

THE PARENTS' GUIDE TO GCSE Results Day

August 2025



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Introduction

There's intense focus on results day and it can be a nerve-racking time for you and your teen, both in the lead up and on the day itself.

Once final exams are over in May/June, it seems as if nothing more can be done except wait out the long weeks until results are announced. All this tension and anticipation can build setting off a wonderful release if the results are good, but something potentially damaging if things haven't gone as planned.

Results Day is an important marker in your teen's academic achievements. However, although it can seem like the final verdict on how much your teen's got out of their schooling, the more realistic viewpoint is that it's a

useful indicator as to whether your teen's on the right path. If results are poor, perhaps they need to take a different tack, such as focusing on qualifications that involve more practical studies instead of classroom studies, or where course work and ongoing assessment are the basis for grading rather than examinations.

GCSE results day is a pivot point, marking the transition from one academic phase to another. It's not a final destination, it's one step in a much longer journey. In this guide we'll share with you what you can do to help your teen prepare for their results, what you can do if they don't get the results they'd hoped for, including an outline of all the options available, and advice on where to get more help if you need it.

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Leading up to Results Day

It's a myth that there's no action to take ahead of results day, so neither you nor your teen should feel you just have to sit it out. One of the best ways to help the day go smoothly is to plan ahead and make sure they know what steps to take, especially if the worst happens and their results are disappointing.

Don't forget, as well as being a time to rest up after a busy summer term, the holidays are also a time for your

teen to explore their hobbies and interests, including trying new ones. This is a fun way for them to broaden their experience and will help them do better in interviews later.

If they are anxious, we've also got tips on how you can help them manage stress and improve their mental resilience. This is an important life lesson and it's never too early for them to find effective ways to wind down.



Results day checklist:

- ✓ Get an early night on Weds 20th August so they're rested, even if they can't sleep properly! Trying to cope with emotional situations will be more difficult if they're tired.
- ✓ Rise and shine to head off early to get their results within an hour of them being ready – delaying could let anxiety build up.
- ✓ Eat a decent breakfast and drink plenty of fluids before heading to get their results. This will stand them in good stead if they get caught up and delayed once they're there or if they head off to celebrate with friends afterwards.
- ✓ Find out who they should speak to at school and at their next educational establishment, including phone numbers and email addresses. If they need to make calls, they'll want all the information right on hand.
- ✓ Make sure they've got pen, paper and a fully charged mobile phone with them.
- ✓ Read our guidance on about next steps BEFORE results day, so they've got a good idea of what appeals most as Plan B if Plan A falls through.
- ✓ Reassure them that you are there for them, with love and support, because of who they are. Your love is not dependent on what results they get.

Developing Interests & Skills

What your teen does outside of study can be extremely valuable in shaping their future. Interests that don't seem connected to their ultimate goals could well have a significant impact on whether they achieve them. Exploring interests will also help them discover what they enjoy most.

Improving adaptability

Having a broad range of interests allows different parts of the brain to develop and rest. This will help your teen improve their resilience, widen their field of experience, and improve their ability to think flexibly.

Developing skills

Hobbies and interests are the best way for teens to develop skills, whether they have interests they share with others, enjoy alone - or both.

Balance is key

Balance is key. Adults who are able to combine being active, having fun and working usually achieve more because they use their time effectively when focusing on any one area and find it easier to switch focus when changing between different activities.



Developing their passions

What's great about encouraging your teen to pursue their interests is that it could cover anything from typical hobbies to something outside the mainstream. The point here is: does your teen have a passion for anything? It may seem a strange passion or it could be something totally conventional - but do they enjoy it?

Typical hobbies might include reading, football, gaming, vlogging but less usual hobbies might include stand up comedy, candle making, puppetry, pet sitting, stone skipping or rapping. Does their hobby result in them meeting and communicating with new people (whether online or in person?), learning a new skill, competing in teams, getting creative or being extremely time efficient? These are all excellent transferable skills that are central to helping your child stand out from others.

Of course, it's not always true, but it is rather nice if your child's hobby takes them offline for a little bit too!

Enjoying a life where each day involved different types of activities should help them sleep too.

