



Click me to learn more



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

APPRENTICESHIPS WITH THE TOP 20 EMPLOYERS WILL BE VERY COMPETITIVE



You may also be interested in

Click me to sample some pages



WWW.THEPARENTSGUIDETO.CO.UK



Chapter 4: University and the UCAS process

Selecting the right university and course will be one of the most important decisions your child faces in shaping their future and you will want to help them every step of the way. The “right” university means the right university for them: one which offers courses they’d like to study; where they will fit in and feel comfortable; one that will stretch their abilities without breaking them; and one where they will feel safe and happy. The “right” university will differ from child to child – even within the same family.

Of course, whilst going to university is first and foremost about getting a higher-level qualification, it offers much more than that. It’s about learning to research independently, create professional relationships, develop lasting friendships, living without parental supervision, adopting fun and meaningful hobbies and interests. It’s learning to be a grown-up: self-reliant, resourceful and confident. So how do you decide what is right? We’ll guide you.

Useful links

[UCAS](#)

[The
Parents’
Guide to](#)

Researching the right course

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 child 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 child'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 child 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

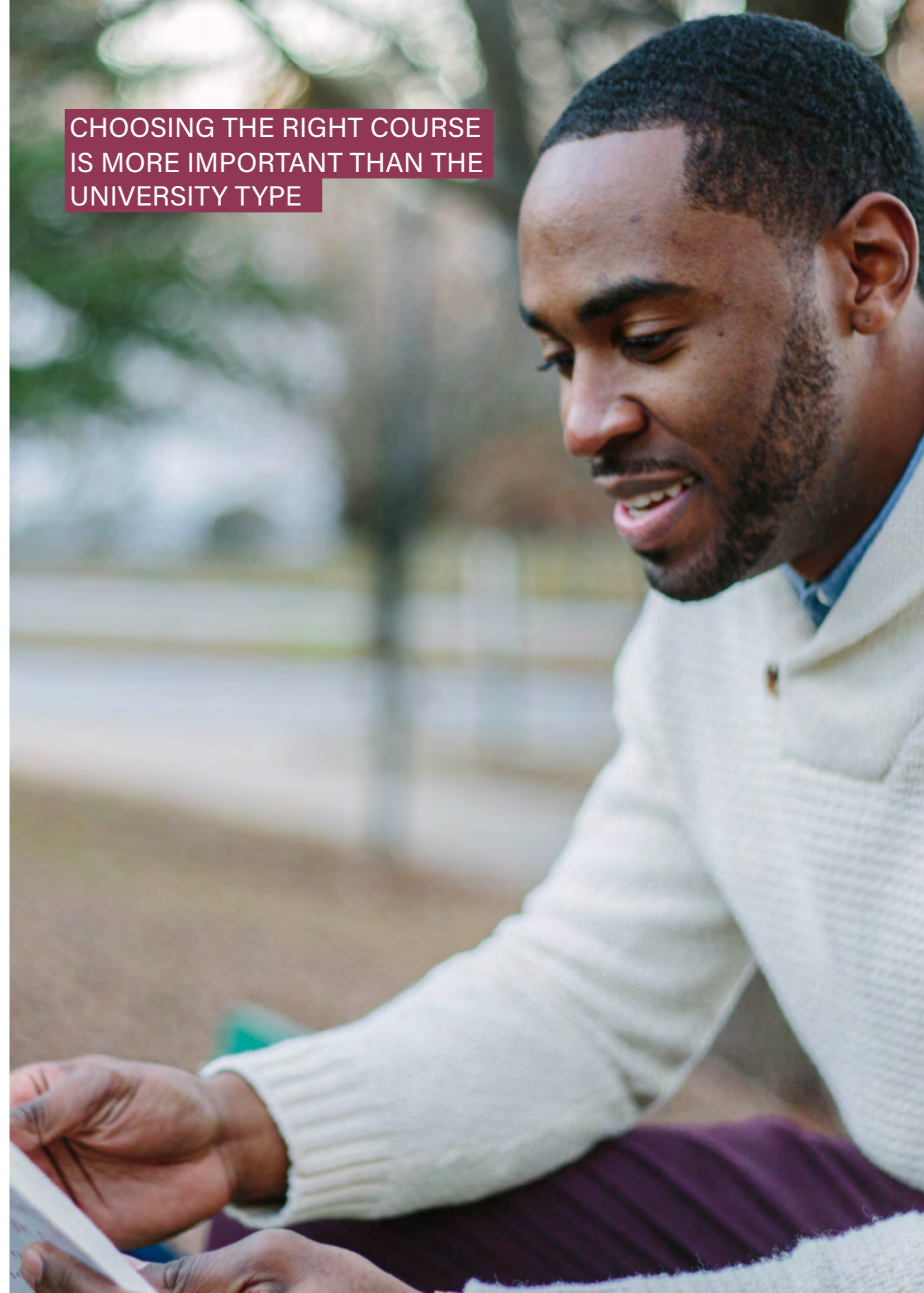
Your child should research courses with entry requirements that are closely aligned to their predicted grades, allowing for some aspirational and safe choices either side.

