

Decision making myths

Introduction to this workbook

Most people believe in some of the myths about career decision-making. They can have a big impact on how we feel and whether we make decisions that we're pleased with in the future.

Identifying and thinking through what you believe about decision making can help you:

- ✓ Feel more motivated to make a decision
- ✓ Feel calmer about making a decision
- ✓ Feel more confident about your ability to make a good decision
- ✓ Spend an appropriate amount of time and effort on your decision (neither far too much or far too little)

Step 1: Identify what you believe

Read each of these statements carefully and tick one of the three boxes to the right to record what you believe.

This isn't about getting it 'right' or 'wrong', just spotting what you think.

Tick or cross one box on each row to record your thinking.	I don't believe this is true	Not sure	I believe this is true
1. You shouldn't get hung up on choices: it's all a matter of luck anyway	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. It doesn't matter what I choose: fate or destiny will determine my future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. You don't really need to think about choices: things will work out eventually	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. What I decide now will definitely affect the rest of my life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Changing your mind later on wastes time and money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. If you're not 100% sure what to do you should wait until you're certain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Every choice you make limits your options in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. A careers adviser would know exactly what career would suit me best	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. A careers adviser should just tell me what to do!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The best thing to do is to wait for someone well-qualified to help you choose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. The important people in my life should make the decision for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Other people know me better than I know myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Because of my gender, some choices aren't open to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Because of my background, some choices aren't open to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Because of my disability, some choices aren't open to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. It doesn't matter what subjects you choose to study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. It's important to keep studying 'hard subjects' if you want a good job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Everyone should go to university if they possibly can	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. You only get one chance to go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Step 2: Explore what's relevant for you

For each of the myths where you ticked 'I believe this is true', there is a related 'guidance section'.

This includes an explanation of why we might classify it as a myth together with quick exercises to help try out different approaches.

How to do this

1. Fill in columns 1 and 2 in the table with the statements you believed were true and their number.
If you didn't have many statements you thought were true, you could do this for those you weren't sure about.
If you had more than will fit, you can draw the table again in a new document.
2. Do the [Guidance exercises](#) for each statement in your table, (check [Answers to exercises](#)) and tick them off in column 3.
3. Fill in column 4 with what you believe now: an 'updated' version of the statement in column 1.

1. Statement	2. Number	3. Finished exercise	4. Updated statement (what you believe now)
<i>EXAMPLE</i> You only get one chance to go to university	19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>It's possible to change course, or to do other courses at uni after the first one, although there are limits to the amount of finance that may be available.</i>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	

Guidance exercises

Remember – you don't need to do every exercise! Just those for the statements in your table in Step 2.

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Statements 1, 2 and 3 – It's all down to luck/chance/fate

All of these form part of the same myth: that your future is just a matter of chance. That what whatever happens, happens.

But that's not really the full picture.

While being open to chance events is often a great idea (and can make you really adaptable), if you just wait for what will be, without **doing** anything, you're likely to either:

- a) get stuck waiting, or
- b) end up with something that isn't that great.

A useful way to think about it:
Luck = Preparation + Opportunity

Exercise

Read Nihal's story below. How many times did he do something proactive to make his luck happen?

Nihal read about different careers online, and he noticed he preferred ideas that involved making useful stuff, being practical and creative. He saw an advert on for a talk to learn more about a furniture design course and thought about it, realised it fit his preferences, so made time to attend.

The talk was interesting, but said successful applications needed some work experience, so he emailed some local furniture makers to ask. None could offer work experience, but one offered him a summer job helping package up items for shipping.

He was a bit disappointed, but needed to earn some money that summer anyway, so agreed to give it a go. He got on really well with the team, talked to them about his interest in furniture design and worked hard. At the end of the summer, they asked if he wanted to stay on as an apprentice furniture designer assistant and he was really pleased. "I got lucky," he says.

Your answer:

Statement 4 - What I decide now will definitely affect the rest of my life

It is possible that a decision now could affect the rest of your life. You might find a life-long interest, meet love of your life (ahh) or get a life sentence (less ahh). But it's far more likely that (like the vast majority of the time), you make a choice which either:

- a) steers you in a certain direction, but where you're still free to change your mind,
- b) doesn't have a huge impact, or
- c) leads to a result you could have achieved in many different ways.