Skills they'll develop

- ✓ **Commitment** – Understanding the benefit of maintaining interest over the long term
- ✓ **Communication** – The ability to express complex ideas clearly and simply with others, either in writing or speech
- ✓ **Critical thinking** – Unafraid to ask questions and delve into deeper meaning
- ✓ **Focus** – Being able to concentrate on one thing at a time and not getting distracted
- ✓ **Leadership** – Being able to motivate and inspire others to take or follow action
- ✓ **Listening** – Actively listening and hearing what others are saying
- ✓ **Passion** – Feeling strongly about certain things and taking appropriate action to demonstrate and channel this passion
- ✓ **Problem solving** – Being able to think of, and develop, inventive solutions to problems
- ✓ **Resilience** – The ability to manage stress and bounce back when faced with difficulties – required to succeed under pressure
- ✓ **Teamwork** – Being able to collaborate and co-ordinate with others
- ✓ **Time management** – Using time effectively to maximise outcomes

Why soft skills matter

Soft skills, or transferable skills, are developed through what we do, not what we're taught. These are qualities that apply in all situations, such as being a good communicator, showing initiative or paying attention to detail.

Helping your teen stand out

During interviews, whether for jobs or places in further education, interviewers are likely to see candidates of a similar age, with similar qualifications and similar classroom experience, so it's what happens outside the classroom that helps them differentiate one candidate from another.

Discover more

- ✓ [National Careers Service](#)
- ✓ [UK Skills Builder](#)
- ✓ [The Parents' Guide to](#)

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How can my teen develop their personal attributes and transferable skills?

As a teenager, the best way of developing a broad range of transferable skills is through non-academic interests, such as hobbies, co-curricular activities, super curricular activities and ensuring a balance of time spent with family, friends, other students and alone.



10 ways to deal with anxiety ahead of results day

In the lead up to results day, help manage your teen's stress and nerves with our tips on instant ways to reduce stress. They're easy to put into action and most of them can be done anywhere at any time, with a positive impact in minutes.

However, don't forget, some of their stress may be caused by fear of letting you down, so let them know you love them for who they are and, whatever their results, that won't change.

1. Get laughing



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

2. Take a bath



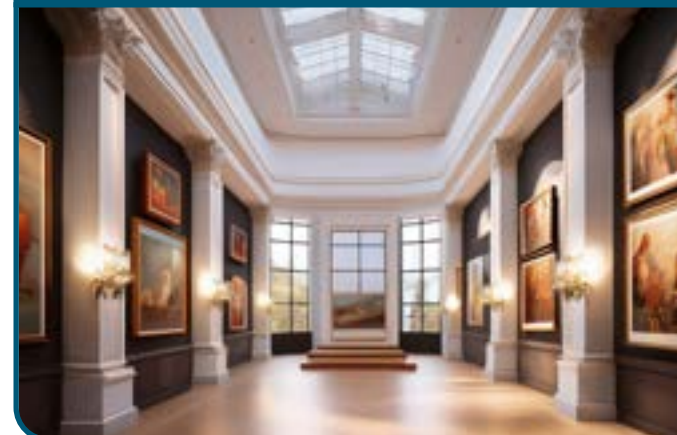
Another easy one when energy levels are low. For best effect, add some essential oils, bubble bath or anything that creates a smell that makes them feel nurtured (good examples are lavender, vanilla, chamomile or cinnamon). Lay back, relax in the warm water and stress will wash away. Great to try ahead of bedtime, to help promote a restful night's sleep.

3. Take a walk!



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.

4. Look at what inspires you



Whether it's a photo, picture, painting, fabric, building or statue, looking at inspiring things will give them 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.

5. Read (or listen) to a book



One of the great things about reading a book is that it's a creative process. Unlike a film where they're presented with images and just need to watch, as they read a book the writer is inviting them to picture the situation in a way that resonates with them. It's a terrific way to step into another world and place – even if only for a few minutes at a time.

6. Help someone else



Good deeds create virtuous circles. They're not only helpful to the recipient, the giver gets a feel good boost from helping someone else. Win-win all round. It's one of the reasons volunteering is a great idea. Doing the occasional thing for our friends, family and neighbours can create the same effect.

