

The Parents' Guide to

GCSE Results Day

August 2024



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Planning ahead
- Managing results day nerves
- Alternative options
- Where to get help

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Introduction

There's intense focus on results day and it can be a nerve-wracking 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 there's no more to be done except sit and wait out the long weeks until August when results are announced. All this constrained energy can build like a pressure cooker, exploding into a wonderfully euphoric 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

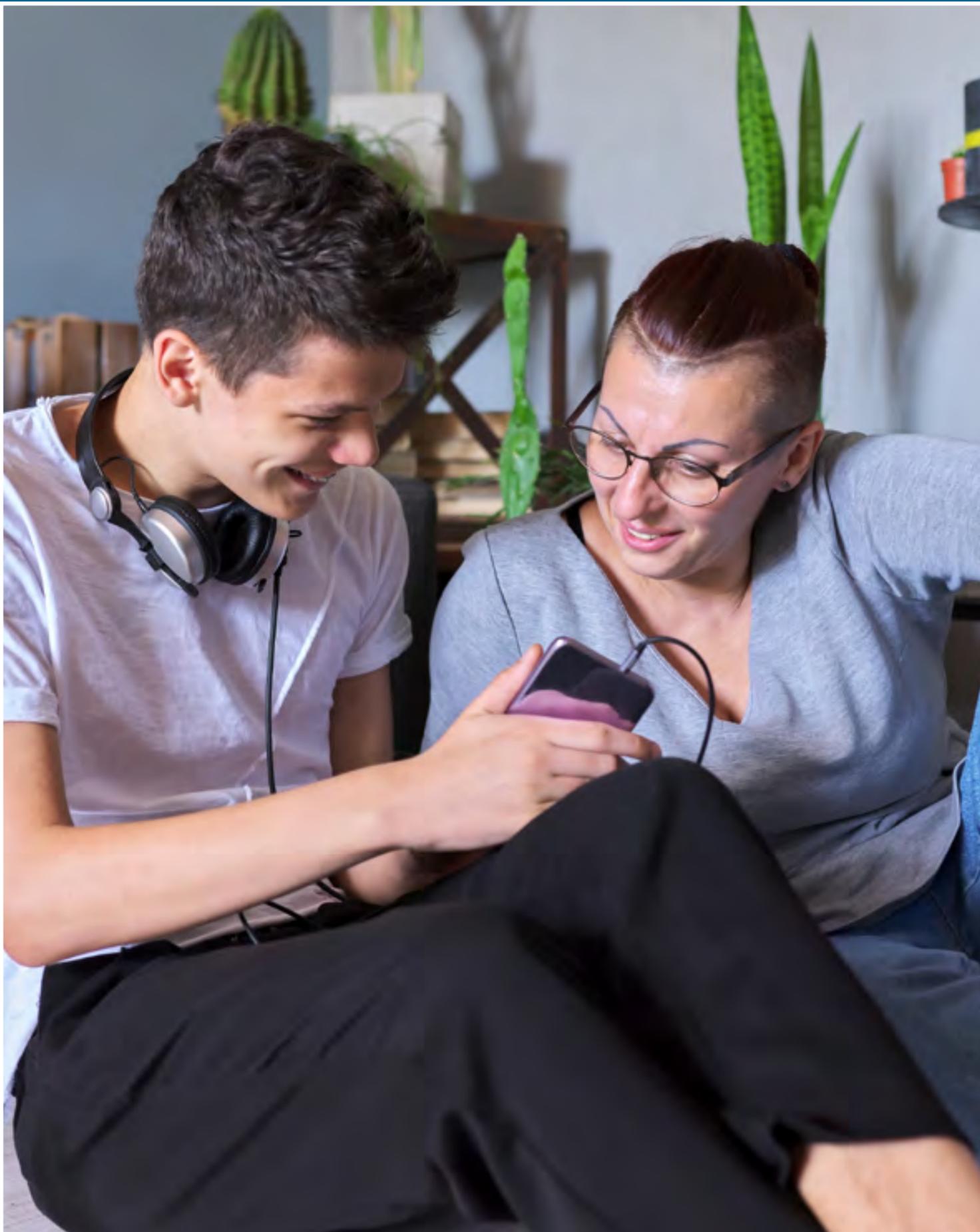
useful indicator as to whether your teen's on the right path. If results are poor, perhaps they need to take a different track, such as focusing on qualifications that involve more practical studies instead of classroom studies, or where course work and ongoing assessment are the basis for grading rather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

JOIN US

If you're interested in a fortnightly newsletter with ways you can support your teen, we'd love you to join us.