A useful way to think about it:

When we decide on the next step to take on a walk, we don't determine the whole journey.

Exercise

Read each of the three stories below.

Which decision-making scenario goes with each story?

Does their choice:

- a) steer them in a certain direction, but where they're still free to change their mind?
- b) not have a huge impact?
- c) lead to a result that they could have achieved in different ways?

Scenario	Your answer: a, b or c?
<p>1. Amara did an apprenticeship in audit and accounts after A Levels, and as part of it completed the AAT (accounts technician) qualification. She worked hard and did well, and after her apprenticeship they offered to pay for her ACA (chartered accountant) training to become a fully qualified accountant.</p> <p>During her ACA classes she studied alongside people who had been hired by the firm after doing a degree, and some who'd come on a school leaver programme but hadn't done the AAT qualification before. Some had studied finance, maths or business before, but many had done all kinds of different subjects.</p>	
<p>2. Jay chose to take an apprenticeship in sales with a major car dealership chain. Her apprenticeship had made her more confident as a communicator, but by the end she realised that she just wasn't motivated by sales targets. She decided she wanted to help customers, but not sell, and used her achievements on her apprenticeship to successfully apply for a customer service job at one of her favourite companies.</p>	
<p>3. Matt decided that for his GCSE optional subjects, he'd take German, History and Textiles. He found it hard to choose, as he didn't have strong feelings about any of the options. He didn't go on to study any of the three after GCSE. Five years on they came in handy when he applied for a job that wanted 5 GCSE grades at 4-9. (He got 5s in all three, although it didn't matter what subjects they were).</p>	

Statement 5 - Changing your mind later on wastes time and money

Most people will change direction or change their mind at some point.

It makes sense: whenever you take a new step, you understand more about yourself and the world. Sometimes that understanding that means that the smart thing for you to do is to make a change. That's **not wasting** anything: that's using your new knowledge.

Changing your mind or changing direction can mean

- a) re-doing some steps, **but not necessarily**
- b) using time and/or money, **but not necessarily**

And even if it does mean re-doing steps, using time and/or money, it still might be the smart thing to do.

A useful way to think about it:
Changing your mind doesn't waste anything if it makes use of new knowledge.

Exercise

Read Oti's story below, and then decide whether the statements about her story are true or false.

Oti wanted to be a professional dancer and she chose not to worry about English, and Maths at school as they weren't important to her at the time. She got 3s in those subjects, although her teachers said she was capable of 4s. At her post-16 college, she studied Dance and P.E. and did well. But in the summer before her last year of college, she started to realise that job security was really important to her. The thought of being a freelance dancer, not knowing when she'd get work and juggling with other jobs didn't appeal at all.

So, she changed her mind. She did some work experience shadowing a teacher in another school and decided that becoming a P.E. teacher would really suit her. She already worked with kids as a charity volunteer. However, she learnt that she needed a 4 in English Language and Maths to get onto a teacher training degree.

In her last year at college, she did an additional GCSE resit programme alongside her subjects. This was free (as she'd not got 4s before), although she did have to do three extra hours of classes on each subject each week). Her teacher training place was conditional on her getting at least a 4. She was really motivated this time, and got two 5s.

Which of the statements below are true?

Statement	Your answer: True or false?	
1. Changing her mind was a good idea	True	False
2. Changing her mind cost Oti time	True	False
3. Changing her mind cost Oti money	True	False

Statement 6 - If you're not 100% sure what to do you should wait until you're certain

100% certain is impossible. You, just like all humans, are complex and you change over time, and you live in a complex world that changes too. All you can be is 'sure enough' when you're making decisions.

Being 'sure enough' means

- a) thinking through what it's possible to be pretty certain about, and
- b) accepting what you just can't know for sure.

A useful way to think about it:

You can only be pretty certain about the things that you can be pretty certain of.

Exercise

Take each factor, decide whether it's something you can be pretty certain about and add it to one of the two lists below

Factors:

- 1. What I like doing
- 2. All the options that would suit me
- 3. What I'm interested in
- 4. What will change in a few years
- 5. What I'm good at
- 6. Whether an option fits my criteria
- 7. What I'll need in the future
- 8. Whether my ideas are available options

List A: things you can be pretty certain about	List B: things you can't know for sure

Statement 7 - Every choice you make limits your options in the future

It's rare that making a choice really does limit your options.