7. Stretch



Stress tends to make us tense up, contracting muscles, folding inwards on ourselves, compressing the lungs and body. Combat stress by stretching one body area at a time and loosening the tension that's built up.

8. Breathe



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.

9. Play some music



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

10. Snuggle up with a pet



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



The Parents' Guide to Teenage stress & anxiety

- How to spot the signs of anxiety and stress
- Ways to help right away
- Long term strategies to build their resilience
- Coping with rejection
- Encouraging healthy routines
- Looking after the basics
- Where and when to get help and support

Buy now

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



GCSE Results Day 2025

When are results available?

Students can collect their results from school as early as 08.00 am on **Thursday 21 August**. Be sure to check with your teen's school, as different schools may open at different times.

We think it's a good idea for students to collect their results in person because there will be teachers on hand to help them with next steps, whatever their results might be.

Students receive a result slip (sometimes called a Candidate Statement of Provisional Results) detailing grades and the individual mark per paper. They'll get their certificates in the autumn term.

Preparing to collect results in person

Tempting though it may be to hold their hand, allow them to go alone if that's what they want to do.

We'd recommend a good breakfast ahead of getting to school early, so they're properly fuelled for whatever lies ahead. Don't let them put it off (especially if they're worried as their anxiety could increase as the day goes on).

Being prepared makes life easier.

Make sure their phone's fully charged, they have pen and paper for note taking when using the phone, photo ID, any acceptance letters and contact names and phone numbers of people they may need to speak to (if different from school for their next stage).

Other ways to collect results

If your teen can't collect the results themselves, check with the school as there may be other options. For example, having them sent by post, collected by someone else with ID, given over the phone, or made available via the parent portal.

Results App

New for 2025, the government is trialling the "Education Record App". For 95,000 GCSE students across Manchester and the West Midlands, results will be available on their phones from 11:00 on 21 August.

If your teen is taking part in the pilot, they can still collect their paper results from school at 08:00 if they wish.

Encourage your teen to collect their results in person

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designed with YOU
in mind, offering
clear, practical steps
you can take at
home.*

Next steps:





Understanding Grades

GCSEs are graded from 1-9. All numerical grades are passes, with grade 4 indicating a standard pass, grade 5 indicating a strong pass and 9 being the highest grade possible. In some cases, students may receive a “U” meaning they have not achieved a grade.

However, grade 4 is the minimum level that students must achieve in

English and maths. If they are graded 3 or below, they will need to retake the exams.

This numeric system of grading was introduced in 2017, and if you are more familiar with the previous A* to G grading system, the table below gives some comparable points, although the two systems are not directly equivalent.

Old grades	New grades
A*	9 - <i>Highest grade</i>
A	8 7
B	6
C	5 - <i>Strong pass</i> 4 - <i>Standard pass</i>
D	3
E	2
F	1
G	
U	U - <i>No grade awarded</i>

Understanding Options

Resits

Students that don't achieve a grade 4 or above can retake English language and maths GCSEs in November 2025 free of charge. If they achieved 4 or above and wish to retake to improve their grade, they will be expected to pay.

For other subjects, students will be expected to pay and will have to wait for the next summer exam time in 2025 to resit.

If they obtain a lower mark when resitting an exam, they can choose to use the higher mark achieved.

GCSE remarks

If the marks seem inappropriate given your teen's skill level, it's possible to apply for a remark. It's vital your teen speaks to their subject teacher first and confirms their opinion, because grades can go down as well as up. The deadline for review of remarking GCSE is 25 September 2025

Getting the results they'd expected

Congratulations! This is wonderful news and they can go onto their next steps as planned. Time to celebrate.

Getting better results than they'd expected

Congratulations! This is wonderful news and they can go onto their next steps as planned, or reconsider their options if there is an alternative path they would prefer to take. For example, they may wish to take different A level subjects or start an apprenticeship at a higher level. Time to chat to their teachers at sixth form, college, or other education provider about their options before celebrating!

What to do if results are disappointing

The most important thing is to remember that this is not the end of a successful career for your teen, albeit that they may need to take a different approach than what they had originally planned. Try to be supportive and reassuring; there are always alternatives, and a positive outlook usually speeds up finding the right solution.

