



# Parents' Guide to a Successful Sixth Former

From Teenage Learning Coach **Sarah Brazenor**



# Introduction



Thank you for downloading this free guide. After working with many teenagers who transition into sixth form, I have seen first-hand the mistakes they can make and the problems they may encounter.

Do not underestimate the step-up to year 12. It is a big change both educationally and emotionally as our teenagers make the transition to become independent students.

Students will find themselves going from the highly supervised learning of secondary school to the independent learning required at sixth form.

They will find the responsibility for their learning will be firmly on their shoulders with some sixth forms helping the transition and others expecting independent learning from the start.

This transition is part of their learning journey and getting it right prepares students for their next steps, be that University, apprenticeships or work.

Therefore, as a parent we just want to support them in the best ways possible. In this guide I have highlighted the top 5 areas I believe will help your teenager and you the most. Please take from the guide the points that resonate with you.

My aim is to give you some ideas to try and to highlight the key areas students may struggle with in year 12.

Enjoy.

# 1. How ready do you feel?

Let's start with how you are feeling about it. Click on the link below and it will take you to a simple questionnaire, which once completed will give you a report and suggestions of ways forward.

[CLICK HERE TO TAKE THE QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

Depending on your results of the questionnaire you will now know how ready you are feeling and what you need to be aware of as your teenager settles into sixth form.

## 2. The difference between GCSE's and A level/BTECs

Understanding the difference between GCSE's and their year 12 courses is really important. Many students think they must do 3 A levels and disregard BTEC courses.

Different learning preferences will excel with different courses. Below I have linked learning preferences to courses.

**A levels (academic subjects)** – Mathematics, Sciences, Business Studies and Psychology

Students who use Visual and Audio Digital learning preferences are generally well suited to these subjects. Achieving a grade 7 or above at GCSE will make the transition easier as they will have a firm foundation of knowledge to build upon.

### **A levels (creative subjects) - Art, Design, Media Studies, Drama and DT**

Students who use Visual and Kinaesthetic learning preferences are generally well suited to these subjects which have many practical elements and are more creative.

### **A levels (others) - Languages, Music**

These subjects lend themselves to students who use their tonal skills.

### **A levels (Essay based) - English, History, Philosophy and Ethics**

Students have to like writing essays and have an inquiring mind suit these subjects.

### **BTECs**

Often thought of as easier or less important than A levels, BTECs offer a very different learning experience for students.

There are different levels with the BTEC extended Diploma being the equivalent of 3 A levels.

BTECs have a lot of course work which is continually assessed. The courses are more interactive and can involve practical work and teamwork. They usually suit students who are Kinaesthetic learners and/or don't do well in exams.

Therefore, I would check that your teenager has picked courses that suit their natural learning preferences.

Don't know what their natural learning preferences are? Get in touch, happy to help.

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### 3. Have they picked the right subjects?

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The best way to be a successful sixth former is to choose the subjects that will make them shine. Subjects they love and which they want to learn more about.

If your teenager doesn't have a clear idea of what they want to do after sixth form, then picking subjects they like doing is a good idea. If there's a subject, they couldn't do at GCSE and are keen to learn it now then they generally enjoy them.

I would add a note of caution here with subject choices. Occasionally students are pushed into subjects they don't want to do. As a parent it's hard to stand back and let them choose subjects you'd prefer them not to take.

In my experience students who are "encouraged" to pick subjects they don't want to do find it harder to engage with the lessons.

This is different to the students who pick subjects that they need for their next steps. They usually see them as a steppingstone and find a way to succeed.

I also think that students need to settle into their subjects, and it can take a couple of terms before they are enjoying them.

## 4. How do you know they are doing the work?

This is a tricky one. Teachers will be encouraging independent learning and you may not have the level of contact as before.

Often the first time you know that something is not going well is when they get disappointing mock results.

As a parent it's a fine line between showing an interest and being a nag. Over the years I have perfected some open-ended questions that seem to be well received.

**What's the name of your XXXX teacher?**

If they don't know their teacher's name that could be an indication that they are not enjoying their lesson or subject.

**Are there many students in your XXXX class that you like?**

They may say too many, or they are all boring or they are too noisy.

**I wish I'd studied XXXX, what's it like?**

Just opening the dialogue about one of their subjects.

Showing an interest in their day and being open to listen, when they want to speak, seems to get the best results.

I have had to stop myself asking too many questions of my teenagers. I personally like as much information as possible, but I have had to learn patience.

Also, if they are not doing the work, or it's not good enough, I think a bit of failure can really help them refocus and start working harder.

There may be other reasons why they are not doing the work which may need a bit more investigation.

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## 5. Ensuring they have the right learning mindset

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The mind is very powerful, and we are the product of our thoughts. Therefore, the learning mindset your teenager has, is really important to ensure they become a successful sixth form student.

You need to hear statements like these:

- The subject is hard, but I am finding ways to learn it.
- I am not successful yet.
- I will find a solution to the problem.
- I will ask for help when I get stuck.
- I know I will do well, it's just taking me some time to learn everything.

These are all very powerful statements and suggests your teenager is taking responsibility for their learning journey.

In contrast, if you hear statements like this, you should be concerned:

- The subject is too hard, I'll never understand it.
- I am going to fail.
- There is no solution.
- No one will help me.
- I haven't got enough time to learn everything.

The first set of statements are very empowering and suggest the possibility of a positive result. The second set are very negative and doesn't give the brain much hope of change. Therefore, if you are hearing a lot of the negative language you need to reply with positive responses.

The subject is too hard, I'll never understand it



At the moment the subject is hard but I am learning something new and I need to give my brain time to understand it

I am going to fail.



Based on what evidence?

There is no solution.



If there was a solution what would it be?

No one will help me



There will be help you just need to ask for it

I haven't got enough time to learn everything



Do you need to learn everything?

# And Finally...

Year 12 can be a big transition for our teenagers, and I hope you've found this guide helpful.

If you feel that you need more help then please get in contact [sarah@connective-learning.co.uk](mailto:sarah@connective-learning.co.uk) or click [here](#) to register your interest in the "Successful Sixth former programme", available from 30th September.

