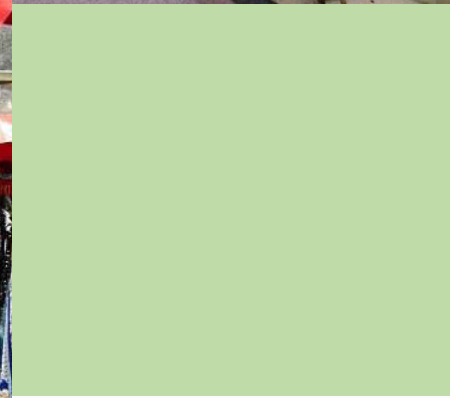


Alternative Ambitions

Promoting alternatives
to university



Welcome



I'm delighted to welcome you to Uni's not for me's new e-magazine, Alternative Ambitions. Our sole aim is to give you the right information to help your students make life decisions that are right for them as individuals. From apprenticeships to school leaver programmes to technical and career colleges - the opportunities are endless, and can give young people a head start to a career at a time when graduate jobs are no longer guaranteed.

Alternative Ambitions will be delivered to you monthly and will be packed full of practical and inspirational information. As this is a trial and new to us too, we welcome any feedback. We want to get it right as it's such an important issue for you, your students and for a healthy, balanced workforce.

Thank you and enjoy!

Hattie Wrixon

Co-founder of Uni's not for me

"I was interested to learn about the Uni's not for me website. It is important that young people are aware of the wide range of opportunities that are available to them upon leaving secondary education. I wish the website every success in the future."

Nicky Morgan Secretary of State for Education

uni's not for me

intelligent | articulate | ambitious

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UNFM in the news...



Calling all aspiring journalists

Competition time ... in partnership with News Academy

The News Academy is an initiative of News UK, built on our commitment to securing a sustainable future of high quality, professional journalism. We believe that a vibrant news industry is vital for a mature democracy.

We are working in partnership with the highly regarded Young Journalists' Academy (YJA).

Enter our fortnightly competition for the chance to see your work published on the News Academy website and win a £100 Amazon voucher.

Simply send us a 200-word piece following this fortnight's theme and you could see your work published on the News Academy website!

This month you will need to download the press pack, link [HERE](#).

All info is on our [HOMEPAGE](#).

News Academy wants aspiring journalists to submit stories, scoops and comment pieces covering the 2015 General Election, which they will then publish.



Did you know...

All these people didn't attend university...

- **Richard Branson** – Virgin
- **Karen Brady** – Former managing director of Birmingham City FC and currently vice-chairman of West Ham United FC
- **Levi Roots** – Entrepreneur and creator of Reggae Reggae sauce
- **James Caan** – Dragons' Den
- **Laura Tenison** – Founder of JoJo Maman Bébé
- **Kate Reardon** – Editor of Tatler
- **Charlie Mullins** – Founder of Pimlico Plumbers

Careers you thought required a degree... but don't

- Accountancy
- Law
- Journalism
- Pilot
- Army
- Trader
- Engineering
- Graphic Designer
- Advertising

These are just some of the alternatives to uni...

- Apprenticeships
- School leaver programmes
- Internships
- Work experience
- University technical colleges
- Career colleges
- College
- NVQs
- Straight to work
- Gap Year



FutureLearn Choices

**Free online courses to help
you decide if uni is for you**

Deciding what to do in the run up to finishing school or college can be hard. Choosing whether to undertake A-levels, attend university, embark on an apprenticeship or start work can change the course of your life, which, understandably makes the decision even tougher.

These choices, and the application and interview processes that follow, can be daunting. But you're not alone – according to the Office for National Statistics, there are around three million 16 to 19 year olds in the UK alone, who are making the same tough decisions.

INTRODUCING FUTURELEARN CHOICES

To help you with these decisions, FutureLearn has introduced **FutureLearn Choices** – a collection of free online courses to bridge the gap between school and higher education, and help 16 to 19 year olds choose the right degree, uni or career.

The courses, provided by many top UK universities, run for three to eight weeks during June and July, and can be taken anywhere, anytime on mobile, tablet or PC. The main purpose is to give you an insight into a topic you're already interested in, which can in turn help determine whether you want to enter into that industry and pursue it for further learning.

FutureLearn Choices courses are designed to help you make the most of post-exam term time and the start of your summer holidays, so that you're prepared for and relaxed about the important decisions you'll need to make.

In the meantime, you can see all of the FutureLearn Choices courses at www.futurelearn.com/collections/choices. You can also visit our **blog**, which includes tips on choosing your next step.

By Neil Harvey, head of marketing, FutureLearn.



Future Learn

Top tips for students on taking the next step after A-levels

So, you're in your final year of school and you need to make the tough decision of what to do next. Although it can be a hard decision to make, it's a good opportunity to get you thinking about the steps you need to take towards achieving your dream career. Here are a few top tips from FutureLearn to help you make that decision.

1. SPEAK TO AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE.

Making fundamental decisions about your future at aged 17/18 can be a daunting experience. You're also still discovering your passions. So speaking to friends, family, careers advisers and people who are working in the industry you're interested in, can really help you make your decision. There's lots of free advice available online too, like the [National Careers Service](#).