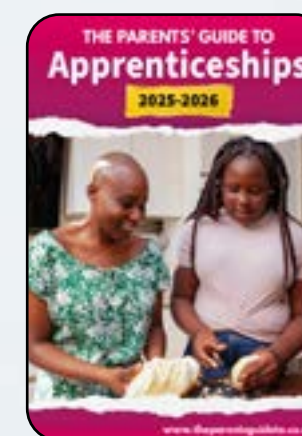
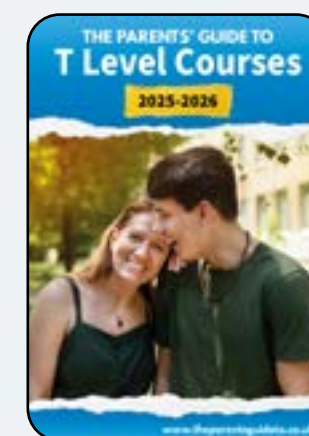
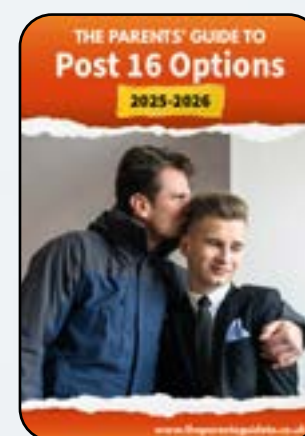
School support

Make sure you know who to contact at your teen's school or college for advice and support if results do not go as planned. Find out this information ahead of results day so you have the details to hand, should your teen need them.

Next steps if results don't go to plan:

1. Contact the school / college / education provider and see whether they will be accepted with their existing results. If their grades are just below what they had expected, this may be possible.
2. If they have not passed maths and/or English, it may be possible for them to start their new course whilst studying for resits at the same time.
3. This may also apply if they have not passed one or two of their other GCSE subjects.
4. Look for alternative qualifications where they can study something similar that requires lower GCSE passes.
5. Do an internship, traineeship or volunteer placement to obtain, and be able to demonstrate, that they have skills needed to continue further studies .
6. Start an apprenticeship – perhaps at a lower entry level.

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Rethinking What They do Next

All 16 year olds must undertake further education until they are 18. This doesn't mean they have to stay on at school or go to college, they can get a job with a training element to it, but they cannot work full-time without some training. Their options are to take academic qualifications, such as A levels, BTECs, IB or T Levels or take vocational qualifications, such as an apprenticeship, technical qualifications or job with training.

Remember, low grades do not mean your teen cannot study their chosen subject at sixth form. There may

be an option to retake the GCSE, or commence the sixth form subject without a retake. However, in some cases, GCSE results are a strong indicator of future performance and it may not be wise to pursue a subject for which they do not have a natural aptitude; choosing an alternative subject might be a better option. Speak to their school teachers and get advice about next steps.

If they've struggled to get good results at GCSE, they can do an internship or traineeships to get the experience to progress.



What's the best route for future success?

Sixth form qualifications fall into two categories: academic or vocational. Academic qualifications are subject focused and largely theoretical, whilst vocational qualifications are usually more hands-on and pertain to industry and the world of work. The best known qualifications are A levels and BTEC, because most schools with sixth forms offer both these options. However, there are other alternatives that could well be a better fit for your teen.

Studied at school or college:

- ▶ A levels
- ▶ BTEC
- ▶ International Baccalaureates (IB) – only offered by a small number of schools

- ▶ T Levels
- ▶ Cambridge technicals

Studied through work (with release to an educational centre for the learning element)

- ▶ Apprenticeships
- ▶ BTEC apprenticeships
- ▶ Technical qualifications (such as NVQs Tech Bac or City and Guilds)

All of the above options provide routes to higher education after sixth form, so your teen will not be closing down their chance of further study by taking any one of them. However, if your teen has a specific course or university they hope to start after sixth form, they should check entry requirements before choosing what to study at sixth form.



Where to get independent help

Sometimes it's easier to discuss next steps during times of disappointment with someone who isn't directly or personally involved.