[Sign up here](#) 



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.

Get ready for results day – our checklist

1. Get an early night on Weds 21st 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.
2. Rise and shine to head off early to get their results within an hour of them being ready – delaying could let anxiety build up.
3. Eat a decent breakfast and drink plenty of fluids before heading to school. This will stand them in good stead if they get caught up and delayed once they're there.
4. Find out who they should speak to at school and at their next educational establishment if it's different, including phone numbers and email addresses. If they need to make calls, they'll want all the information right on hand.
5. Make sure they've got pen, paper and a fully charged mobile phone with them.
6. Read our guidance on **pp24-35** 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.
7. 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 and skills over the summer holidays

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 with varied daily activities should also help them sleep better.

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

What are transferable skills?

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.

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.

Useful links

National
Careers
Service

UK Skills
Builder

Help your teen stand out:



Includes information on:

- Self-development and increasing confidence through reading, audiobooks and podcasts
- Getting work experience
- How different hobbies impact mental and physical health
- Recommendation for non-curricular online courses
- Soft skills and why they're important

Discover more

Soft skills can be learnt and developed in one situation and then be used and applied in another situation



Our top 10 ways to deal with anxiety ahead of results day

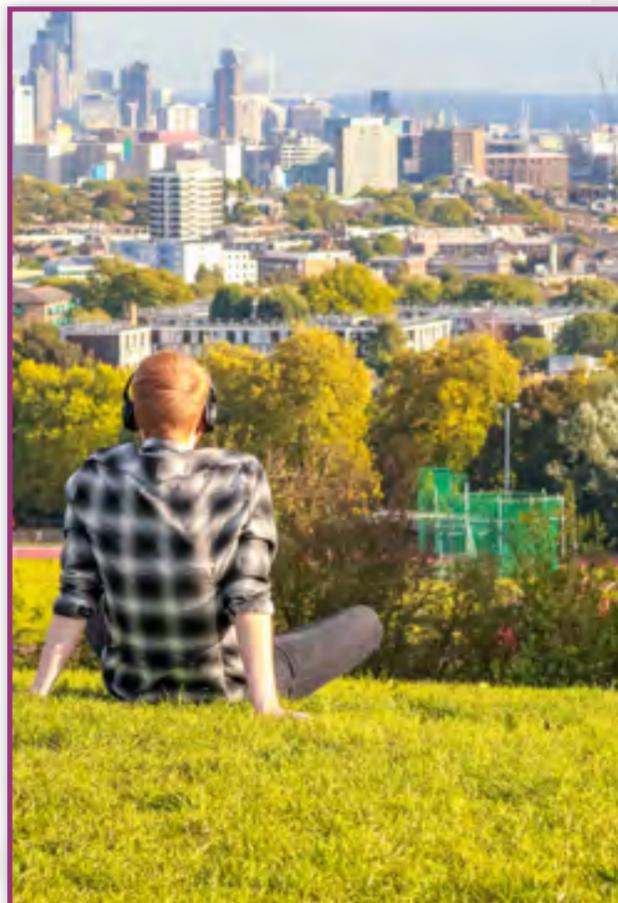
In the lead up to results day, help manage your teen's stress and nerves with our tips on instant ways to reduce stress. They're easy to put into action and most of them can be done anywhere at any time, with a positive impact in minutes. However, don't forget, some of their stress may be caused by fear 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 brisk walk outdoors

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.



3. 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.

