



CHRIST THE KING
SIXTH FORMS

What I wish I'd known before starting my A Levels

Top tips from CTK



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Preparing for the Future

Regardless of how your school adapts to the current circumstances you can expect some disruption to continue into next year, but it still won't be long before you have to start making some decisions about your future. Now is a great time to prepare yourself for post-16 education and research the opportunities available to you.

Over the last few months, you have hopefully developed some new skills. You have been learning remotely and have needed to take more responsibility for directing your own learning. These adaptations may be good preparation for A Level and university.

Choosing your A Levels

If you haven't done so already then Year 11 is a great time to start thinking about what subjects you might like to do. Think about what you're good at and what you enjoy. Some degrees (such as medicine) may expect you to study specific subjects so make sure you do your research and find out what may be required.

The ['Choosing your subjects guide'](#) will explain this in more detail and give you some practical tips on how to get started.

Choosing where to study

Starting A Levels isn't just a case of picking subjects. What you do and where you choose to study can shape your experience. You may decide to stay at school or go on to a sixth form college. A Levels pose an academic challenge and are structured differently to GCSEs. The ['Why us'](#) guide will help explain how things will change when transitioning to A Levels and why you should choose CTK.

What I wish I'd known before starting my A Levels

Introduction

Preparing to finish secondary school and progress on to study A Levels can be both exciting and scary. As you probably know, with this next stage of education comes a lot more responsibility and independence. You will need to make decisions about where and what you will study, you will have greater control over your time, and you will be expected to take more responsibility for your learning. We asked a number of current CTK students, who were in your position only a few years ago, to reflect on what they wish they'd known before starting their A Levels. We hope their experiences will help prepare you for the transition to the next stage of your educational journey.

What advice would you give to help someone make their A Level subject choice?

If you know for sure what you want to study at university, I recommend starting by looking at the entry requirements for that course as you may find that there are some compulsory subjects. I knew pretty early on that I wanted to study medicine at university and so that meant studying Biology and Chemistry at A Level, as these were a minimum requirement for most UK medical schools.

For my other two subjects in Year 12 I decided to go for Maths and History, as these were subjects that I enjoyed during school and figured that this passion would probably be enough to drive me through the challenges of A Levels. And I was right, I really enjoyed all the subjects I studied, and if I had to do it all over again, I would not change any of them!

How did A Levels compare to your experiences at school?

The biggest difference I found was that I had quite a lot more spare time in my timetable, with at least one or two free periods each day. At first, I spent much of this new-found freedom with friends, but I then began to realise that this time would be better spent in the student centre getting on with work. I created my own little timetable where I set myself tasks to complete during free periods. This helped me to keep on top of my studying and revision so that I wasn't overwhelmed by work in the evenings and on weekends.

What were the biggest challenges you faced when completing your A Levels?

For me, it was finding time in Year 13 to focus on revising Year 12 content, which, because of the linear system, would also be assessed in the end of Year 13 exams. I found that the best way to tackle this issue was to keep organised with a rigid timetable. Often in free periods I would dedicate specific time for homework and revision for Year 12 topics. Even having different folders for different papers can do wonders to manage the motherload of information you will learn in the two years during studies!

How did you go about managing your time in terms of revision and exam preparation?

Every day until my final exam I made a schedule in which I specifically marked a subject and topics that I would revise each day. It was crucial to monitor my own progress. Once I realised that some topics were going better than others, I was paying more attention to ones that required more effort.

How did your experience studying for A Levels prepare you for university?

The main thing that studying A Levels did for me in terms of preparing for university was probably the aspect of independent study and time management. I can't emphasise enough how crucial these skills are when it comes to higher education, as the onus is much more on you when it comes to studying at university. Whilst your teachers at school and college/sixth-form will chase you up when you're falling behind and performing badly in particular subjects, at university your tutors and lecturers will be expecting you to keep yourself in check and make sure that you're completing all the relevant assignments. Of course, if you are struggling with certain aspects of studying at university, whether it be the difficulty of some topics or managing your time effectively, there is support available from your department, but there's only so much they can do as you will have to put the effort in.

Looking back, what advice would you give to your younger self about to begin their A Levels?

Work out how you learn best and utilise that. It's much easier to study when you are playing to your strengths and not working against yourself.

Do the work earlier rather than later. Don't wait for exams to revise. You'll thank yourself for it later. Just relax and try your best.

I know I did everything I could, and I think there is a peace that comes with that, whatever way the results play out.