2. THAT BEING SAID, REMEMBER THIS IS YOUR DECISION.

Lots of people will offer their advice, and it is great to listen. However, this is a decision that can affect the rest of your life, so it's not one to be taken lightly. As this is your decision, weigh up the pros and cons of each piece of advice you receive, but ultimately, go with your gut and do what you feel would make you most happy.



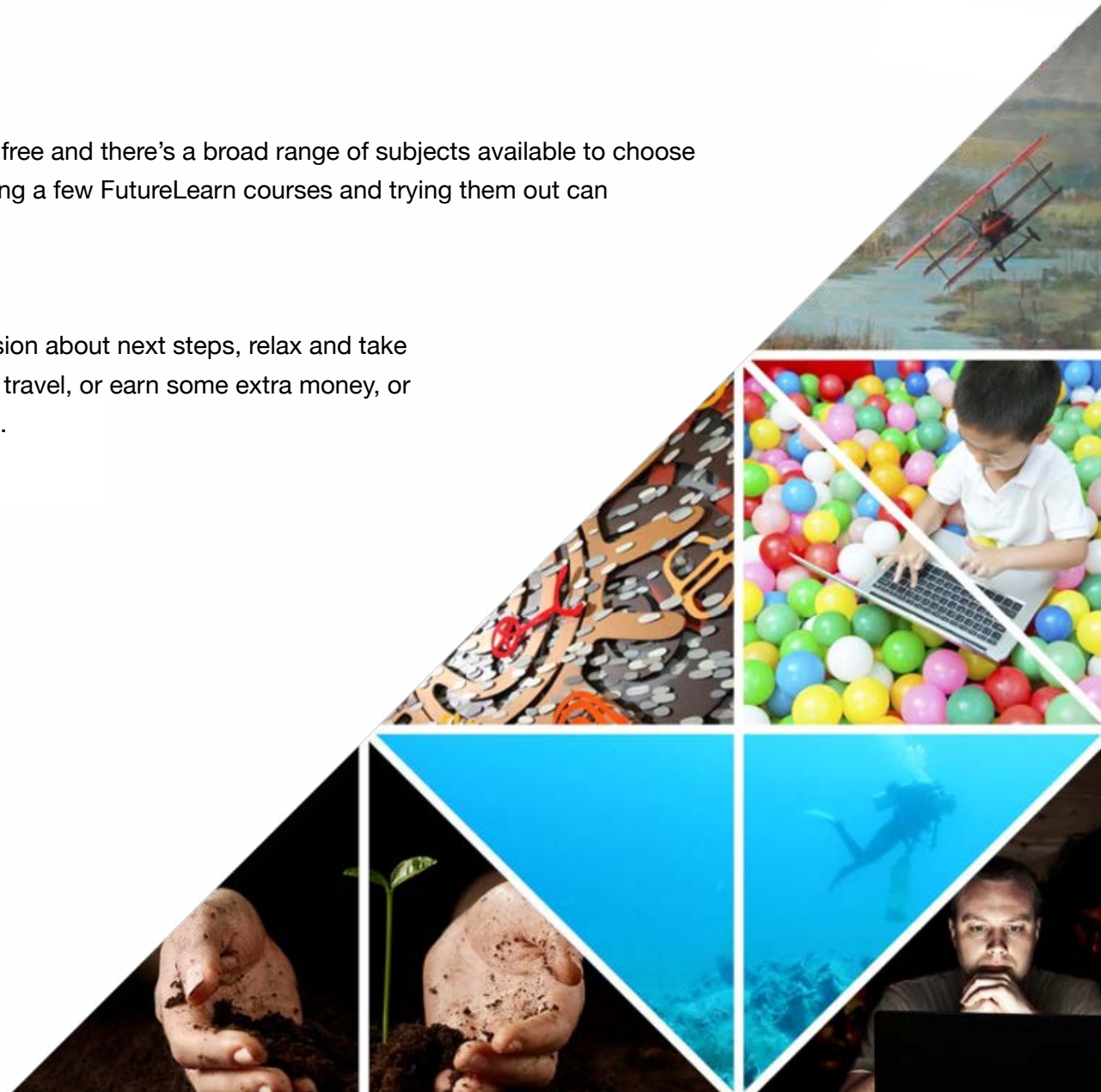
3. DON'T PANIC!

You can take as many FutureLearn courses as you want. They're free and there's a broad range of subjects available to choose from. If you're in two minds about what route to go down, choosing a few FutureLearn courses and trying them out can really help narrow down your choice.

4. ENJOY THE SUMMER

Now that you've finished your A-levels and have made your decision about next steps, relax and take advantage of the long break you have. It could be a good time to travel, or earn some extra money, or to catch up with friends and family after the hard year you've had.

You deserve it!



2015 education party pledges

Labour

After a long debate over free schools, Labour finally promised that existing free schools will remain open if they take power. But schools will be subject to more oversight from local authorities. It would allow some new schools, but only in areas judged to need new places. The new schools would be called “parent-led academies”, not free schools.