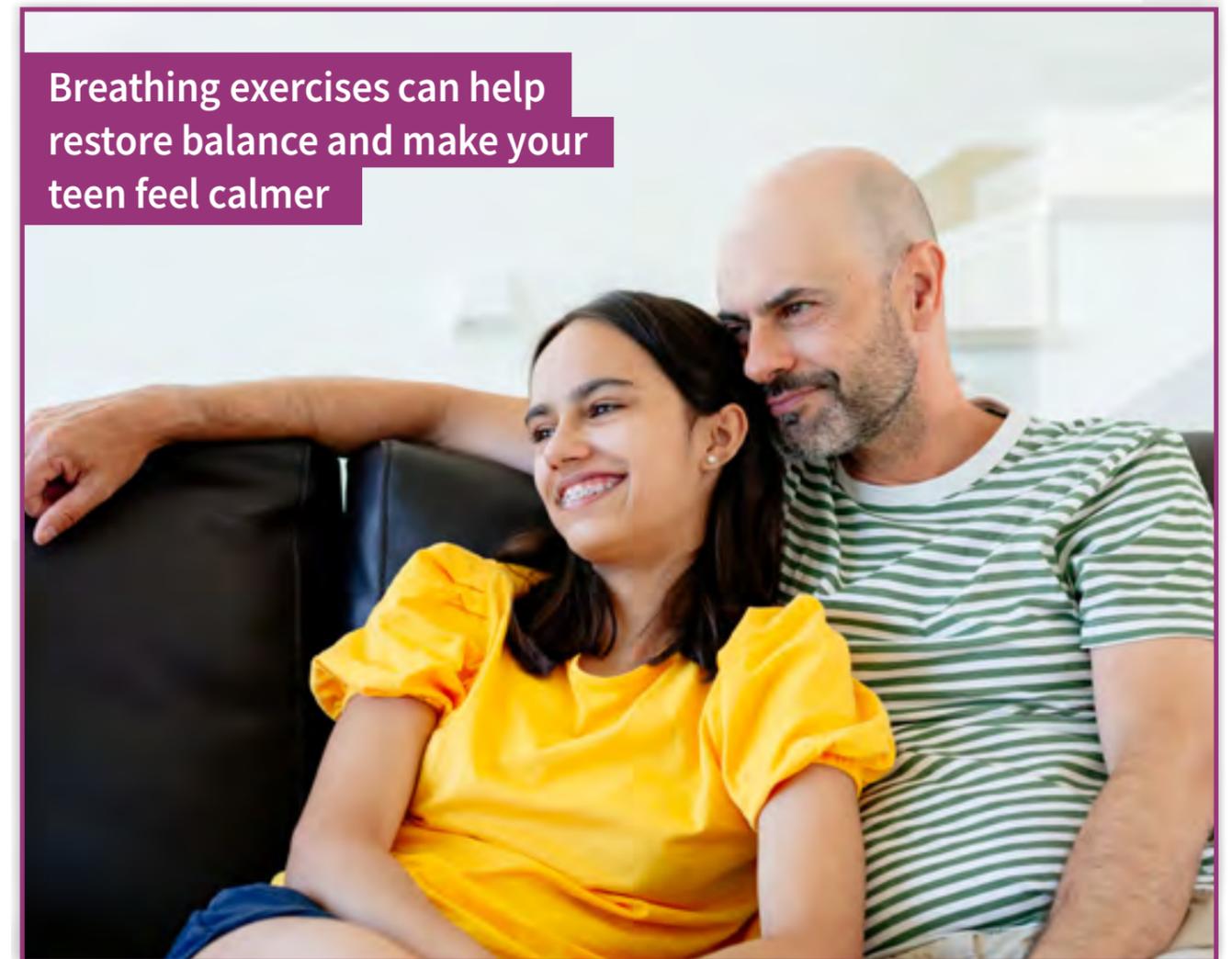
4. Look at something inspiring

Whether it's a photo, picture, painting, fabric, building or statue, looking at inspiring things will give you 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 you're presented with images and just need to watch, as you read a book the writer is inviting you to picture the situation in a way that resonates with you. It's a terrific way to step into another world and place – even if only for a few minutes at a time.

Breathing exercises can help restore balance and make your teen feel calmer



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. 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.

8. 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.

9. Play some music

There is no quicker and easier way to completely change your 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 your pet

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



Help your teen cope with stress, including:



- 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

Discover more

Make sure your teen knows your love isn't dependent on their results



Where 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

 mind
for better mental health

NHS

SAMARITANS

GCSE Results Day – 22 August 2024 (England & Wales)

When are results available?

Students can collect their results from school as early as 08.00 am on Thursday 22 August. Be sure to check with your teen's school, as different schools may open at different times.

The best idea is 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 will receive a result slip (sometimes called a Candidate Statement of Provisional Results) detailing grades that have been awarded, 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 to collect results, so they're properly fuelled for whatever lies ahead. Don't let them put it off (especially if they're worried about the grades they might

get) as they'll end up spending the day worrying about what's to come and increasing anxiety.

Being prepared makes life easier.

