10 Things to Do to Prepare for...

Your A Levels

Commissioned by GCSEPod.

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Activities

These activities will help you to reflect on the skills you have developed throughout your GCSE courses and will help you to prepare for your A Level studies.

1. Exam Board and Specification

If you have decided on your A Level subjects, contact your teachers or check your Sixth Form prospectus to find out which exam board and specification your school uses for each subject. Once you have this information you can go to the exam board website and download an overview of the specification so you have a clear idea of what the course will involve and also explore other support material that the exam board has made available. If you have not decided on your A Level subjects then you can carry out this same process for the range of subjects you might be interested in studying, as having a clearer idea of the course content will help you to reach a decision.



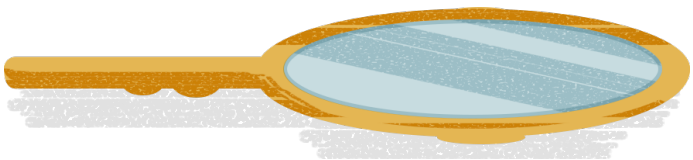
2. Review Key Points

Go back through your GCSE work in all the subjects you might be interested in carrying on to A Level. Decide on the key points that a student studying that subject at GCSE needs to know and produce a booklet of key skills and knowledge that could be given to future GCSE students. Think carefully about how you organise this booklet, dividing up and sequencing the information in a way that is clear and helpful.

3. Self-Reflection

Reflect on your time so far in school - what have been your strengths and weaknesses? Were you punctual? Were you organised? Did you manage your time well? Did you get involved in projects and activities? Do you have any regrets about how you conducted yourself? If you could do it all again, would you change anything?

Make a list of what you have been good at and what you could have done better.



4. What Makes a Good Student?

Write down the qualities you think characterise an excellent Sixth Form student (these should not all be academic). Honestly assess yourself against these qualities and then write a letter to yourself in which you explain what you will need to do, and what you might need to change, in order to make the most of your time in Sixth Form.

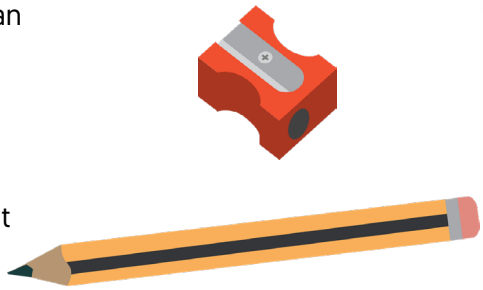
5. Personal Statement

Draft a personal statement that you might send to a university or prospective employer. You may not yet be able to tailor it to a specific course of further study or employment but you can include:

- What school subjects interest you, why this is and what skills you have gained from studying them.
- What personal qualities you have that would make you suitable to go on to further study, training or employment. (Remember you have to provide evidence to back up what you say about yourself)
- What hobbies and interests you have and what personal qualities these have helped you to develop.
- Any additional information about you, such as part time work or volunteering. Again, remember to be very clear about what you, as a person, have gained from this.

Once you have completed your personal statement consider whether you are happy with it and whether, if you were an employer or a university admissions tutor, you would be impressed by it.

If there are gaps, or you have struggled to find things to write, then you have time to enhance your skills and experiences in the next 18 months so make a plan of what you are going to do and when you will do it.



6. Overcoming Challenges

Write two paragraphs, the first explaining the challenges you face in the current situation and the second explaining what you have done to try to overcome them and the personal qualities you have had to demonstrate. You can refer to this extraordinary experience in job interviews for the rest of your life so spend time reflecting on what it has taught you and give yourself credit for how you are managing it.

7. What's in Store...?

Do some thinking, researching and planning for your future. You do not have to have a set route at the moment but explore different ideas about where you might like to be in 5 years and then in 10 years. Be adventurous and aspirational and think about a range of different things you might like to do. Write these down then research what you would need to do and achieve to make them actually happen.

8. Wider Reading

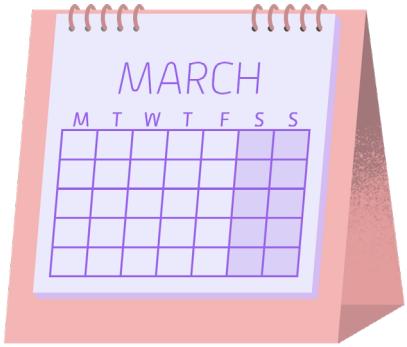
Twice a week read a quality article, extract from an academic journal, or entries on a respected website related to the subjects you are thinking of studying next year. You do not have to worry about the specific topics that will be on your courses, the experience of wider reading will be extremely beneficial.

9. Time Management

Plan out what a typical week might look like next year.

Factor in what time you will need to get up, how you will travel to school / college, your lessons, any part-time work, sports and hobbies and at least 4–5 hours out of class study per subject.

Write this out from Monday–Sunday and specifically allocate time to each activity across the week.



10. An Ideal Reference

Write the reference you would ideally like your Head of Sixth Form to write for you when you leave school/college at the end of your studies. Keep this in your planner throughout the next two years to keep you focused. Make sure you make it happen!