Useful link

Which?
University
course search

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

CHOOSING THE RIGHT COURSE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE UNIVERSITY TYPE



Narrowing choices

There is plenty of information about university courses available, and whilst it's up to your child to do the research, as parents you can help guide them by checking that the courses they shortlist fit their personality. For example, a child 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 child's needs:

Is your child academic or practical?		<p>Do they enjoy being in the classroom?</p> <p>Do they enjoy learning in a studio or outside?</p> <p>Do they enjoy writing essays and researching topics or prefer to make and produce things?</p>
Which school subjects do they enjoy?		<p>Is there a particular part of a school subject they have enjoyed?</p> <p>Do they have a natural flair for a subject?</p> <p>If they enjoy more than one subject, are there any common themes?</p>
What are your child's hobbies?		<p>Is your child particularly passionate about any music, sport or art related activities?</p> <p>Think about your child's personality traits</p> <p>Try to think outside the box - do they have a particular interest in current affairs? Gaming? Helping others?</p>
Has your child expressed interest in a particular career?		<p>Try to think of subjects that will help them pursue this career without narrowing their options too much if they change their mind later</p>



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 child 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 child'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 child.

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 child 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 child is particularly anxious when it comes to examinations, then choosing a degree which is mainly assessed through coursework or presentations may increase your child's chances of success.

Moreover, think carefully about your child'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 child 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 child can access when moving into higher education.

Remember, your child 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 child 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 statement

As part of the university application, your child will need to submit a personal statement. Effectively, this is a short (4,000 characters or circa 500 words) advert that lets your child showcase why they would make a great student.

Content for a personal statement isn't something that can be created overnight. It takes time to assimilate ideas, finesse them, so it's good to encourage them 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 consolidate thoughts and prompt an understanding of ways to describe clearly what they like and dislike and why.

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, every effort should be made to articulate their suitability and passion for their chosen courses, even if this means articulating in general terms rather than specifics depending on how different the areas of focus in each course may be.

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.

Hobbies and interests

Their interests beyond the classroom are especially important, where they can demonstrate initiative for doing something that has not been prescribed, and interests and inspiration that they have discovered themselves. This is a key way to stand out from others because it clearly demonstrates their uniqueness. Voluntary experience can also be included.

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.