This is because changing direction is nearly always possible, and is more and more common as society moves away from the idea of a 'job for life'. Most of us will have lots of different jobs and careers during our working lives.

The choices we make usually lead to us adding extra skills or knowledge to what we had to begin with. And with more skills and knowledge, we can usually access more jobs in the future, not less.

A useful way to think about it:

Whatever you choose, you'll probably gain extra skills or knowledge which gives you access to extra possibilities in the future.

Exercise

Read Jamie's story below, and then decide whether the statements about their story are true or false. Jamie's pronouns are they/them.

Jamie decided to focus on sciences at A Level, but was worried about shutting down the possibility of a more creative career by not picking Art and Photography.

Two years later, Jamie had learnt a lot about science, but had kept practicing photography in their free time and had been getting really good. They wanted to become a professional photographer. They had the option to take Photography or Art A Levels the following year at college or just apply directly to some Photography degree courses that didn't require any specific A Level subjects.

After their degree, Jamie decided to apply for jobs in medical photography (a career idea they didn't even know existed until the end of the course, but which used their science knowledge from A Level).

Did Jamie's A Level-choices limit their options?	Your answer: True or false?	
1. Yes, a little, but only in the short term	True	False
2. No, not in the long term - lots of options were open	True	False
3. Yes – some options were completely ruled out forever	True	False

Statements 8 and 9 – Careers advisers know best

You might have access to a careers adviser at school or college or anyone can contact the [National Careers Service](#) to get careers advice.

However, careers advisers are human: they don't know about every available option, they don't know you as well as you know yourself, and they don't have a crystal ball into your future!

But careers advisers do have the training to help you:

- Figure out what might be important to you in making a good choice
- Learn about some of the main options out there
- Think through problems
- Make a plan of action for what's next

A useful way to think about it:

Careers advisers don't know what you 'should' do. But they can help you think it through more clearly.

Exercise

Careers professionals can help, but we're usually not keen to make the choices for you!

Which are the three correct reasons why?

Why aren't careers advisers keen to make decisions for you?	Tick the three correct reasons
1. We want to see what you choose and then tell you you're wrong	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. We're really lazy and/or mean	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. We want to help you make choices, so that you can do it again in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. We're biased and hungry and would tell everyone to be a chef to get free food	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. We don't want to get sued	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. We don't know everything about you and what would make a choice a good one	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. We don't know about every single career option in existence (we're not Google!)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement 10 - The best thing to do is to wait for someone well-qualified to help you choose

Waiting for help might not be helpful...

You might have access to a careers adviser at school or college or anyone can contact the [National Careers Service](#) to get careers advice.

But waiting for their help isn't necessarily the best idea:

- a) Lots of people don't work with a careers adviser and make a great choice
- b) While you wait you might miss out on opportunities

But most importantly,

- c) Actively trying to make the decision yourself is really helpful.

The thinking processes usually helps you figure out what's important and spot what you need to know.

A useful way to think about it:

By trying to make your own choice, you'll know what help (if any) you need

Exercise

So, what should we think about careers help?

Two statements here are generally true - can you find them?	Your answer: True or false?	
1. Careers help isn't worth waiting for	True	False
2. Trying to make the decision myself might help me figure at least some things out.	True	False
3. I can use careers help if I need it, but I might not need it.	True	False
4. Working with a qualified careers adviser is essential to make a good choice	True	False

Statement 11 - The important people in my life should make the decision for me

A useful way to think about it:

There are disadvantages and advantages to other people making the decision for you

Let's think about what the advantages and disadvantages might be.

Exercise

For each of the statements below, decide whether it's an advantage or disadvantage of other people making the decision for you and add it to one of the two lists below.

1. It takes any pressure off you
2. They might have misunderstood information
3. They might choose something that doesn't suit you
4. You know that they approve and support the choice
5. You're less motivated towards what's been chosen
6. Their information might be out of date, incorrect or incomplete

List A: Advantages of other people making the decision	List B: Disadvantages of other people making the decision

Instead of other people making the decision for you try:

- Involving the important people in your life in your thinking
- Be open to their feedback, but decide yourself how true or useful it is
- Check that what you go on to do is something you're motivated to do, and you've used accurate, up to date and complete information to research it.

