

Choosing your GCSEs can seem overwhelming. You may be worried that you will make the wrong choice that will affect your future education and career options.

At Activate Learning, we want you to enjoy this process and make the right decisions for YOU. So, we have put together some helpful tips and frequently asked questions to help you make up your mind.

Should I base GCSE options on what I'm good at?

If you have a natural ability, this can help as you will be balancing many subjects during your GCSEs. Most future courses require a minimum amount of GCSE passes (Grade 4 or above), so choosing a subject you are good at, will give you a better opportunity to gain one of those pass requirements. Being good at a subject also means you can often work faster at it and it may have an impact on your career choices in the future.

Should I base GCSE options on what I enjoy?

It is always good to enjoy what you do. However, all students have to study maths, English and either triple science (3 GCSEs) or combined science (2 GCSEs). Balancing these compulsory subjects with subjects you love is a good idea. Loving a subject can often mean you naturally work harder at it and achieve better grades.

Should I choose a GCSE subject because I like the teacher?

It is great when a subject is taught well by an inspiring teacher BUT they might leave! Choose a subject based on your interest and your ability.

Should I choose a GCSE subject because my friends are doing it?

Being friends does not always mean you are good at the same subjects. Your interests and abilities may differ from your friends and it's a good idea to choose the subjects based on YOUR interests and abilities – You can still keep your friends for socialising and you will make new friends in your new subject areas.

Whose advice should I listen to when choosing GCSE options?

Your teachers can offer good advice as they know you and know how the GCSEs work. If you are undecided about subjects, speak to a teacher and they may be able to help. Speaking to a careers adviser can be useful if you have an idea of the career you want to move into. They can offer useful insights on subjects needed for certain careers. Parents or older siblings may also be able to offer support as they know you and know what you like but they may not be too familiar with grades required for future careers etc. So, speaking to a range of people is a good idea. Attend a college open event and ask the industry specialist teachers who have worked in that industry what GCSEs may benefit you in the future.

Are my A-level choices affected by the GCSE choices I make now?

You do not always need a GCSE in a subject to study it at A level e.g. law, psychology or media but some subjects do require it. If you are considering an A level subject already, it would be a good idea to speak to a teacher or further education provider to see what the entry requirements are.

What is an Ebacc (English Baccalaureate)?

The EBacc is a set of subjects at GCSE that can help to keep a young person's options open for further study and future careers.

This combination of GCSEs is compulsory in some schools but not in others. Speak to your teachers and ask them if they think you should consider doing the Ebacc.

The EBacc is:

- English Language and English Literature
- Maths
- Science – Biology, Chemistry and Physics
- Geography or History
- A language i.e., French, German, or Spanish

What options are open to me once I finish my GCSEs and how might they affect my choices now?

Once you finish your GCSEs you will have the following options:

1. A levels
2. Vocational course
3. Apprenticeship

What is an A Level?

An A Level is a more academic subject-based qualification that can lead to university, further study, or work. You would usually choose three different subjects.

What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a genuine job that allows you to earn as you learn, while gaining valuable skills and professional knowledge in a specific industry role.

What is a vocational course?

A vocational course is a career-based, specialist work related qualification. They are designed to give learners the skills they need to move on to higher education, an apprenticeship or to go straight into employment.

Where can I find more information about my choices?

1. Your school will have copies of the college prospectus in their careers library. The prospectus is a good place to start as it gives details of entry criteria, including which subjects and grades are required. Likewise, the college website will give information on entry criteria.
2. You could also visit a college open event where tutors will be able to advise you.
3. If you know you would like to go to University, it's never too early to do your research - take a look at the UCAS website www.ucas.com and find out which subjects and grades you need to access your chosen course. Then track back to where you are now to ensure you choose the right GCSEs to get you on your chosen path.
4. If you are interested in taking an apprenticeship when leaving school, take a look at the Government website www.apprenticeship.gov to gain more information on the types of apprenticeships available and the subjects and grades needed.

Do I need a GCSE in a similar subject to the vocational course or apprenticeship I am interested in?

No. The only specific GCSEs you may be asked for to study a vocational course or apprenticeship are Maths, English, and Science.

If I know what vocational course I want to do now, how can I choose my options wisely to prepare me for it?

If you have a course in mind and you have the option of studying a similar GCSE at your school, it may be helpful to take that GCSE. Go to a college open event and speak to the course tutors. They have worked in the industries that they teach and will be able to advise you of any helpful GCSEs for a particular career pathway.

What if I change my mind?

That is OK! You may decide that you would like to go into a different career once you have finished your GCSEs. That is why the only specific subjects you may be asked for to study a vocational course at college are Maths, English and Science which are compulsory.



**For more information
check out our websites:**

activatelearning.ac.uk
activateapprenticeships.co.uk