

Choices at 16

Now that you've reached fourth year, and could possibly leave school this year, you have some important decisions to make about your future.

Even if you've already decided to stay on at school you still need to think and plan ahead. The subjects and courses you choose now will have an impact on the options open to you in the future.

Your main options

Before you consider each option remember to:

- think about your future career plans (if you have any yet) – what's going to help you achieve them
- work out the options that fit best with your skills, interests and strengths
- think about your attitude to further study
- talk your ideas over with your parent or carer – there may be funding issues to discuss.

Staying on at school

A popular choice! Last year 88.4% of S4 pupils stayed on for S5, and 74.2% of those stayed on for S6.

After the 2016/17 school year, 92.9% of school leavers went on to a positive destination.

The benefits of staying on at school:

- the chance to carry on with subjects you enjoy and want to take further
- the opportunity to improve your general academic qualifications, which may expand your career options and improve your chances of getting into work, training or full time study after school
- more time to mature, and think about your future
- the opportunity to get involved in more work-related courses and activities in school
- you may be eligible for an Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) of £30 a week during term time if your household has a low income (visit the [EMA website](#) for more information).

But you do need to ask yourself a few questions first. Are you prepared to put the work in to do well next year? What subjects will you take, and which careers or courses will they help to get you into? Is it right for me, or would I achieve more in a different environment?

Going to college

In 2016/17, 39.9% of fourth year school leavers went on to further education at college.

The benefits of full time study at college:

- you can take a full time vocational or work-related course and prepare for entry into a specific job or career

- you have the opportunity to study new subjects and courses that aren't available in school
- you can move on to more advanced courses if you do well
- it's a more adult environment than school, you could be studying with people of all ages
- it's a fresh start, a new place, people and tutors.

But it's also a big change. You'll have to take more responsibility for managing your time and your course work. Lecturers and tutors won't chase you up about handing your work in on time!

Read our articles on '[Going to college?](#)', '[Differences between school and college](#)' and '[Funding full time further education](#)' for more detailed information.

Finding a Modern Apprenticeship

Modern apprenticeships are now the main route into employment for young people straight from school. They give you the opportunity to start a job with guaranteed training towards a recognised work-based qualification.

The benefits of a Modern Apprenticeship:

- you earn as you learn
- you can train in over 80 different jobs from accounting technician to plumber
- your training is related to the job you are interested in
- you work towards a recognised qualification – usually a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) at SCQF Levels 5, 6 or 7, although technical apprentices study for an SVQ at SCQF Levels 8 or 9.

You may need to take an aptitude test to get into some apprenticeships, particularly for craft and technician level apprenticeships in construction and engineering. For more information take a look at our [Apprenticeship](#) section.

The pay rate for apprentices varies but you are entitled to at least the National Minimum Wage for apprentices. From April 2018 it is £3.70 an hour (for those aged under 19 or aged 19 and over in the first year of their apprenticeship). The basic pay rate for apprentices in year 2 is £5.90 an hour for 18-20 year olds, and £7.38 an hour for those aged over 21.

Going straight into a job

You could decide to look for a job that doesn't include apprenticeship training. Opportunities are out there but they are limited due to the economic situation, and you may not get any recognised training.

Benefits of going straight into a job:

- you're earning money straight away
- you're getting real-life work experience
- the employer may offer training programmes that will give you the skills to work your way up in the organisation.

How much you earn can vary a lot depending on the sort of industry you go into, but it's important to remember that the national minimum wage for 16-17 year olds is £4.20 an hour from April 2018.

Employability programmes

If you don't feel ready to move on to work, training or further education by the time you leave school you could take part in a personal development or employability programme to help you to build up your confidence and skills.

There is a wide range of programmes, which vary depending on the area you live in. Some are national training programmes; others are run by local community groups or employment initiatives. There may be the opportunity to do work experience, voluntary work or community work as part of the programme.

Your school and career coach will be able to give you more information on the programmes that are available in your area.

And finally...

We'd just like to mention that volunteering is another option you could consider. If you'd like to know more read our article ['Volunteering'](#).

It's important to remember that you can help your parents or carers to support you by talking with them about your options.

They may not be aware of the full range of options open to you at this stage, or the types of career advice and support that are available to you – in and out of school.

Ask to speak with your career coach or adviser in school if you would like more information and advice before making any decisions.