

# Coping with change: leaving secondary school

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The time you spend at secondary school is truly unique. You start out there as a child and leave as a young adult, and hopefully, you learn a lot about yourself and the world. Because it's such an important few years in your life, leaving school behind can seem a little daunting. But worry not! There are lots of exciting times ahead no matter which path you choose. We share some wisdom on how to deal with leaving secondary school.

## Know your options

First things first – you need to know what your choices are for when you finish secondary school. It's probably not wise to leave on your last day and then start planning, so be aware of your options beforehand. It will make it all the easier dealing with the change. Below, we've listed out the most common choices for UK students:

- Go to Sixth Form. Whether you stay at your secondary school or move elsewhere for this, you can continue studying for A-levels, BTECs or CTECs. This route often leads to higher education. The Unifrog [Colleges and Sixth Form tool](#) can help you get some inspiration on the courses and institutions available to you.
- Go to college. These are usually separate from schools and offer a broad range of qualifications including NVQs and Diplomas. Again, our [tool](#) can help you find the courses that interest you most.
- Start an apprenticeship. If you want to keep learning and earn a wage while you do so, a Traineeship or Intermediate apprenticeship could be just the thing for you. Check out our [apprenticeships tool](#) to find one that's a good fit for you.

You should consider which of these choices best reflects your ambitions and goals going forward, and research the potential options you have. The Know-how library is full of useful resources that can help you find out more about your post-16 options.

## Be prepared

No matter which route you choose, change can sometimes seem like it springs upon you all at once, leaving you a little overwhelmed. In our guide to [dealing with change](#), we discuss some of the things you can do to make your transition to the next stage of your life a successful one. The fact you're even reading this article shows that you're thinking about your future, which is an excellent first step! With the right preparation, you'll soon be thriving no matter what you do.

## Find your people

For some students, one of the biggest obstacles to overcome when finishing secondary school is leaving friends behind. However, it's often one of the natural changes that occur. In our [guide on how to make friends at a new school or college](#), we discuss ways that you can find people who share your interests. It will take some effort from you to make new connections, but don't forget that many people will be in the same boat. Try to find those individuals who you have a lot in common with – it will make settling in much easier.

## Manage your time

Regardless of whether you go onto further education or an apprenticeship, you'll likely have a less-structured day than you currently do at secondary school. Your timetable will be freer, meaning that you'll need to make an effort to manage your own time. Our [guide on how to manage your workload](#) has some useful tips for those staying in education. However, many of the tips can be applied to other areas of life too. Planning, goals, and prioritisation are all essential aspects. There will be fewer people to tell you what to do after you leave school, so it's always a good thing to show your initiative by planning your time effectively.

## Enjoy it

Life after secondary school has so many exciting opportunities no matter what you choose to do. Despite how scary it may seem (or not), know that there are lots of interesting things ahead for you. Try to enjoy the moment and take the chance to explore your new situation. You still have plenty of time to figure out what you want from life and what your future holds.