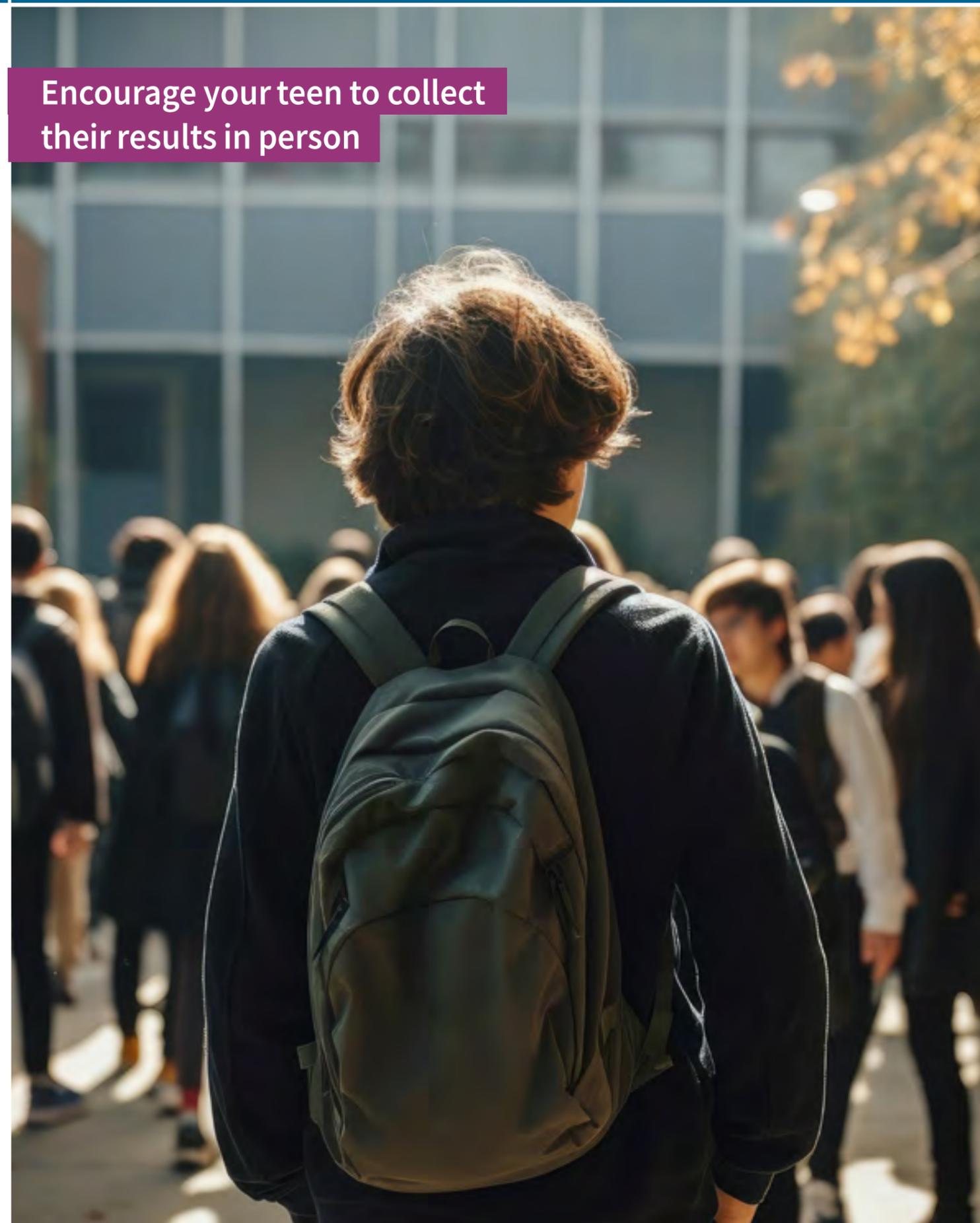
Make sure their phone's fully charged, they have pen and paper (or something for note taking when using the phone), photo ID, any acceptance letters and contact names and phone numbers of people they may need to speak to (if different from school for their next stage).

Other ways to collect results

If your teen can't collect the results themselves, they can be sent by post or there may be different secure ways to collect results (such as by telephone or via the parent portal) depending on the school. You can check this with the school.

Alternatively, someone else can collect the results for them, so long as they have a signed letter of authority from your teen and ID. Results are in a sealed envelope, so there can be no sneaky-peeking before your teen!

Encourage your teen to collect their results in person





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	1
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 2024 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 26 September 2024.

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.

Planning ahead for results day – our checklist

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.

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.