Statement 12 - Other people know me better than I know myself

There are some things that both you and those around you probably know: what grades you're getting, your hobbies and what you're visibly good at.

But there are two big reasons that other people don't necessarily know you better than you do:

1. Other people can't know everything about you: they probably don't know what all your hopes and fears are for the future, who you admire and why, how much you enjoy using different skills, or things you find interesting but haven't had a chance to talk about.
2. Everyone sees things with their own biases and beliefs (including us). Other people too have their own set of biases and beliefs which influence the conclusions they come to.

A useful way to think about it:
Another people's perspective might be useful but it's not perfect.

Exercise

Fill in the blanks:

Photo A illustrates statement ☐ and photo B illustrates state ☐

Statement 1 - Other people can see only part of who we are: there's more beneath the surface they might not realise.

Statement 2 - Other people see us through their own point of view, which isn't free of distortions.

Picture A:



Photo by [Alexander Hafemann](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Picture B:



Photo by [Josh Calabrese](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Statement 13 - Because of my gender, some choices aren't open to me

The UK Equality Act 2010 says you must not be discriminated against because you are (or are not) a particular sex (or sexual orientation for that matter). It also says you must not be discriminated against if gender identity is different from the gender assigned to you when you were born.

Hear from two people who overcame the idea that your gender limits your options:

[Kayleigh's story](#)



[Shaun's story](#)



Did you know that

- In 2019, 2,650 men applied for nursing and midwifery courses in England
- All roles in the military are open to women
- In 9 of the last 10 years, more women than men have started apprenticeships
- In 2019, the government funded a £30,000 project to encourage more men to start careers in childcare

There's a big benefit to workforces becoming more diverse and less affected by 'traditional' gender roles, with strong correlations between diverse workforce teams and better results.

A useful way to think about it:
The vast majority of choices are open to you, regardless of your gender

Exercise

There are only three exceptions in the UK where opportunities are allowed to be restricted based on gender.

Can these opportunities legally be restricted by gender?	Your answer: True or false?	
1. Jobs that require physical strength.	True	False
2. Competitive sports	True	False
3. Where being a particular sex is absolutely essential for the job	True	False
4. Religious roles	True	False
5. Jobs looking after children	True	False
6. Military roles involving front line combat	True	False

Statement 14 - Because of my background, some choices aren't open to me

Your background does not limit what you can do in life. It is absolutely possible to come from a low-income family and go on to a high-income job, and the reverse. And hopefully you already know that discrimination based on your colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins is illegal. Many organisations are actively trying to encourage applications from all sections of society to make their staff teams more diverse, talented and representative of the whole country.

However, this isn't to say that everything is always easy. Examples of challenges that people can face based on their background:

- a) If no-one in your family has been to university before it can be hard to know what you need to know.
- b) If you don't know someone like you who does a particular job it can be hard to imagine yourself in their shoes.
- c) If people in your family have struggled with debt it can be hard to consider taking a loan to invest in your own business, training or university education.
- d) If you're a care leaver (or you will be one after school or college) it can be hard to think through the practicalities involved with options for your future.
- e) If you're a carer for a family member, it might be hard to think about how to balance this important role in your life with your career options.
- f) If you're thinking about doing something that isn't familiar to those around you, they may find it difficult to understand.

A useful way to think about it:

There may be challenges, but no choices are ruled out based on your background.

Exercise

What could help with the challenges mentioned above? Match up the challenge and the idea which could help:

Ideas	Matching challenge (a – f)
1. Researching information yourself and giving yourself time to think it through. Think about what information you'd need to feel comfortable (for example, information on repayment, or likely earnings). If you're considering student loans, look at universities' funding pages, the gov.uk student finance information (including the extra help section) as well as the Discover Uni course finder for information what graduates of each course go on to earn.	
2. Going to free Open Days or Taster Courses.	
3. Not everyone in a top professional or managerial role comes from a privileged background; on average, a third ¹ of people in these roles have a working-class background. You could ask around (teachers, family friends, emailing organisations directly) to ask if there's someone who's been where you are now that could give you some advice.	
4. Finding resources you can share with those around you to help them understand what you want to do. Look for resources like UCL's Parents Guide to University or Rate My Apprenticeship's parents' advice .	
5. Searching for [whatever you want to do] and "young carer". e.g. searching for "university" and "young carer", brings up lots of different universities' pages describing their support packages – many are really well thought through, practical and generous.	
6. Look for specific information for care leavers on career websites – a useful example is Careerpilot's information for care leavers on moving on after year 11 . Searching for "university" and "care leaver", brings up lots of different universities' pages describing their support packages – many are really well thought through, practical and generous.	