Personal statement mindmap

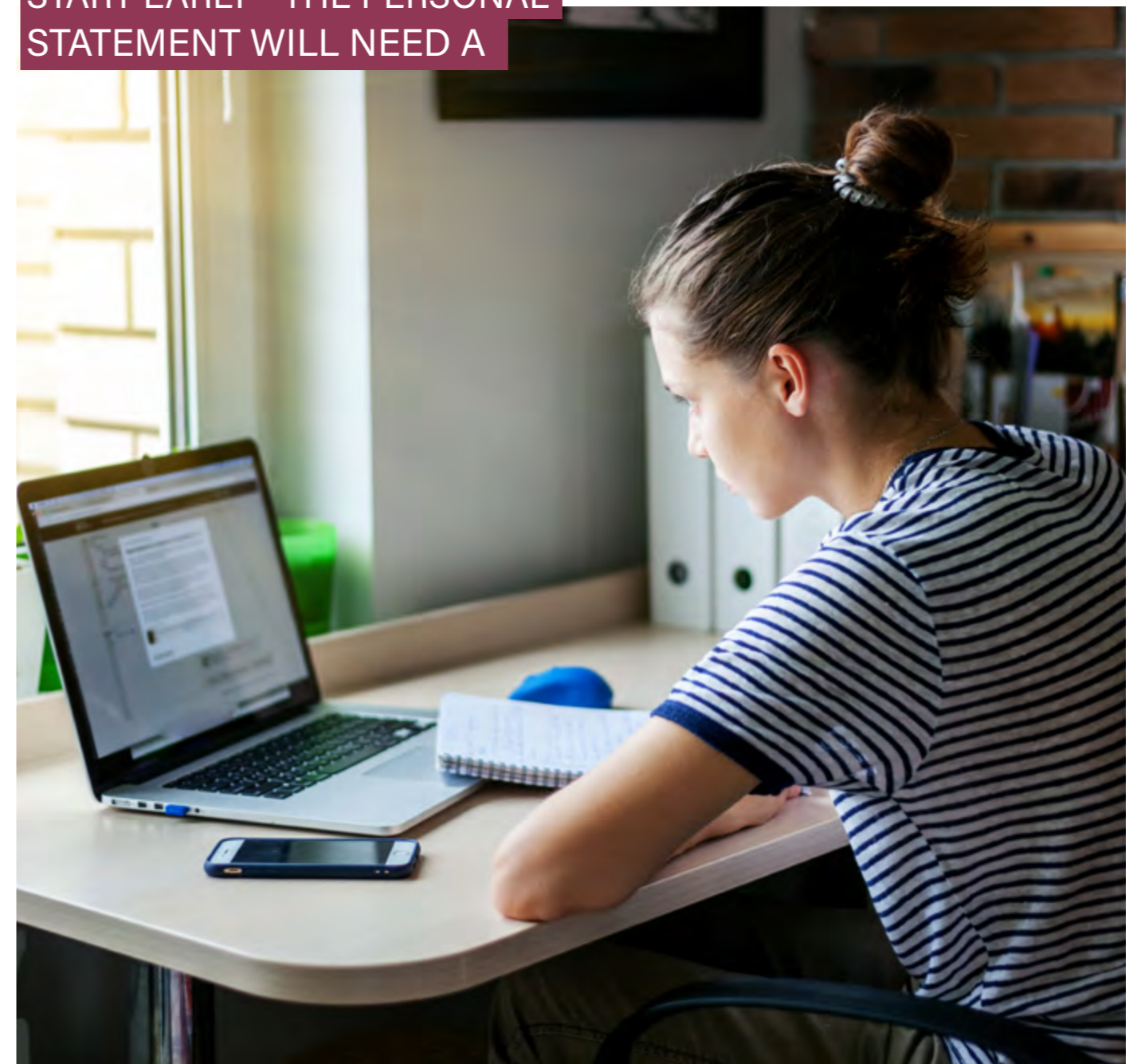
The Parents' Guide to University

Starting early

Your child will need to be prepared 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 is a good idea to return to school in September with at least a

first draft of their personal statement completed. If they are still unsure about which course to study once they leave school, they can focus their draft more on their skills, achievements and hobbies until they are ready to include this information.