The Exam Results Helpline is also available and can be used to access free support from trained careers advisors

They're open 08.00-20.00 Mon-Fri and 10.00-17.00 Saturdays and Bank Holidays. Opening hours are extended around results day.

Qualification/Educational Routes

Level 8	Doctorate (PhD)			NVQ 8	
Level 7	Masters degree (MA)			Degree apprenticeship / NVQ 5, 6, 7	
Level 6	Bachelors degree BA or BSc				
Level 5	Foundation degree FdA or FdSc	Higher National Diploma (HND)			
Level 4			Higher National Certificate (HNC)	Higher apprenticeship / NVQ 4	
Level 3	A levels Grades A-E	International Baccalaureate	T Levels	BTEC (extended) diploma BTEC certificate	Advanced apprenticeship / NVQ 3
Level 2	GCSE Grades 4- 9 (C, B, A or A*)		BTEC first diploma		Intermediate apprenticeship / NVQ 2
Level 1	GCSE Grades 1- 3 (D,E,F or G)		Foundation diploma / entry level qualifications		Traineeship / NVQ 1
Academic route			Vocational route		Applied / work route

Levels of Education

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland there are 8 qualification levels (1 - 8) plus an entry level qualification for those just starting. Generally, the higher the level, the more difficult the qualification is.

With so many different qualifications, it can be hard to know what they mean and where they might lead to next. To help you understand, we've created a summary of what the levels mean highlighting academic, vocational and work-based routes to higher education.

Making the Right Choice

You know that the better grades your teen achieves at sixth form, the more options they'll have about what to do next. Remember, they're likely to improve their outcomes when they're studying both something they enjoy learning that is presented in a way that appeals to them. In broad terms, those who like coursework and prefer "doing" will enjoy taking BTECs, T Levels or apprenticeships. Students that prefer listening and taking exams will enjoy the traditional A level or IB approach.

Same destination, different path

If your teen has their heart set on a career choice but little aptitude for the subjects needed to progress towards it, vocational courses can be helpful. Someone that wants to go into business could avoid a maths-heavy Economics A level and choose to take a BTEC in Business Studies or a T Level in Business Services instead.

Alternatively, they can start an apprenticeship in an industry area they are interested in (such as hotels and leisure) and work towards their goal from a different angle.

Options after GCSE:

Full time study

A levels
(level 3)

T Levels
(level 3)

BTECs
(levels 1,2,3)

Other technical qualifications
(levels 1,2,3)

Exam retakes

Work and study

Apprenticeships
(levels 2,3)

Supported internships

Traineeships



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.



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.

A summary of all their options - part 1

	Qualification Type	Type of learning	Entry requirements	Subject choices	UCAS points	Can lead to
A levels	General Certificate of Advanced level qualification	Mostly theory	At least x5 GCSE grade 4 – 9. At least grade 5/6 in the subject/s chosen for A level	Typically three subjects	56 points - A* 48 points - A 40 points - B 32 points - C 24 points - D 16 points - E	University, further study, training or work apprenticeship
International Baccalaureate	Diploma Programme (IBDP)	Mostly theory, some practical	Set by the school, up to 5 GCSEs	Up to six subjects plus some compulsory modules including an extended essay	Up to 56 for Higher Level and 28 for Standard Level (grade 7). In the IBCP, students also earn up to 12 points for the Reflective Project.	University, further study, training or work
	Careers Related Programme (IBCP)	Balance between practical and theory		At least two from the IB diploma range + CP core + career related study		
BTEC Nationals	(Level 3 are similar standard to A Levels, with subsidiary diploma equivalent to one A level, BTEC diploma equivalent to 2 A levels and extended diploma equivalent to 3 A levels).	Combination of practical and theory	Up to 5 GCSEs	Three vocational subjects	For subsidiary diploma: 56 points – D* (distinction) 48 points – D (distinction) 32 points – M (Merit) 16 points – P (Pass) <i>Points are doubled for diploma and tripled for extended diploma</i>	University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work
T Levels (England only)	Technical Level Qualification	Classroom learning (80%) with industry placement (20%)	Up to 5 GCSEs	One industry field, such as construction or Education	168 points - D* 144 points - D 120 points - M 96 points - P (C or above) 72 points - P (D or E)	University, apprenticeships