Statement 15 - Because of my disability, some choices aren't open to me

The charity Disability Rights UK has this to say:

Never assume disabled people can't enter a particular career. Nursing, teaching, sport, business, law, media, IT, veterinary science – you name it – there are disabled people working in every imaginable field.

Many successful people have, at some stage, been told their career ideas were unsuitable. It's important to persevere, take advantage of any available support and try to get the skills and knowledge you need for whatever job appeals to you.

The Equality Act 2010 means that employers have to remove barriers in the workplace for disabled people and financial support is available to help them do this. Always start exploring your options based on what you want to do. Then you can think about any advice and support you might need. ([Disability Rights UK's Careers and Work for Disabled People Factsheet F24](#))

Scope is campaigning for workplaces to prioritise inclusivity for disabled people, and shares information about some of the challenges disabled people can face in their work, for example, [Edith's story about how her career has been affected by her MS](#).

While you may have some genuine limitations, rather than assuming some choices are ruled out completely, think about possible adaptations that could be made. Remember that reasonable adjustments in the workplace and hiring process are your legal right under the Equality Act. Many employers and course providers also have a policy of guaranteeing an interview to candidates who declare a disability on their application to help increase diversity.

Reasonable adjustments could include things like:

- Additional software or equipment
- Changes to your work environment
- Adjusting the balance of tasks
- Adjustments to when you work (for example, flexible working or reduced hours)
- Adjustments to where you work (for example, working from home)
- Providing a reader, interpreter or personal assistant
- Additional training for you or the people you work with

A useful way to think about it:

There's no need to assume that you can't do what you want to because of a disability.

Exercise

What's possible? Read the statements about what someone could do using reasonable adjustments or equipment, and decide if you believe it's true or false.

A person with...	... could work as a using...	True or false?	
1. Dyslexia	Marketing manager	Speech to text software, smart pens, screen colour adjustments and a proof-reading system that benefits the whole team.	True	False
2. A visual impairment	Teacher	A guide dog, a screen reader, braille equipment and maybe a teaching assistant	True	False
3. A hearing impairment	Musician	Hearing aids, music composition technology or tuning aids	True	False

Statement 16 - It doesn't matter what subjects you choose to study

It isn't the case that your subject choices don't matter at all, although in some cases they do matter less than you might think.

Four reasons why your choice of subjects matters:

1. Some *courses* that you might want to do someday require particular qualifications
2. Some *careers* that you might want to do someday require particular qualifications
3. Choosing subjects you're more motivated to study is likely to lead to you getting results due to increased effort
4. Choosing subjects that use skills you're good at is likely to lead to you getting better results due to increased ability

Four reasons why your choice of subjects might matter less than you think:

1. Some *careers* just require education to a particular level, rather than any particular subject¹
2. Some *courses* just require education to a particular level, rather than any particular subject
3. New ways are opening up to get into professions regardless of your educational background (e.g. [Access to HE courses](#))
4. It's possible to go back to college and take other subjects later in life.

A useful way to think about it:

There are good reasons to make an informed choice of subjects, even if many careers are flexible.

Exercise

What are some of the areas in which subject choice does or doesn't matter? Read each suggestion and decide if you think it's true or false:

Suggestion	True or false?	
1. You can become a lawyer without taking Law A-Level	True	False
2. Most standard Medicine degrees require an A Level (or equivalent) in Chemistry	True	False
3. You don't need an accountancy degree to become an accountant	True	False
4. You don't need to take a business degree to work in business	True	False
5. To become a vet, you need a veterinary science degree	True	False

¹ Using a [summary of research](#) into this area, we estimate that around 35% of UK jobs require a degree. How many of these jobs require a particular degree subject varies by industry. For example, one study found 50% of entry-level jobs in marketing required a degree, but only a fifth of them required a marketing degree.

