

Your Guide To Career Routes

Whether you're leaving school at 16, thinking about what's next after college or sixth form, or just wanting to try a new career route, there are loads of different paths you can take. This guide breaks down the main routes into your future career.

Stay in Education: A Levels, T Levels, or Other Qualifications

A Levels

- Academic subjects like Maths, English, Biology, History, etc.
- Usually take 3 subjects over 2 years.
- Good route if you want to go to university or aren't sure what career you want yet.
- Leads to: University, higher apprenticeships, some jobs.

T Levels

- Qualifications focused on specific careers (e.g. health, digital, construction).
- 80% classroom, 20% on-the-job (with 45-day placement).
- Equivalent to 3 A Levels.
- Leads to: Work, apprenticeships, university.

BTECs & Vocational Courses

- Practical and career-focused (e.g. business, sport, media).
- Can be taken at colleges.
- Often include work experience.
- Leads to: Work, apprenticeships, university (some courses).



GCSEs

College/Sixth Form

- ◆ Usually need 5 GCSEs at grade 4+, including English and Maths.
- ◆ A-levels often require grade 6/7+ in the same subject.
- ◆ Foundation routes available if entry grades aren't met.

University

- ◆ Expect at least 5 GCSEs at grade 4/C+, including English and Maths.
- ◆ Top courses (e.g. Medicine, Law) prefer grades 7–9.
- ◆ GCSEs considered alongside A-levels in applications.

Apprenticeships

- ◆ Need English & Maths GCSEs (grade 4+).
- ◆ Higher apprenticeships may need more GCSEs.
- ◆ Functional Skills offered if GCSEs not achieved.

Core GCSE Subjects

Combines/Triple Science
English Language
English Literature
Maths



Apprenticeships

PARS recognises the achievements of apprentices after completion, helping boost career progression and employability!

Learn more [HERE](#)

What is an Apprenticeship?

- A real job with training.
- You earn a wage while learning.
- Time is split between work and study (e.g. 4 days work, 1 day study).

Levels

-  **Intermediate (Level 2)** – equivalent to GCSEs.
-  **Advanced (Level 3)** – equivalent to A Levels.
-  **Higher (Level 4–5)** – equivalent to HNCs or Foundation Degrees.
-  **Degree (Level 6–7)** – equivalent to a full university degree.

Best for:

- Those who want to earn while they learn and gain hands-on experience.



University

Key Note: Most level 3 apprenticeships give you **UCAS Tariff points** – useful for university applications!

What is University?

- Higher education courses in a wide range of subjects.
- Usually lasts 3–4 years (undergraduate degrees).

Entry Requirements:

- Usually A Levels, T Levels, BTECs, or an Access to HE Diploma.

You can study:

- Academic subjects (e.g. Law, Psychology, Physics).
- Vocational degrees (e.g. Nursing, Engineering, Teaching).

Best for:

- Careers that require a **degree** (e.g. doctor, solicitor, architect).
- Those who enjoy academic learning.



Study Programmes & Supported Internships

Study Programmes

- Full time education.
- Help you build skills, get work experience, and prepare for apprenticeships or jobs.
- For 16–19-year-olds who aren't quite ready for a full apprenticeship.

Supported Internships

- For young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).
- Focus on developing skills for employment with extra support.

Employment with Training



You can get a job at 16, but **you must still be in some form of education or training** until you're 18.



Some employers offer on-the-job training or will pay for qualifications (like NVQs or professional certificates).

Discover your skills by clicking [HERE](#) and completing a 5–10-minute quiz!

Gap Years & Volunteering

Not ready to decide? Take a year out to:

Gain work experience



Volunteer



Travel



Think about what's next



...Great for personal development and boosting your CV!

How to Decide What's Right for You



Ask yourself:

- Do I like studying or prefer practical learning?
- Do I know what career I want, or do I want to keep my options open?
- Do I want to earn money straight away?
- Would I enjoy a mix of work and study?

Where to Get Help:



UCAS (<https://www.ucas.com/>)



Careers advisers at school or college



Apprenticeships (<https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/>)



National Careers Service (<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>)

Final Tips

There's no “one right path”

Not everyone takes the same path and that's okay. Some go to university, others do apprenticeships, work, or start businesses. Success is personal, not just about money or status. Choose what feels right for you, not others' expectations.

You can change direction later

Choosing your next step at whatever age can feel big, but it's not forever. People change careers, return to study, or discover new interests. Your path can twist and turn — every step helps you grow and learn something new.

Focus on what suits you

It's tempting to follow friends or what sounds impressive, but the best path is the one that suits you. Think about what you enjoy, how you learn best, and the lifestyle you want. Your interests and strengths are key to finding a career you'll enjoy.