[Click here for the latest.](#)

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, vocational qualifications, such as BTECs, IB or T Levels, or work-related qualifications, such as an apprenticeship.

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 type of qualification gives them the best chance of 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 (England only, usually offered by colleges not schools)
- 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.

Discover more in The Parents' guide to Post 16 options



Includes information on:

- What qualifications are on offer
- Which qualifications are better suited to different types of learners
- Where they can study – the pros and cons of different learning environments depending on the type of student
- Considerations in making the right choices

Discover more

Level	Qualification / educational routes				
8	Doctorate (PhD)		NVQ 8		
7	Masters degree (MA)		Degree apprenticeship / NVQ 5, 6, 7		
6	Bachelors degree BA or BSc				
5	Foundation degree FdA or FdSc	Higher National Diploma (HND)	Higher apprenticeship / NVQ 4		
4		Higher National Certificate (HNC)			
3	A levels Grades A-E	International Baccalaureate	T Levels	BTEC (extended) diploma BTEC certificate	Advanced apprenticeship / NVQ 3
2	GCSE Grades 4- 9 (C, B, A or A*)		BTEC first diploma	Intermediate apprenticeship / NVQ 2	
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.

Level 3 qualifications are typically taught in schools and colleges after GCSEs.

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	<i>(level 3)</i>
T Levels	<i>(level 3)</i>
BTECs	<i>(levels 1,2,3)</i>
Other technical qualifications	
	<i>(levels 1,2,3)</i>
Exam retakes	
Work and study	
Apprenticeships	<i>(levels 2,3)</i>
Supported internships	
Traineeships	



Typical length

12-18 months

Entry requirements:

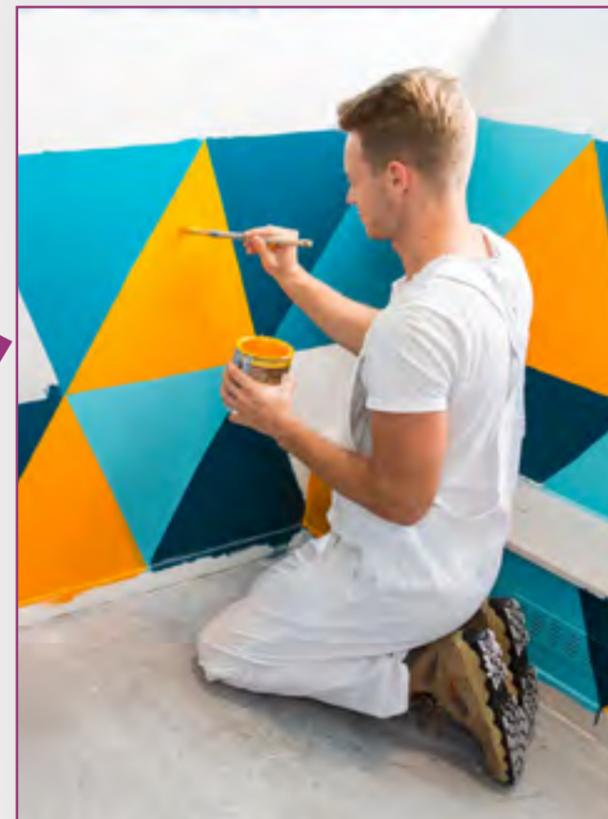
None or few

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.

All their options - part 1 of 2

	A levels	International Baccalaureate	BTEC Nationals	T-Levels (England only)
Qualification type	General Certificate of Advanced level qualification	International Baccalaureate Diploma	Business and Technology Education Council Diplomas <i>(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).</i>	Technical Level Qualification
Type of learning	Mostly theory	Mostly theory, some practical	Combination of practical and theory	Classroom learning (80%) with industry placement (20%)
Qualifications needed to sign up	At least x5 GCSE grade 4 – 9. At least grade 5/6 in the subject/s chosen for A level	Set by the school, up to 5 GCSEs	Up to 5 GCSEs	Up to 5 GCSEs
Subject choices	Three subjects	Up to six subjects (three standard level and three at higher level plus some compulsory modules including an extended essay)	Three vocational subjects	One industry field, such as construction or Education
Commitment	2 years full time			
Tuition costs	Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)			
UCAS points awarded for passing	56 points – A* 48 points – A 40 points – B 32 points – C 24 points – D 16 points – E	56 points - Higher Level 7 48 points - Higher Level 6 32 points - Higher Level 5 24 points - Higher Level 4 12 points - Higher Level 3	For subsidiary diploma: 56 points – D* (distinction) 48 points – D 32 points – M (merit) 16 points – P (pass) <i>Points are doubled for diploma and tripled for extended diploma</i>	168 points - Distinction* 144 points - Distinction 120 points - Merit 96 points – Pass (C or above) 72 points – Pass (D or E)
Can lead to	University, further study, training or work	University, further study, training or work	University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work	University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work