Statement 17 - It's important to keep studying 'hard subjects' if you want a good job

Not necessarily. Studying 'hard subjects' that you're not motivated to work on, or that don't use the skills you're good at, is usually a recipe for getting poor grades and feeling rubbish in the process.

What a 'good job' means is different for different people.

A 'good job' could mean a particular profession or professions:

- Sometimes particular jobs require studying challenging subjects. If you've got the ability and the motivation to do it well, it could be a good choice, but you want to avoid really struggling with subjects that you're not keen to study.

A 'good job' could mean doing a job that uses your interests and strengths:

- Researching jobs that suit you (use our [career help toolkit](#)) will help you learn about any qualifications they require. Those subjects may or not be viewed as challenging, but if you're motivated, they could be a good choice.

A 'good job' could mean a job that pays well:

- High pay doesn't always mean studying challenging subjects. Running your own (successful!) business, working as an air traffic controller, a senior police officer or train driver are all examples of professions which don't require specific qualifications and which earn some of the highest median salaries in the UK.² Use this [online tool to compare salary information for different jobs](#). But also, look for jobs that suit you (using our [career help toolkit](#)). If the salary motivates you, great, but it also needs to suit your skills, to be a good choice.

A useful way to think about it:

It's important to choose options that make sense based on what you want and what you're good at.

Exercise

Zena and Kizzy are sisters in Year 11. Both grew up with a strong sense that education was important, and that they should try hard to do well in school, but while it came easily to Kizzy, Zena found it more challenging. Their parents really like the idea of their daughters taking 'hard subjects' at A Level because they love them a lot and want them to be financially stable in the future.

Kizzy's ambition is to become an engineer, and science and maths subjects have always been her highest grades. Zena hasn't ever really enjoyed subjects that involved writing essays, science or maths. The subject she enjoys and is best at is art, and she loves kids' TV shows and has a secret ambition to become an animator.

1. What do you think is important for Zena to do? (pick at least one)	Tick to choose
a. Research what she might need to become an animator, and what the job and pay might be like	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Choose subjects that would help her get into a creative career, and which she's good at	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Talk to her parents about what she really wants to do, giving them information about why she thinks it's a good option for her in the future, and giving them information about the financial prospects.	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Take one subject she loves and is good at but a couple of 'hard' subjects just in case	<input type="checkbox"/>

² To see which professions earn the most, see [the interactive chart labelled Figure 11 in the official Office of National Statistics Employee Earnings data](#).

2. What do you think is important for Zena to do? (pick at least one)	Tick to choose
a. Research what she might need to become an engineer and what the job and pay might be like	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Choose subjects that would help her get into engineering and which she's good at	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Talk to her parents about what she really wants to do, giving them information about why she thinks it's a good option for her in the future, and giving them information about the financial prospects.	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Take at least one subject that isn't academic (even though she doesn't tend to do as well in them) for 'breadth'	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement 18 - Everyone should go to university if they possibly can

Deciding whether or not to do higher study is going to depend on lots of personal factors.

Start by thinking about what you want things to be like in three or four years. What do you want to be different? Your goals might be very precise, or still a little vague, but it's good to start with what you want to achieve in order to weigh up whether higher education might be helpful right now.

A useful way to think about it:

Higher education may or may not help you achieve your goals: it depends on what they are.

Exercise

Have a look at a selection of goals for their future that different people might have. Put each of the 11 goals below into one of the lists. Either:

- A. higher education is required,
- B. higher education could really help but it's not the only way, or
- C. higher education might not help.

Goals:

- 1. Becoming a pilot
- 2. Becoming a doctor
- 3. Becoming a vet
- 4. Becoming an accountant
- 5. Gaining confidence
- 6. Trying out new hobbies
- 7. Making new friends
- 8. Starting your own business
- 9. Living 'off grid' in the wilderness
- 10. Becoming a plumber
- 11. Earning lots of money

List A: Goals where higher education is required	List B: Goals where higher education could really help but it's not the only way	List C: Goals where higher education might not help

Statement 19 - You only get one chance to go to university

You don't only get once chance to go to university! Remember that higher education is more than just traditional full-time undergraduate study too. You can often study higher education (degree level) courses at college, you can study part time while working, or you can gain a degree on the job with a degree apprenticeship.