A summary of all their options - part 2

	Qualification Type	Type of learning	Entry requirements	Subject choices	UCAS points	Can lead to
Cambridge Technicals	A Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate (equivalent to an A level) or Cambridge Technical Diploma (equivalent to x2 A levels)	Practical course with lots of coursework based on real life case studies	At least x5 GCSE passes	Range of vocational subjects	Cambs Tech level 3: 56 points – D* (distinction) 48 points – D 32 points – M (merit) 16 points – P (pass)	University, further study, training or work
Other Qualifications	City and Guilds; National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or Tech Bac (similar to Baccalaureate)	Dependent on the qualification, most contain practical on the job training	Set by the school, up to 5 GCSEs	Range of vocational subjects	In most cases no UCAS points are awarded but there are some exceptions.	Further study, training, professional development programmes or work
BTEC Apprenticeships	Advanced Level 3 (equivalent to x2 A levels)	Work based including off-site learning	Advanced Level 3 - depends on employer, some require at least 3 GCSEs	Range of vocational subjects, driven by the job offered	N/A	University, further study, training or work
Other Options	Traineeship / Volunteer with training / internship – all to help your child get enough skills to take on an apprenticeship	Work based	None	Range of vocational subjects, driven by the job offered	N/A	Further study, apprenticeships or job



Final Words

We hope you've enjoyed reading this guide and feel better prepared for results day. Now it's time to enjoy the holidays with your teen, creating happy memories as they move closer towards becoming independent young adults.

If your teen doesn't get the GCSE results they want, then this guide will give you some thoughts on how to reassess and create an alternative way for them to achieve their ambitions.

Almost all of us tend to be better at things we enjoy than things we don't. If your teen has a natural passion for certain subjects (whether academic or vocational), they will likely make good post GCSE choices. Don't forget, your teen will need to spend a lot of time on them (much more than they did at GCSE), so it's a good idea that they have an interest and aptitude for the subjects they study.

