



St Helens College



YEAR 9 OPTIONS GUIDE



WHY GCSEs MATTER

As you move through Year 9, it's time to start making decisions about your GCSE subjects. The choices you make now will shape the next stage of your education and may influence your future study or career options. This guide has been created to help you and your parents understand the subjects available and make confident, well-informed decisions.

Progression to College:

GCSEs help you build the foundations for college courses, including BTECs, T Levels, A Levels, and apprenticeships.

Skill Boost:

GCSEs build key skills like problem-solving, time management, and critical thinking.

Linking GCSEs to Your Future Goals:

If your school offers subjects that match your interests or career goals, choose them as they can be helpful. But if those subjects aren't available, don't worry, you won't be at a disadvantage when applying to college.

Keeping Your Options Open:

Colleges look at your overall GCSE grades, not just specific subjects. If you're unsure about your future, pick subjects you enjoy and are passionate about you'll likely do better because you'll be motivated and committed.

Core Skills: English and Maths

English and maths are really important for your future. Colleges and employers look closely at these GCSE grades so it's important to try your best. If you don't achieve a grade 4 in either subject, you'll need to resit it alongside your course at college.

CHOOSING MY OPTIONS

DO'S AND DON'TS



Research

Think about possible careers and use this as a starting point. If you're unsure, explore careers that match your skills and interests. Remember that some careers require specific subjects and high grades, such as Medicine or Veterinary Science.



Get advice

You can seek advice from your teachers, form tutor, careers advisers, parents/carers, family, and friends. There are also many useful online tools to help you research career options, which may influence your choices, such as the National Careers Service.



Pick something you will enjoy

You are going to study these subjects for the next two years, so choose something you enjoy and are good at. You're more likely to stay motivated and try your best if you enjoy what you are studying.



Don't decide last minute

Don't leave your choices to the last minute or rush the decision. It's important to choose subjects that interest you and will be beneficial for your future. Take time to think about your options and consider the benefits of each one.



Don't copy your friends

Don't choose a subject just because your friends have chosen it. Your goals may be different, which means your subject choices may be too. Don't let the idea of being in a different class to your friends put you off.

TIPS FOR STUDENTS

TIPS FOR PARENTS

It's never too early to start thinking about your future. We would love to welcome you to our Open Events, where you can explore our campuses, meet our expert tutors and start to think about the options available to you when you leave school.

 **Reflect on Your Interests** What subjects do you enjoy the most?

 **Consider Your Strengths** Which subjects are you good at?

 **Think About Your Future** What careers or further studies are you interested in?

 **Seek Advice** Talk to teachers, career advisors, and family members.

 **Balance Your Choices** Aim for a mix of subjects to keep your options open.

 **Do your research** Look at your options for College or Sixth Form, look at the courses available and entry requirements for your chosen subjects.

 **Support and Encourage** Help your child explore their interests and strengths.

 **Stay Informed** Learn about the subjects and what they involve.

 **Discuss Future Goals** Talk about potential career paths and how different subjects can help.

 **Attend School and College Events:** Attend the options guidance events and parent-teacher meetings in school. You can also visit Colleges/Sixth Forms on their Open Events, this is a great opportunity to explore their chosen place of study, meet the tutors, see facilities and make an informed decision about their future.

 **Be Open-Minded** Respect your child's choices and support their decisions.

FAQs

Q WHAT IF I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO DO IN THE FUTURE?

A Choose a broad range of subjects to keep your future options open.

Q ARE ENGLISH AND MATHS IMPORTANT?

A YES! English and maths are the main subjects that we look at when you enrol on your chosen course. If you don't achieve a Grade 4 in either subject, you will continue to study and resit your English and maths GCSEs, alongside your chosen course at College.

Q WHO CAN HELP ME DECIDE WHAT SUBJECTS ARE RIGHT FOR ME?

A You are surrounded by people who want to help and support you! Reach out to your parents/carers, teachers, careers advisors, family and friends but ultimately the decision is yours. Choose wisely!

Q WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING MY OPTIONAL SUBJECTS?

A You will be studying these subjects for the next two years, so it's important to choose ones you will enjoy. For example, if you like learning by doing, you may want to consider practical subjects that allow you to develop your strengths and skills.

Q WHAT IF MY SCHOOL DOESN'T OFFER A GCSE LINKED TO MY CHOSEN CAREER?

A Don't worry! GCSE options vary from school to school, so you don't need prior knowledge or experience in a subject to study it at college. For example, you don't need to have taken Engineering at GCSE to study Engineering at college.

CHOOSING YOUR SUBJECTS

Core subjects

Optional subjects

How do I decide which subjects to study

Ask yourself:

What am I good at?

What do I enjoy most?

What career would I like in the future?

How do I prefer to learn and be assessed?

Have I picked this option for the right reason?

NEED MORE HELP?



Talk to Your Teachers:

They can provide insights into what each subject involves

Visit your Careers Advisor:

Get advice on how different subjects can impact your future.

Attend Options Evenings at School:

These events provide valuable information and a chance to ask questions.

Visit the National Careers Service Website:

The National Careers Service is a fantastic tool to help you research your careers options and the opportunities available to you when you leave school.

REMEMBER: Your GCSE choices are an important step, but they are just the beginning of your educational journey. Choose wisely, but don't stress too much - there are many paths to success!

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