There is flexibility. There are options to:

- a. apply for a higher education course at any point in your life (it doesn't have to be in your last year of school or college)

If you go on to higher education, then it can be possible to:

- b. apply to switch to a different course during your studies
- c. leave a course after you start it and apply again for something else
- d. apply for higher-level course after your first one, which could be at a different institution
- e. apply for a higher-level course after your first one, which might be in a different subject
- f. apply for a second degree after your first degree, even if it's at the same level

However, although there's flexibility, there are things to take into account.

A useful way to think about it:

You have many opportunities higher education, but some may be a lot more convenient in terms of time, money and effort.

Exercise

For each of the points a -f, above, find more information on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), [UCAS](https://www.ucas.ac.uk) and [Discover Uni](https://www.discoveruni.co.uk).

Here's some of the relevant information. Match it up with the point (a-f, above) that it helps to inform.

Relevant information	Matching option (a-f)
1. You might not have access to student finance (loans to help you pay for tuition and living costs) for a second degree at the same level as one you already have.	
2. If you're over 21 when you start an undergraduate degree you're usually classed as a ' mature student '. You might need to factor in things like on-site childcare or part-time or distance learning options to fit around other responsibilities. Most universities are very supportive.	
3. Your institution may not always let you to switch courses. It's more likely if you've not been studying long (so there won't be too much to catch up on) and if you meet the entry requirements for the new course. It's less likely if the course is full or if you don't meet the entry criteria.	
4. If you leave and apply again, this probably means some time out of study. There isn't a guarantee that your application would be successful, although you could use the time to make your application more competitive. You'd still have the same access to student finance for the second course, although you might have had to pay partial fees for the first one too.	
5. Each higher-level course will set their own entry criteria. Some will specify that you need to have done a first course in a particular subject, and others will be open to a range of different subjects.	
6. Being a competitive applicant for a higher-level course usually means demonstrating with the results of your first course that you're an able student, and some need specific grades.	

Answers to exercises

Answers for statements 1, 2 and 3

There are 8 moments where Nihal did something proactive to make his luck happen. They're in bold below:

*Nihal **read about** different careers online, and he **noticed** he preferred ideas that involved making useful stuff, being practical and creative. He saw an advert on for a talk to learn more about a furniture design course and **thought about it**, realised it fit his preferences, so **made time to attend**. The talk was interesting, but said successful applications needed some work experience, so he **emailed** some local furniture makers to ask. None could offer work experience, but one offered him a summer job helping package up items for shipping. He was a bit disappointed, but needed to earn some money that summer anyway, so **agreed to give it a go**. He got on really well with the team, **talked to them** about his interest in furniture design and **worked hard**. At the end of the summer, they asked if he wanted to stay on as an apprentice furniture designer assistant and he was really pleased. "I got lucky," he says.*

Answers for statement 4

1c, 2a, 3b

Answers for statement 5

1 – True (it probably was a good idea - changing direction to something more stable, once she realised how important that was to her sounds like a good move)

2 – True (it did cost Oti a little time, the extra work she had to fit in during her final year of college)

3 – False (the resit courses were free)

Answers for statement 6

List A: 1, 3, 5, 6, 8

List B: 2 (*all* is the problem here! Some options you could be pretty sure about), 4 and 7 (unless you're Professor Trelawny on a good day, no one can really be pretty certain about this!)

Answers for statement 7

1 – True (but only in the short term, and only a little. There were some short-term limitations - degree courses they weren't eligible for without different A Levels, but Jamie could always have taken extra courses to meet the requirements of something they really wanted to do)

2 – False (there were always lots of options open. Some would require some more work (like extra courses), but actually picking their subjects added to Jamie's options. Their science courses even gave them knowledge of anatomy that helped them get into medical photography later.

3 - False - Nothing was ever ruled out forever! (Some options just might have taken a little more work, that's all...!)

Answers for statements 8 and 9

3, 6 and 7.