All their options - part 2 of 2

	Cambridge Technicals	Other qualifications	BTEC apprenticeship	Other options
Qualification type	A Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate (equivalent to an A level) or Cambridge Technical Diploma (equivalent to x2 A levels)	City and Guilds; National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or Tech Bac (similar to Baccalaureate)	Advanced Level 3 (equivalent to x2 A levels)	Traineeship / Volunteer with training / internship – all to help your child get enough skills to take on an apprenticeship or other form of qualification if they do not already have the minimum qualification requirements.
Type of learning	Practical course with lots of coursework based on real life case studies	Dependent on the qualification, most contain practical on the job training	Work based including off-site learning	Work based
Qualifications needed to sign up	At least x5 GCSE passes	x5 GCSE passes	Advanced Level 3 - depends on employer, some require at least 3 GCSEs	None
Subject choices	Range of vocational subjects	Range of vocational subjects	Range of vocational subjects, driven by the job offered	Range of vocational subjects, driven by the job offered
Commitment	2 years	2 years (level 3)	1-2 years	6 weeks – 6 months
Tuition costs	Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)			
UCAS points awarded for passing	Cambs Tech level 3: 56 points – D* (distinction) 48 points – D 32 points – M (merit) 16 points – P (pass)	In most cases no UCAS points are awarded but there are some exceptions.	n/a	n/a
Can lead to	University, further study, training or work	Further study, training, professional development programmes or work	University, further study, training or work	Further study, apprenticeships or job offers



Final Words

We hope you enjoy the summer holiday with your teen creating some wonderful memories as they move closer towards becoming independent young adults, and you both have plenty to celebrate when results day arrives. If your teen didn't get the GCSE results they wanted, then this guide should have given 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.

If you'd like daily tips on how to support your teen with careers and wellbeing after GCSE, we'd love you to join The Parents' Guide to family and join us on our social media channels. We share daily reels on Instagram and Facebook.



You might also enjoy our free fortnightly parent newsletter – [sign up here.](#)

Have a wonderful summer,

Vanessa and Darius



Visit **The Parents' Guide to** for more support:

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.



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.