START EARLY - THE PERSONAL STATEMENT WILL NEED A

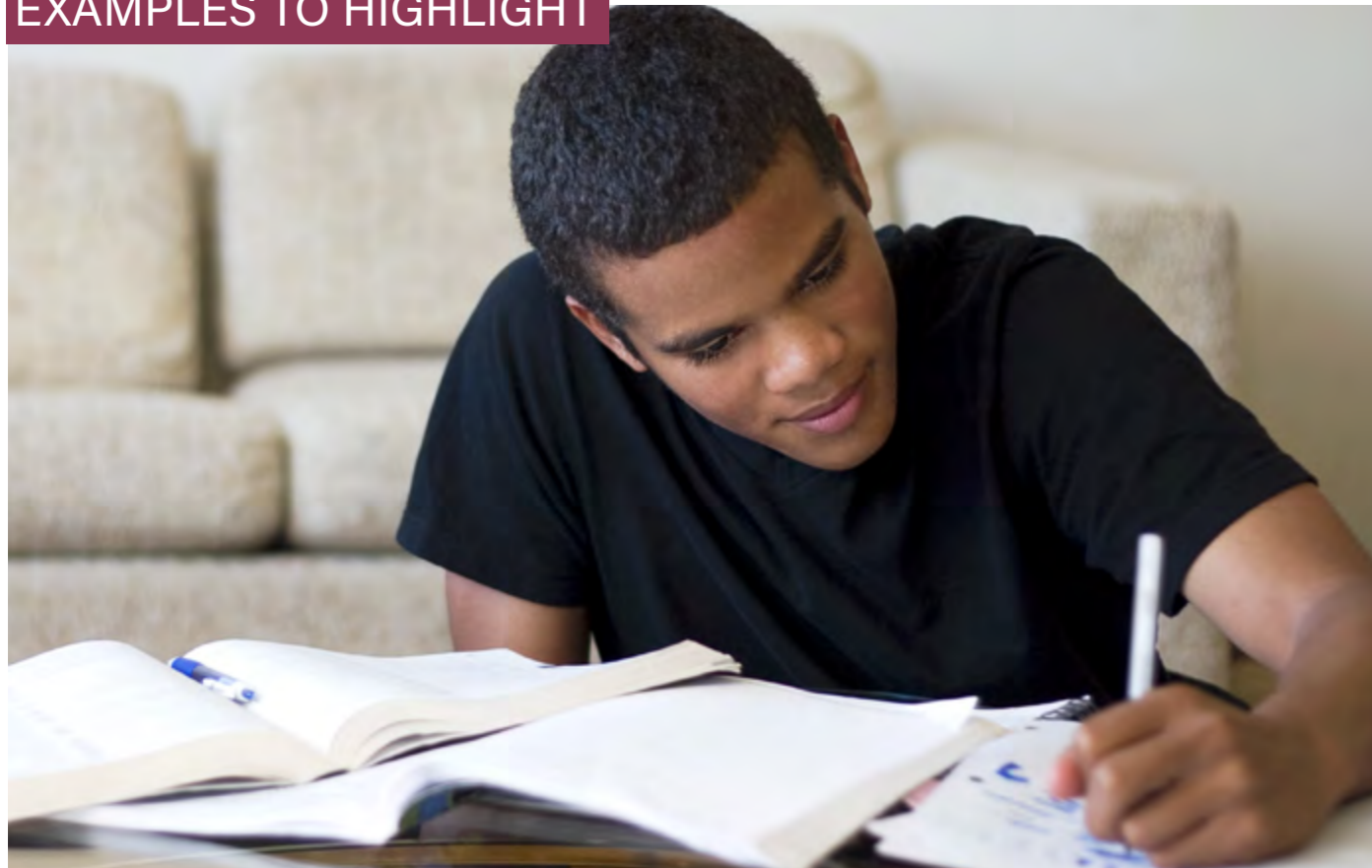


Setting the right tone

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) rather than listing them without qualification.

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.

MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD USES EXAMPLES TO HIGHLIGHT



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 start by making a list of all the things they might want to include. 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 start off by breaking it into more manageable chunks. This will make the personal statement less daunting and might even help them start to structure it. Try to remind your child that no one is expecting a perfect first draft.

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.