Labour have committed to the following:

- The party would create new independent directors of school standards to drive up results in local areas and intervene in troubled schools, as well as taking the views of parents into account.
- The party would guarantee childcare for parents of primary school children between 8am to 6pm.
- One of the most controversial Labour education policy is its plan to cut the maximum cap for university tuition fees from £9,000 to £6,000.
- Labour says it will increase education spending at least in line with inflation. The extra funding will allow Labour to cap class sizes at no more than 30 pupils. They will also create thousands of new school places.

Conservatives

Free schools, funded by the state but run by parents, teachers or third parties outside council control, are the centre of Tory thinking on schools. Should the Conservatives win the election, at least 500 extra free schools will be built according to David Cameron.

- The Prime Minister has announced that all primary and secondary schools rated as “requiring improvement” or “inadequate” by Ofsted could be given new leadership and converted to academies.
- Children will be set demanding new targets to ensure they have mastered the basics of reading, writing and maths.
- Nicky Morgan, the Education Secretary, is drawing up proposals to reform the teaching of English and maths in state schools so that every child masters the essential skills of the “three Rs”.
- David Cameron has admitted that school spending per pupil could fall in real terms under a Conservative government.
- Despite strong pressure from MPs, Mr Cameron remains opposed to the widespread creation of new grammar schools, but has hinted at allowing existing grammars to expand.



- Existing schools will be allowed to apply to become grammar schools and select according to ability and aptitude
- Students may take an apprenticeship qualification instead of four non-core GCSEs which can be continued at A-Level
- Subject to academic performance, Ukip will remove tuition fees for students taking approved degrees in science, medicine, technology, engineering and maths on the condition that they live, work and pay tax in the UK for five years after the completion of their degrees
- The target of 50 per cent of school leavers going to university will be scrapped
- Students from the EU will pay the same student fee rates as International students
- Ukip supports the principle of Free Schools that are open to the whole community and uphold British values
- Schools will be investigated by Ofsted on the presentation of a petition to the Department for Education signed by 25 per cent of parents or governors
- Children would be taught 'positive messages and pride in their country'



The party's leader, Nick Clegg, has said education will be a key theme for the Liberal Democrats this year. He has promised to maintain the existing budget.

Some of their achievements in Government have included:

- Giving 15 hours free early education to all three-to-four year-olds and 40 per cent of two-year-olds
- Free school meals to all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
- Setting up a £2.5 billion Pupil Premium, which puts more money into schools with pupils who need additional help.



Scrapping Ofsted because of the 'stress' that it causes teachers is among the Green Party's policies.

They support replacing it with a 'collaborative system of monitoring school performance,' which allows teachers and local authorities to work together to maintain high standards.

Other ideas include:

- Opposing performance-related pay for teachers
- Removing public funding from faith schools
- A new citizenship programme to be taught in all schools
- Extending free school meals beyond Key Stage 1
- Class sizes of 20
- All teachers to have qualified teacher status
- School will not be compulsory until age seven
- SATS and league tables abolished.
- Existing grammar schools to be gradually integrated into comprehensive system.

milkround

Founded in 1997, Milkround is the UK's leading graduate careers resource with hundreds of apprenticeships, gap year programmes and school leaver schemes. We're committed to giving school leavers career confidence - that means conquering fears of finding, applying and making that first step on the career ladder.

We will help you make study decisions, narrow your job search, apply for jobs and ensure you make the best possible start to your career. With Milkround you get direct access to employers, with no mystery jobs and no unpaid apprenticeships.

We also hold regular events where you get the opportunity to meet potential future employers, learn valuable skills, gain confidence, and meet other students from all over the UK. You get first-hand explanations of what your future jobs could entail and how you can grow and develop.



On Milkround you'll find:

- **sector insights, videos and links**
- **information in a simple, digestible format**
- **personalised dashboard with Milkround+ where you can manage your preferences**
- **career event listings**
- **The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers**

Sign up for a free Milkround profile so you can add individual jobs and apprenticeships to your wishlist and refer to later in your Milkround dashboard.

By registering with Milkround, you can get personalised email job alerts delivered direct to your inbox matched to your career preferences.

Sign up today and start conquering your career fear.

The many advantages of apprenticeships

As an apprentice you get to learn a trade while you earn, they are usually 1-4 years long, and you study towards a certificate. You also get to work alongside professionals and gain real-life experience while getting paid for your efforts. An often overlooked career path, there are many advantages to being an apprentice and it can be the perfect way to kick off your career after finishing school.



Earn while you learn

Instead of piling up a student loan that you could be paying back for years, you are being paid from the start and while you learn everything you need to know about a vocation. It's also the perfect time to join one of these schemes as the new budget revealed that the minimum wage for apprentices will go up by 20% to £3.30 an hour in 2015.

Climb the career ladder

By joining the workforce as a school leaver you will be years ahead of graduates when it comes to experience, which is something that is seen as more and more valuable by employers. And as your employer is taking the time to mould you into their optimal worker they naturally want you to be a success, and will give you all the support you need along the way. If you work hard and are a good fit for the company there could even be a permanent offer after your apprenticeship ends, and if there isn't, you have earned a competitive edge in your job search - something which is extremely valuable in today's climate.