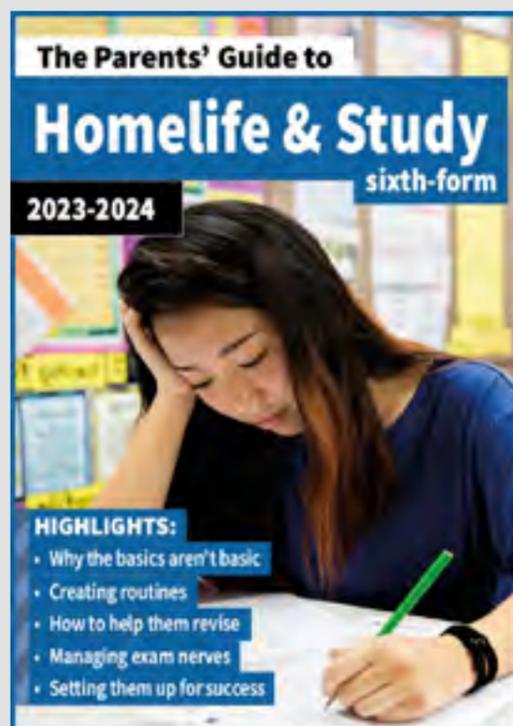
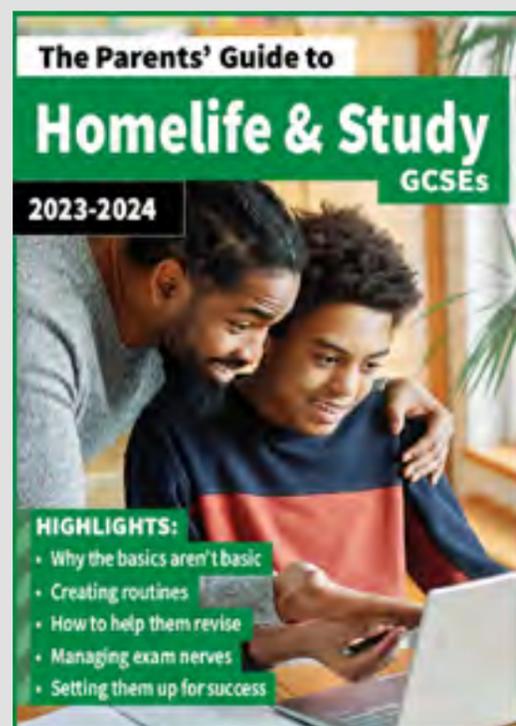
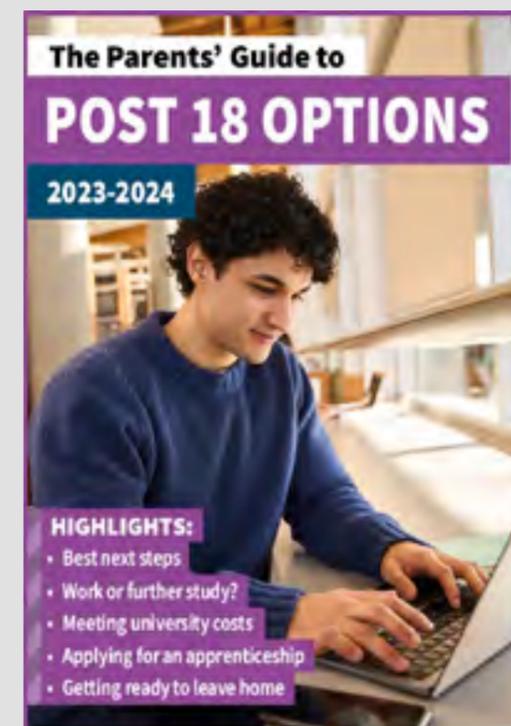
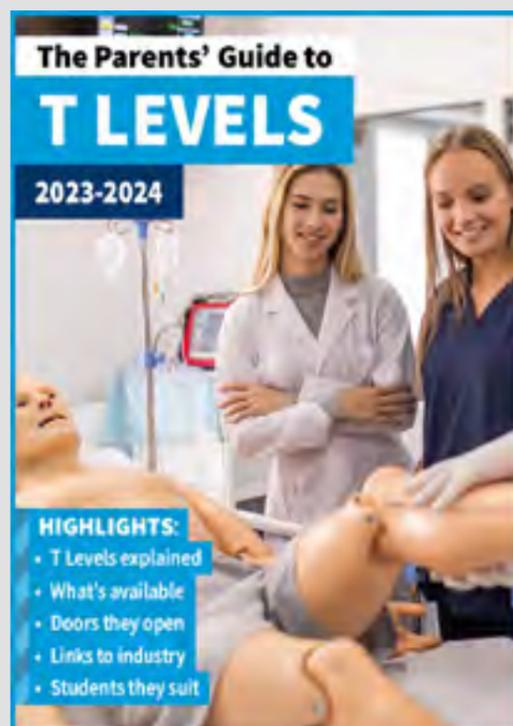
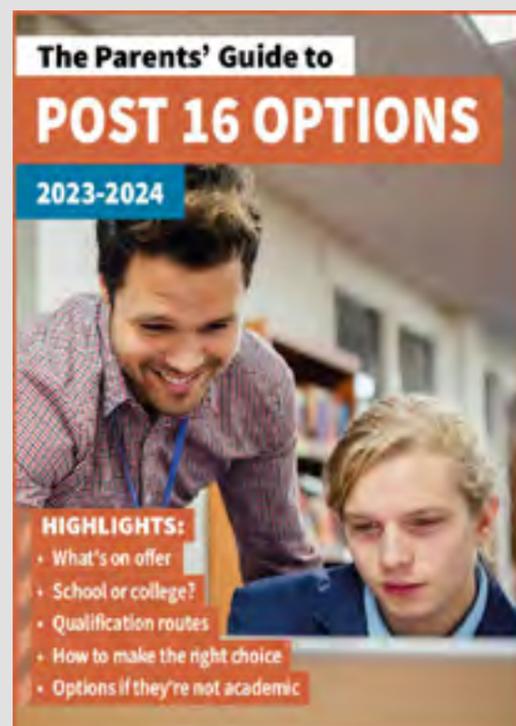
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