Answers for statement 10

2 and 3 are generally true

Answers for statement 11

List A: 1, 4

List B: 2, 3, 5, 6

Answers for statement 12

A2, B1

Answers for statement 13

1 – False

2 – True (although technically sex rather than gender). Inclusion in some sporting events is allowed to be limited by sex (rather than gender) with the argument that differences in stamina, strength and physique would otherwise make the competition unfair. For trans women their inclusion in women's events is often dependent on testosterone level testing.

3 – True -but this is pretty rare – an example would be employing only women in a sexual health centre for Muslim women.

4 – True - Religious roles which are limited to one gender by the tenets of the religion are legal in the UK - for example, an orthodox synagogue can require its rabbi to be a man.

5 – False

6 - False

Answers for statement 14

1c, 2a, 3b

Answers for statement 15

1 – True - in fact, marketing and writing are listed among ['15 careers that dyslexic people rock at' in a campaign by Dyslexia Scotland](#)

2 – True – in fact, as reported [in this news clip from the US, a blind teacher was nominated for National Teacher of the Year award](#)

3 – True – you can read [a great article by profoundly deaf composer and pianist Danny Lane](#).

Answers for statement 16

All of these are true.

1 – You don't need a law A Level to become a lawyer. Or even a Law degree. For more, see the [LawCareers.net guide to different routes into law](#).

2 – Most (64%) of the standard medical degrees advertised for start dates in 2021 required Chemistry at A Level or equivalent. Of those that did not, most required other specific science subjects. Of the 39 universities that offer medical degrees, some offer other programmes that are a year longer than the standard course, designed for people without the required A Levels. 2 universities offer 'medicine with a preliminary year' designed for people with good grades but no science subjects. 18 offer 'medicine with a gateway year' to support people who have the ability but have 'barriers to their learning', and don't typically require specific subjects to have been taken. However, numbers of places are usually considerably higher on the standard medical courses.

3 – You can start to train 'on the job' to become an accountant without having taken any degree – many accountancy firms run school leaver programmes or apprenticeships where you earn and learn. However, having a degree (in any subject) can be advantageous – many accountancy firms also run a 'graduate programme', similarly to the school leaver scheme, you'll earn and learn and complete accountancy qualifications, but you'll usually be earning at a much higher level and with increased responsibility.

4 – It's possible to work in business straight from school, although your starting salary might be higher with a degree. Although a business subject might help to convince an employer that you're really keen and able, business related work experience, or even setting up your own enterprise could do that equally well. In fact, many of the top firms recruiting at universities are actively recruiting students from all subject areas. Their criteria are usually not related to which subject you study, but what your grades are like, so choosing subjects you're motivated to study is key.

5 – You do need a veterinary science degree to be a vet. (You can't take medicine and argue that 'humans and horses are very similar really...') For more, see the [TargetCareers guide to which careers need specific degree subjects](#).

Answers for statement 17

1 – a), b) and c) are important for Zena. Taking a subject that she doesn't like and doesn't tend to do well in is unlikely to lead to a good result.

2 - a), b) and c) are important for Kizzy. Exactly the same as for Zena, taking a subject that she doesn't like and doesn't tend to do well in is unlikely to lead to a good result.

Answers for statement 18

List A: 2, 3 (there are no other ways to become a vet or doctor other than going to uni and doing a degree)

List B: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11 (there are non-university route into lots of professions, such as accountancy, although starting salaries for those with a degree might be higher. Clubs, societies and extra-curricular programmes at university can make it particularly easy to try out new hobbies, make new friends or start a new enterprise, although it's not the only way you can do these things of course! And earning lots of money isn't unique to graduates. Although on average graduates do earn more over their lifetimes (see [TargetCareers' summary of graduate earning potential](#) for more), and earning potential can vary considerably between courses. Look up courses on [Discover Uni](#) to see what graduates of those programmes earn after 6 months and 3 years to help inform your decision).

List C: 1, 9, 10 (university courses have to fulfil a certain level of academic content, and so for some more practical professions, a degree is unlikely to teach you the practical skills you need. And off-grid wilderness living might not be helped by requirements to attend lectures, classes and tutor meetings. Unless your wilderness is *very* close to campus. Although, studying via distance learning is a possibility of course!)

Answers for statement 19

1 – f, 2 – a, 3 – b, 4 – c, 5 – e, 6 – d

ⁱ [State of the Nation 2018-2019: Social Mobility in Great Britain](#): Social Mobility Commission.