Gain valuable skills

As an apprentice you are learning by watching and doing, which will teach you skills you can use throughout your career. Generic things like teamwork as well as working independently, how to behave in the workplace and how to take responsibility will always be important characteristics of a good worker and an apprenticeship will teach you these along with the more vocational ones.

Network

By not spending your time in a classroom but an actual workplace you are being exposed to one of the most valuable things you can have: contacts. Get to know people and keep in contact even if your place of apprenticeship doesn't end up being your permanent employer. This will ensure that you have a potential safety net - not to mention many new friends.

If you have decided that you're not attending university, or are undecided, an apprenticeship might just be the thing for you. So many sectors are available to you, such as IT, retail, banking, accounting and much more. Have a look at the widespread selection of available ones, see if there's a career path there that suits you, and start your working life off with a bang.

Written by: Sophie Lundberg



For more information on opportunities and advice go to www.schoolleavers.milkround.com

SCHOOL LEAVERS

Jobs board



ATOS - Apprenticeships - Technical:

Our technical apprenticeships covers a range of specialist areas, so wherever your strengths lie we're sure to have a role for you.



BDO - School Leaver Programme:

Gain a prestigious professional qualification, have a permanent salaried job and gain commercial work experience alongside leading professionals, working on real business projects.



Aldi - Store Apprentice / Logistics Apprentice:

Whether you choose store or logistics management, after this three year scheme you'll have the perfect springboard to a successful career in retail.



Allianz - Insurance Technical Trainee Programme:

Develop a wide range of skills and contribute to product design, pricing decisions, monitoring of commercial performance, detecting fraud and more.



Crowe Clark Whitehill - School Leaver Programme:

We are looking for trainees with the attitude and commitment to meet the needs of our award winning firm.



IBM - Apprenticeships:

If you've decided to dive straight into the world of work after college and have a passion for technology, this is one of the best learning experiences out there.



Jobs board

THINK ONE OF THESE JOBS COULD BE GOOD FOR YOU?

CLICK ON THE LOGOS TO FIND OUT MORE



PwC - Higher Apprenticeship opportunities in Tax:

You'll be part of a team working on client projects, building the in-depth business knowledge you'll need to progress through our business.



Mercedes-Benz

Mercedes - Parts Operations Apprentice:

If you have a keen interest in the automotive industry and are prepared to learn challenging new skills to the highest standard then this could well be the job for you!



M&G - Retail Change & Operations Apprentice scheme:

The scheme is designed to help people without degrees start their careers within a leading investment management company.



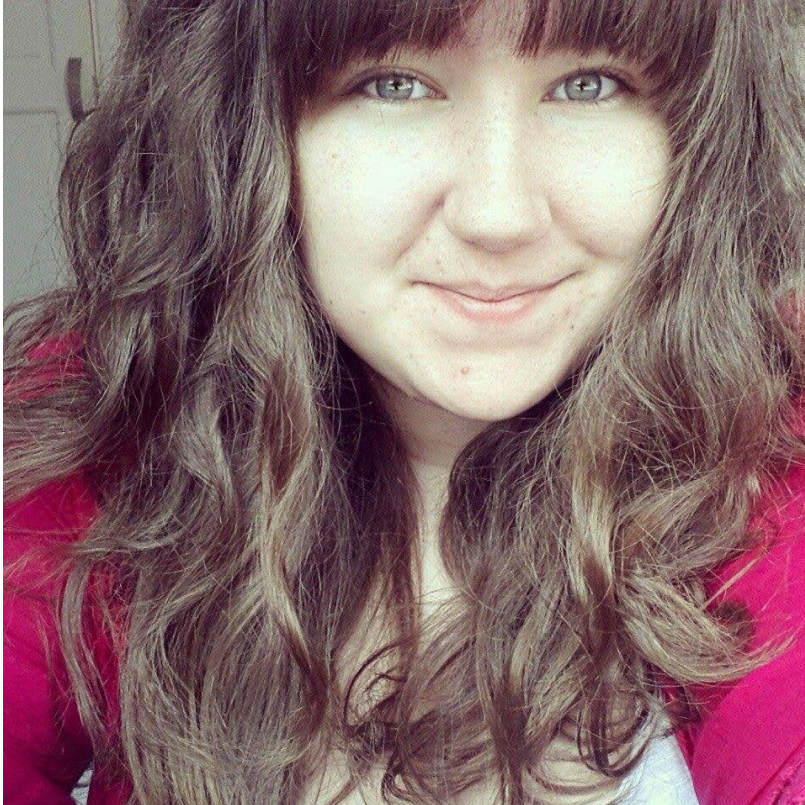
Smith & Williamson - Higher Apprenticeship Programme:

If you're looking for an opportunity where you will be doing real work, for real clients with real responsibility from an early stage, look no further.



Softcat - IT Sales Apprentice:

An opportunity for high achieving sixth form and college students to begin an exciting career at a renowned IT company.



From our own apprentice – Bekah.

If someone said to me a year ago I would be doing an apprenticeship, I would have laughed and said “don’t be silly, I don’t know anything about engineering.”

Clearly, at this point, I didn’t understand what apprenticeships were. Yet here I am, a year into my full time journalism apprenticeship working in London... the location is important when you’re from a small town like me.