You may also be interested in

Click me to sample some pages

WWW.THEPARENTSGUIDETO.CO.UK



AS FEATURED IN THE PARENTS' GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY



Chapter 5: Alternative options

It is important to remember that further education and academic study isn't for everyone. There are plenty of other ways to continue learning, such as apprenticeships, traineeships, paid or voluntary work or gap years.

Getting a job

The world of work can be an exciting option and doesn't necessarily need to rule out further study at a later date. If your child does plan to get a job after school or college, encourage them to think carefully about the kind of work they want to do and the reasons for doing it. Do they plan to start in an entry level position and gradually work their way up to a higher position as they begin to gain more experience? Or do they want to start earning, and use this time to reflect on what they might like to do next?

Useful links

The Parents'
Guide to

Not Going
to Uni

Post 18
options
summary

Traineeships

Traineeships are a type of vocational training and can last six weeks to six months. They are a great way to prepare for apprenticeships (if your child doesn't have the minimum entry requirements) or to get first-hand experience of what a job is like.

School leaver programmes

School leaver programmes offer opportunities to join the workplace straight after sixth form studies and commence skills development and career progression through experience as well as studying to obtain a nationally recognised qualification. Entry requirements vary from employer to employer.



ONE IN TEN STUDENTS
WILL TAKE A GAP YEAR
AFTER FINISHING SCHOOL



Gap Year / deferred entry

Taking a year out after school can be beneficial, certainly in terms of the skills and experiences that can be developed, but your child will need to determine whether it's the right choice for them.

A gap year can be taken while entry to university is being deferred, once a place has been accepted (allowing a year between leaving school and starting university), or if university is not the next step at all.

What does a gap year involve?

Traditionally, this is a year spent travelling overseas, but it needn't focus exclusively on that. Volunteering and work experience can also be incorporated and inform your child's likes and dislikes, as well as giving them valuable first-hand experience in a variety of areas they may not have had chance to try out. Gap years don't have to be expensive, and if

finances are tight, your child can self fund their travels by getting a job first.

Is a gap year right for my child?

If your child is considering taking a year out after school, it's important to spend some time together and identify what it is your child wants to achieve. Gap years can be an excellent choice for students wanting to gain new skills and experience, earn money, spend time deciding what career path they want to take or have a break from work and study.

However, for some a gap year can be distracting and, if not well-planned, could prove somewhat directionless, which is unlikely to be beneficial. Before committing to a gap year, make sure your child has clear goals to make their time out from work or study a productive and fulfilling one.

Useful links

GOV. UK
Foreign Travel
Advice

STA
Travel

Gap 360



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 child with their revision to helping them apply to university through UCAS.

Parent Q&A

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

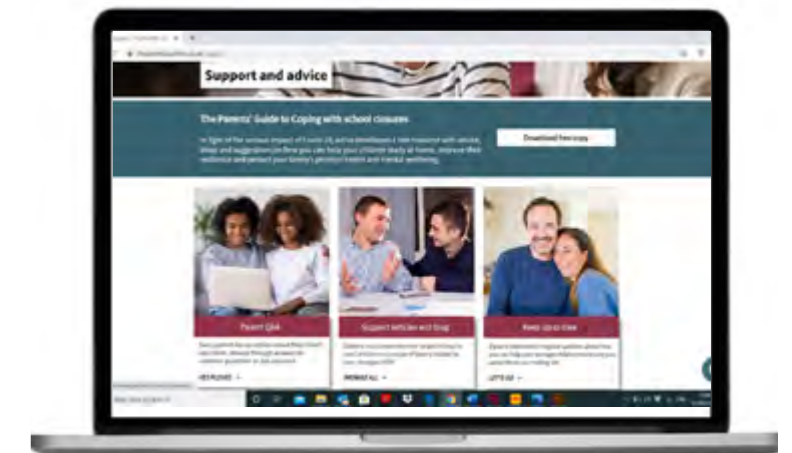
Blog

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 children 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 children 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 children 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 child 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.

Keep up to date

If your 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

The Parents' Guide to: Getting
ahead during the summer holidays

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