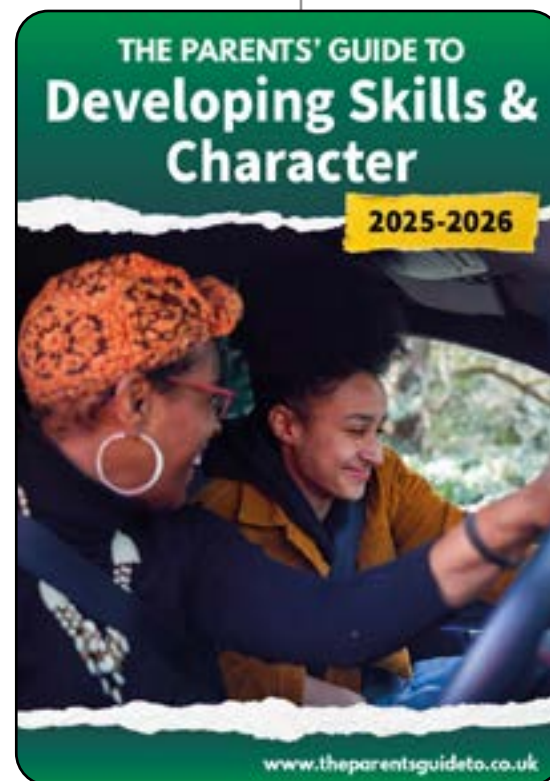
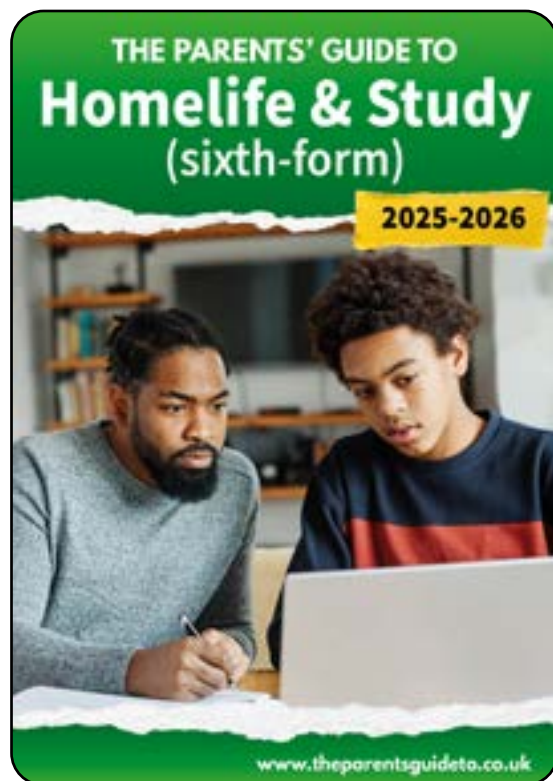
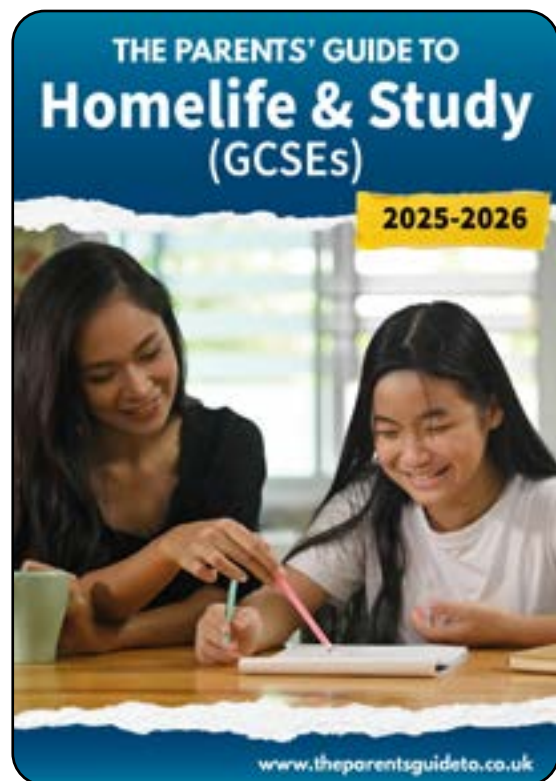
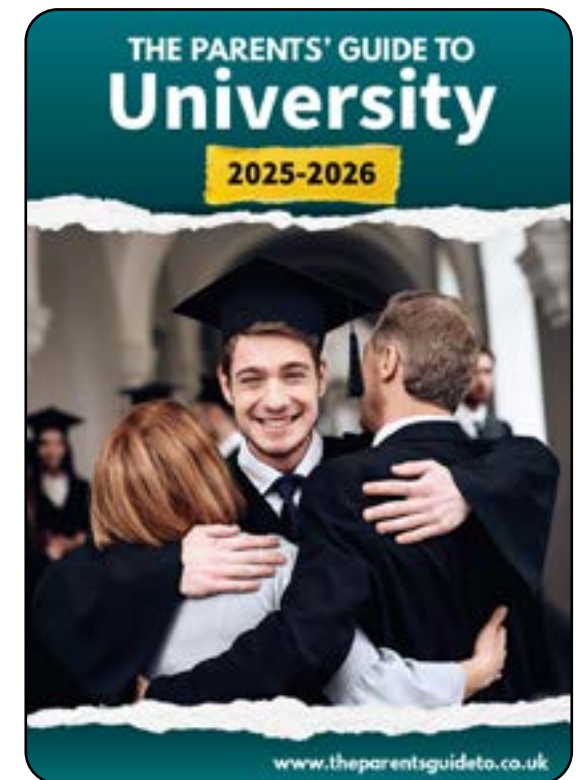
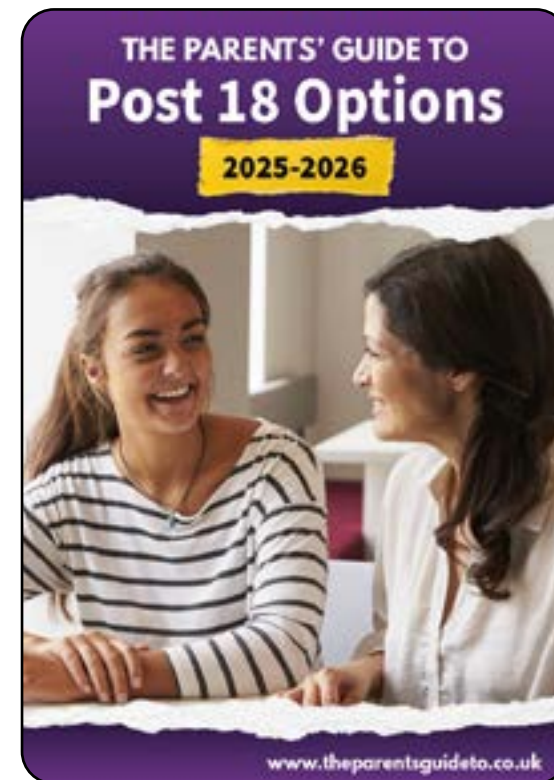
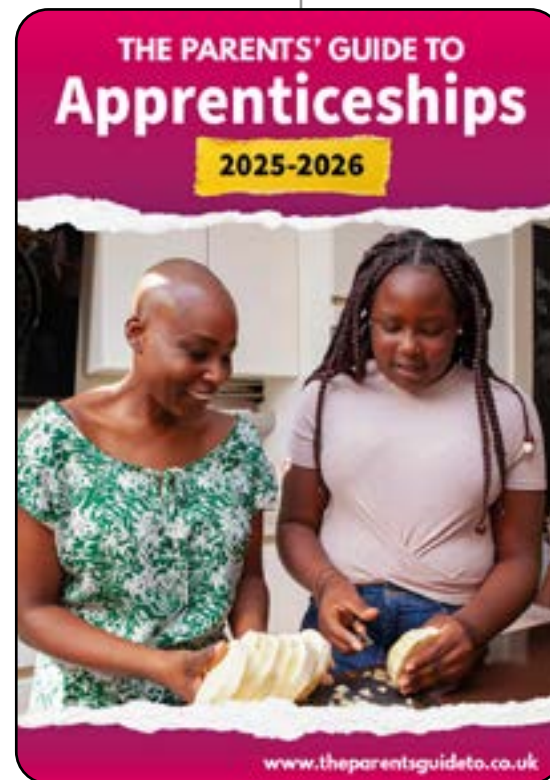
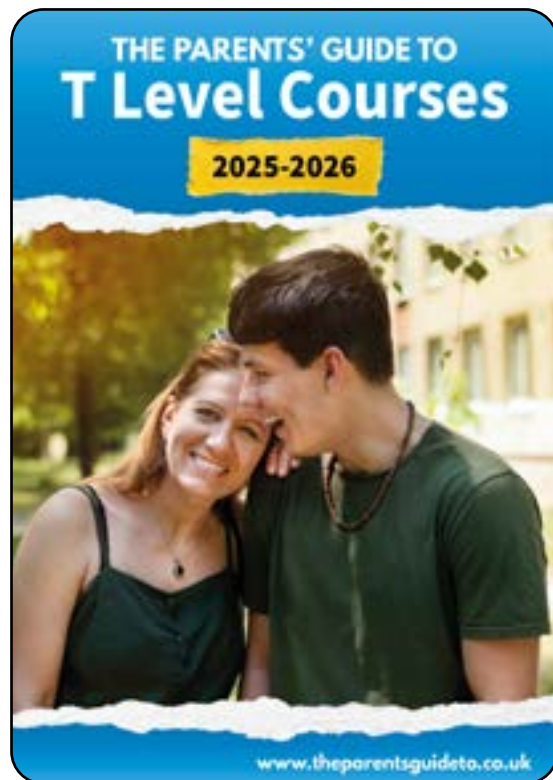
Sixteen is possibly the first time your child is making decisions for themselves that will have a significant impact on their future. It's important for them to realise that they will need to make choices that are right for them and not follow what their friends are doing; it's the first step toward their independent future. Whilst they should be making decisions for themselves, they'll still appreciate help, guidance and support from you.

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