I spend four days a week blogging, researching, interviewing and publishing my own work (which, when you want to be a writer, is a dream come true). The other day is spent at college where I’m learning shorthand, media law and journalism. The apprenticeship course lasts for two years, at the end of which I’ll have earned an apprenticeship qualification as well as a diploma. Though the best part is that unlike those doing journalism degrees, I’m earning while I learn. Through this apprenticeship I’ve gained independence as well as confidence in my ability and more experience than I’d have thought possible at just 19 years old.

Apprenticeships seen as a “man’s world” by young people - and their parents

- **Parents are twice as likely to advise boys to take on an apprenticeship compared to girls**
- **Only one girl in 10 sees an apprenticeship as a viable option for themselves**
- **British Gas is urging more girls to consider an apprenticeship as a career option**
- **Half of female teens are receiving unhelpful careers advice**



New research from British Gas has revealed that parents are twice as likely to advise boys to take on an apprenticeship compared to girls. 22% of parents would encourage their son to take on an apprenticeship while only 12% of parents would give the same advice to their daughter.

Parental endorsement shows through strongly in the take-up among boys. When queried about what career their parents would like them to pursue, a quarter (24%) of males said an apprenticeship; only 7% of girls reported the same.

In an independent survey polling teens and parents, more than a third of UK parents (35%) admitted offering their children differing career advice depending on their gender. The result of the discrepancy is that only one girl in 10 across the UK sees an apprenticeship as a viable option for themselves. Yet more than twice as many teenage boys (22%) are keen to go straight from school into an apprenticeship scheme.

British Gas, which is currently training 1,200 apprentices across the UK, has urged more girls to consider an apprenticeship. Explaining its recruitment drive, the company said in 2014 only 4% of applicants for its competitive technical and engineering apprenticeship schemes were female.

Claire Miles, managing director for Service & Repair at British Gas, commented: *“It’s clear from this research that apprenticeships are still regarded as something of a man’s world among young people. That’s behind the times! Despite the rising popularity of apprenticeships, we’re disappointed that more girls aren’t benefiting from this career option.*

“Apprenticeships are a great way into an organisation. A British Gas apprenticeship allows you to earn while you learn and encourages you to develop skills for life. I’d encourage all girls thinking about their future career, or looking for employment, to consider an apprenticeship.”

British Gas’ survey also reveals concerns with careers advice for girls. Half (49%) of female teens polled complained of receiving unhelpful advice and (44%) of boys shared the same complaint.

Poor careers advice has resulted in girls limiting their own career choices. More than 70% of girls surveyed expressed a preference for traditionally “female” stereotyped roles within their top three career choices: the beauty industry (75%), nursing (73%) and childcare (72%).

Tips for teens interested in an apprenticeship at British Gas:

1. Head over to the official apprenticeship [website](#) to discover more about apprenticeships
2. Keep a close eye on <http://po.st/BGNAW2015> for information on apprenticeship schemes
3. Attend one of British Gas’ open days during National Apprenticeship Week. The events will be hosted at each of the company’s six training academies, which are located across the country. You can register your interest by visiting [here](#).

Please visit [here](#) for more information and to apply to a British Gas apprenticeship.



British Gas

Case study



Name: Stephanie Walker

Age: 24

Position: Services and Repair Engineer at British Gas

Career History: Qualified as a British Gas engineer in 2012

Lives: Newcastle

24-year old Stephanie Walker from Newcastle never planned to pursue a career in engineering. Passionate about sport, Stephanie started a sports degree at university, but one month in, she realised that the course just wasn't for her.

“Many of my friends were heading off to university and it just seemed like a natural next step, but it turned out higher education wasn't what I really wanted – it was a career.”

After leaving university, Stephanie talked through her options with family and friends, but little did she know that this would lead her to what would become her dream job.

“I talked to my grandmother's partner, who had been working as an engineer for British Gas for 40 years. He said great things about the job and really encouraged me to sign up to the apprenticeship

scheme, because he knew that I was looking for a 'hands on' career. “I signed up to the scheme right away and I've never looked back. I absolutely love my job and meeting new customers every day is really rewarding. No day is ever the same, so it never gets boring.”

Despite being one of the few females working in engineering, Stephanie says this doesn't bother her at all.

“Working in a male dominated role is absolutely fine. I was slightly nervous at first and worried that I wouldn't be accepted, but that wasn't the case. All of my colleagues, male and female, have a really good attitude to their work and they aren't concerned with what gender I am.

“I would definitely encourage anybody interested to join the British Gas apprenticeship scheme. As long as you don't mind getting your hands dirty, you're going to enjoy it. The course teaches you technical skills and theory, but you also get to do lots of practical and you can even go out on jobs with another engineer while you're learning, to gain customer experience.”

Stephanie has gained a City & Guilds Level 3 QCF Diploma in Domestic Gas Engineering, and she has big plans for her future with British Gas.

“My British Gas apprenticeship has given me a career for life, and I definitely see myself working for the company for a long time. I'd love to work my way up to become a manager one day and help train other people to get into the profession. I'm really looking forward to my future.”

The many advantages of work experience



Coskun Guclu completed his A-levels in 2014, he has since secured a place at University College London to study biology and anthropology. Though coming to this decision wasn't easy – Coskun took a year out to try a wide range of fields before settling on this course.

He told us about how his gap year helped him develop essential skills that make his CV look brilliant!

If somebody had told me at the start of the year that I would be working in a high level aseptic lab environment, kitted out in a full body suit and various masks and nets, I would have laughed at them and said 'never.' And yet, for me that was one of my favourite parts of my gap year experience, I would have otherwise probably never had the chance to get.

During my time out, I worked in a genetics research facility, a natural history museum, an ancient archaeological dig site and a hospital. By

trying out these various forms of work experience I helped strengthen my CV, as little bits of work experience here and there are very impressive for employers. Employers look for relevant experience and that's important to consider when looking for placements, but they also look kindly upon variety and that's what taking work experience in my gap year has really all been about.

Another area I wanted to get some more experience in was the music industry. I played in various bands during my time at college, I was interested to see what acting as a session musician would be like, taking the opportunities when they were given to me.

I recorded with a handful of groups and artists on singles and EP's, a music video here and there and a handful of live session shows. This was helpful for me as it showed me that despite pursuing an academic subject at university, I can keep playing alongside uni above an amateur level.

Taking chances and not being picky can lead to some exciting, but also pretty inspiring moments. My gap year taught me to consider the possibility that it might not be in my best interests to go to university, and I did consider an apprenticeship more than once during my year out as a serious alternative.

University isn't for everybody but likewise neither are apprenticeships, it all really depends on what you think you would like to get into and how you want to go about it.

Put 100% energy into everything you try and even if it's not your cup of tea I can guarantee you'll learn some valuable life lessons and tighten up your CV tenfold.



5 tips to streamline your CV



In the coming weeks, employers will be receiving hundreds of CVs. If you want your CV to stand out from the rest, it's vital that you prepare. Remember, a CV on its own won't get you a job, but a good one can intrigue a potential employer enough to get you to the next stage of the application process. Use these tips to help your CV land on the 'interview' pile.

Know the format

There's no single rule but one common approach is to lead with your personal details and perhaps a personal statement at the top of your CV followed by your education and qualifications. This provides employers with an overview of your key skills and background straight away and will encourage them to read on if your skillset is intriguing. Next you can list any prior jobs, work experience and volunteer roles. Be sure to list your work experience in chronological order with the most recent job first. Remember, presentation, spelling and grammar are all key components to a successful CV. A CV that is properly formatted will demonstrate your attention to detail, a definite plus for employers.

Highlight your best bits

Most recruiters will have a huge volume of CVs on their desks and will usually skim read them at first review. Highlighting key information by using bullet points, separate sections or bold typeface will not only make life easier for them but will give you a greater chance of making a strong impression. Your CV should paint a picture of who you are and what you have to offer, and you are the painter.

Keep it short

The ideal length of a CV is no more than two pages. While it's important to summarise your background to date, you should do so in a few concise lines for each experience. Each paragraph should outline a key strength relevant to the role and how you have demonstrated this skill. Only include information that will be pertinent to the job for which you are applying, bearing in mind that you can be creative about how your various experiences relate. Keep your descriptions active, and don't be afraid to sell yourself and your achievements. Try to avoid clichés and vague language and focus instead on specifics. And remember, what you don't put on your CV is as important as what you do. If you've taken the time to set up a LinkedIn profile you could include a link to it in your CV so that an employer can find out more about you if your CV is enticing.

Be versatile

Your CV needs to address the question of how right you are for the role, and since every role and organisation is different you shouldn't be afraid of tailoring your CV for each application. That doesn't mean embellishing or inventing the experience you've got, just carefully selecting the stuff that's most relevant for the position you're applying for and not being afraid to leave out the stuff that isn't.

Don't worry about a lack of experience

Work experience isn't the only way to demonstrate your potential. If you haven't got any work experience, there are other ways to show how you've used your skills to contribute to a successful outcome in the past and how these skills might be useful to an employer in future. Any responsibilities you have at school or any voluntary work you have done, such as fundraising, will have given you skills that can be applied in a professional environment.



Success without a degree by Matt Gubba

CEO & Founder of @BizBritain - Championing young entrepreneurs without degrees.

Why real life learning could give you a competitive edge later in your career

When weighing up your options on whether or not going to university is the right choice for you, part of that decision will no doubt be based on how you believe it will affect your career later in life.

You may be thinking that going to university would automatically give you an edge over someone who doesn't, but in reality this is simply not the case. While going to university can be very helpful, or even essential in cases where a specific degree is a prerequisite to that career path (such as medicine), in the world of business, the head start you gain by opting not to go can actually be a big advantage.

According to the Office for National Statistics, only half of the people who go to university go on to work in a field related to their degree after they graduate. Surely this raises the question: why spend three or more years studying and incurring large debts to get a degree unless you're sure that you're going to use it?

My experience has shown me that in the world of business, real life learning wins out over academics. Below are some of my tips on how you can beat the competition without a degree.

Use your head start wisely

One of the advantages of going straight into the working world after you finish school, is that you have the potential to build up a huge head start. By the time your friends have finished their degree course, you will have years of practical experience under your belt which you can use to your advantage.

Experience is usually the only thing that will allow you to progress into more senior positions. It doesn't matter how qualified you are academically; without job experience you will pretty much always be starting at the bottom.

So as a school leaver, if you work hard and learn lots in the beginning, you have the potential to move up the ladder before your friends have even started their first job. I've personally witnessed numerous situations where graduates end up reporting to people of a similar age who don't have a degree simply because they have more experience.

It's important that you capitalise on this, and use your head start to your full advantage. Spend your time learning as much as you possibly can about your job, constantly push for more responsibility, and always go the extra mile. If you do, you will come out on top.

Practical experience beats generic qualifications

One of the biggest problems with relying on going to university and doing a generic degree is that most business based jobs don't really require one. While having a degree to list on your CV may make it slightly easier to open that first door at some companies, you really have to ask yourself whether that stacks up against three years of your time plus tens of thousands of pounds in cost.

Once you've landed that first job and stuck it out for a while, the work experience on your CV will supersede any education listed on there. I can tell you from personal experience of both applying for jobs and having been a manager recruiting people myself, that for anything above the most entry level positions, your experience is what makes you attractive.

Make sure that you gain as much variety of experience as you can in your role, and never be afraid to ask for additional work if you have spare time. The more you learn practically, the faster you will progress in your career.

Never get complacent

Once you have a job, one of the biggest factors that determines how far, and how fast you progress is how you are perceived by those more senior. You need to be seen as being good at your job, hardworking, and keen to go the extra mile.

One of the big weaknesses I often see in graduates is that many are complacent when starting out, relying too heavily on the fact they have a degree to carry them forward. When I was younger I had a job in finance, and I wiped the floor with a stream of older and more academically qualified colleagues because I was constantly making sure that I knew the business inside out, and continually pushed myself forward.

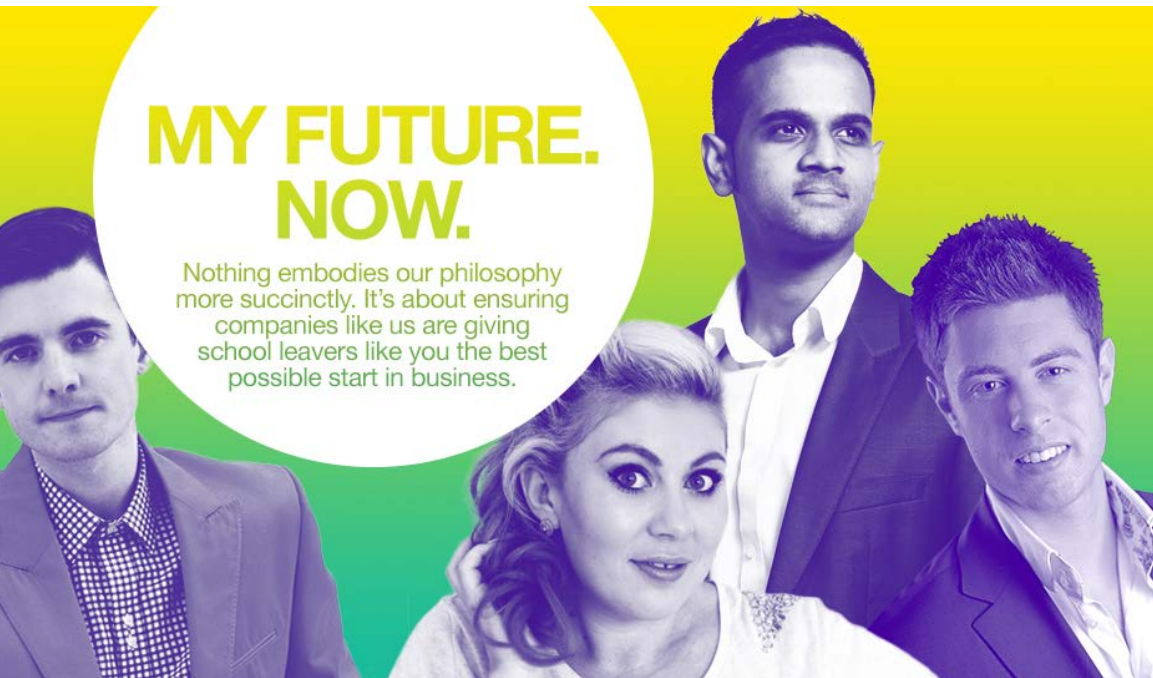
You need to remember that promotions and pay increases aren't just handed out as gifts. You need to be ready to fight for them and force yourself forward every step of the way.

Make sure that you network

Something I always tell people regardless of what they do for a living, is that networking is one of the most important things you can do when it comes to progressing in any field. Most top jobs are found via networking, not via traditional recruitment channels. So make sure you are doing it.

You can start by doing things as simple as using social media to seek out and engage with influential people in your company or industry. Simply making these people aware that you exist is a great first step. Most people will be flattered if you get in touch and ask for a little advice or try to engage with them.

Remember that little and often is the key with networking well. It takes time and consistency to build up good relationships.



Remember that success is all about you

At the end of the day, success comes down to you as a person; not the letters that you do or don't have after your name. If you believe in your own ability and you conduct yourself in the ways that I've outlined above, there are no limits on how far you can go in life. Having the ability to persevere and keep on going through tough times is what ultimately will separate you from the rest. Your level of success is in your hands.

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6 ways to make your gap year stand out on your CV

So you've decided to take a gap year. Whether you decide to travel the world or work part time, taking a break from revision and exams can be a blessing in disguise. However, it's important to remember that it's not all about lie-ins and sandy beaches. Whatever you've got planned, taking some time to do some extra training can really make your gap year stand out. (We promise it won't feel like going back to school!)

Learn a language

If you are planning on going away, why not swot up on a [language course](#) beforehand? Not only will this help you on your travels, but will be a great addition to the dreaded 'additional skills' section of your CV. Forget the horror of GCSE French, evening language courses are far less scary and are a great place to get some travel tips!

TEFL – Teach English as a Foreign Language

What's TEFL we hear you cry? Only your passport to anywhere in the world! If you've got itchy feet and want an adventure, think about taking a [TEFL course](#) and teaching English abroad. Just because you can speak the language doesn't mean you can teach it – your course will allow you to look at the English grammar system as an outsider. Once you've got your qualification, you can go and teach in a number of different countries all over the world. Sounds too good to be true doesn't it?

Photography

Want something fun to try that's completely different from school? A photo speaks a thousand words, so whether it's on your iphone or state of the art DSLR, [book a course](#) and get clicking. What's more, being trained in [Photoshop](#) is another great one to mention in an interview.

Blogging

If you have booked a year of adventures, why not go on a [blogging course](#) and learn how to document it? A great link to add to your CV, a travel blog shows a future employer that yes you have been seeing the world and experiencing new cultures, but also that you have the skills to share this with an audience.

Become an IT expert

(Bear with us on this one). Sure you know how to upload your selfies onto Facebook, but would you call yourself an IT expert? Statistics suggest that 93% of working adults have the internet at home, but a large number of these only know how to do the basics. As the industry booms, taking a [coding course](#) or learning how to use industry related software could help you find that dream job.

Pass your driving test

Even if you are one of the millions of people who use public transport to get to school or work, simply being able to say you hold a driving licence can boost your employability prospects. As daunting as it may be, using your gap year to [get behind the wheel](#) could be something you thank us for.

Want some more inspiration? Have a browse of all of the [fun and short courses](#) listed on our site and make that gap year stand out – you won't regret it!

Hotcourses was established in 1996 and is the world's leading provider of education websites, with 32 educational websites in 20 different languages and information for over 250,000 courses across the UK. **Hotcourses.com** is the company's flagship website, **Hotcourses** is the UK's leading course directory site so we are delighted to be partnered with them!



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Stop the BTech stigma

Let's face it, a BTech hasn't got the best reputation. It's supposedly easier and what the less-smart kids do over GCSEs or A-levels.

That's extremely un-true. There are two main types of learners in this world – the practical and the theoretical. If you prefer theory, you might be dubbed 'book smart' and do the more academic subjects. These are generally completed through exams held at the end of the year.

If this type of learning doesn't suit you, something more hands on and less exam focused could be more up your street. A BTech qualification is designed to be less book-based and more practical. They're learnt mostly through course work that you complete throughout the entire course, rather than a couple of exams at the end.

For some reason, more practical and less theoretical has gained a reputation. Just because you aren't so keen on revising all year round, and just because your brain doesn't retain information you read in books like some people, you are no less smart than anyone else. If you learn by seeing, watching, doing, you are equally as smart as someone who learns through flashcards, textbooks, and essays.

There are some subjects that won't be available at BTech level – though these often have an alternative. At GCSE, you might be grouped into sets to

best determine how you learn best. It's easy to assume that out of these sets, BTech is the 'lowest' group.

Ah so that's where this stigma came from.

If you've been put into a BTech group, I can tell you now that you are not at the bottom, the least clever, the most likely to fail, or whatever else you might think. You're simply the most practical and most likely to succeed in coursework.

That sounds much better doesn't it?

At A-level, your grades might mean you can only do a BTech. That's because your college don't want to enrol you on a course that consists of a great deal of theory and exams, when your GCSEs showed you to be better at coursework.

Certain subjects might only be available as a BTech. Some subjects, like science are a little different. There's the basic subjects available at A-level – chemistry, biology, physics. There is often a BTech route available too, with a slightly different syllabus. For example, a BTech in forensic science. This is more career specific, practical, and just as respectable as any other qualification.

So if you find a subject you like, but are put off by the fact that it's a BTech, remember that all it means is that it's more coursework, fewer exams, and more practical.

Don't let the BTech stigma stop you from doing it what you want, there's no reason why you can't do better at a BTech than someone else can in an exam.

Our partners



If you have a couple of minutes please complete **this** short survey designed for heads of sixth-form and year 12 and 13 heads, to help Uni's not for me understand more about careers services in schools and the opportunities your students are offered. Thank you for participating in our anonymous survey. We really value your feedback.