

## NEC BRIEF GUIDES: Home educating your child

This brief guide is for parents and carers who are thinking of home education. The guide will help you understand what's involved, outline the costs you will be responsible for, and signpost you to further sources of information and advice.

**Note:** throughout this guide, 'parents' refers to parents, guardians and other carers.

### First steps

There are three initial steps to take to withdraw from the school system if you decide home education is the right choice.

#### 1. Take your child out of their present school.

You can do this by going in person to see the head teacher, or in writing by email or letter. The school has to inform the local education authority that your child will no longer be attending their school. This is so that the local authority knows they will be with you during school hours, rather than at school.

#### 2. De-schooling.

Most parents and guardians who take the decision to home educate find that for a period of weeks after leaving school, their child doesn't want to have anything to do with education. The best way you can help is to allow them to spend their time as they wish even if that means watching TV for hours on end!

#### 3. Re-engaging with education.

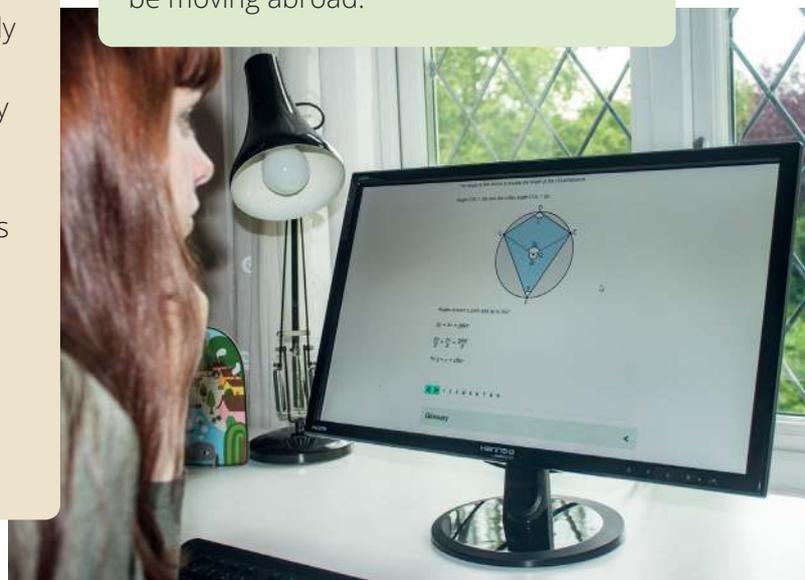
Once your child starts asking questions that show they are ready to continue with their education, sit down and talk to them about their interests and what they would like to learn about next. Discuss with teenagers their thoughts about their future career and think about what GCSEs and A levels and other qualifications they might need.

If your child has never attended school and you have never applied for a school place, you don't need to do anything, although the local authority may contact you to ask what education provision you have made.

### Home educating in the UK

An estimated 20,000 young people in the UK are home educated, according to the Government's All Party Parliamentary Group on Home Schooling. All parents are legally entitled to home educate their child to the compulsory school leaving age (currently 16 in England and Wales), including those who have children with special education needs (SEN).

There are many reasons why families take the decision to home educate. School just doesn't suit some children. They may learn better when they learn informally. They may be being bullied. Some parents have concerns about what they perceive to be a narrowing of the curriculum and 'teaching to the test' at state-funded schools. Parents' first choice school maybe full. The family may be moving abroad.



## PLANNING TO HOME EDUCATE

### Getting started

To study effectively at home, your child will need:

- A desk or table to work at with a chair that supports their back
- Space to store papers, books and binders
- Access to a computer (this doesn't have to be in their own work area)
- Access to equipment to support a range of learning activities
- If there are GCSEs and A levels involved, a study schedule pinned to the wall somewhere prominent
- A diary or notebook (paper or online) to help them keep track of what they have studied

### CASE STUDY Julia Wix

When Julia Wix was a teenager, her father was offered a six-month contract in Belgium and the family went to live there. The six months became several years. Julia left formal education at the age of 15 and her parents turned to home education. The freedom to learn as she chose, liberated from the constraints of a classroom and the demands of peer pressure, suited Julia down to the ground. Through NEC, Julia studied and took maths GCSE and A level Classical Civilisation, Government and Politics, French, and English Language and Literature. Her grades won her a place to study for a BA in Classical & Archaeological Studies with French at the University of Kent. She went on to complete a Masters in Ancient History at Kings College London. *'It's down to NEC that I was able to go to university to study the subject I have loved since being a child. I'm sure my life would have taken a very different course without home education.'*



### Four approaches to learning at home: what they mean for the student

<b>Formal school</b>	Wakes up at a set time, gets dressed in smart clothes, and studies a range of subjects from a timetable with breaks built in.
<b>Informal school</b>	Gets up at no specific time and studies a range of subjects from a loose plan that they may divert from to pursue points that interest them.
<b>Unit studies</b>	Together, choose a topic of interest and do a project on it. This might involve reading, visits outside the home, and talking to people who are specialists in the topic being studied.
<b>Autonomous education</b>	You and your child freely follow your child's interests, with them setting the pace.

There are a number of different ways for home educators to teach the curriculum. Parents can take on the role of tutor, or employ a private tutor for all subjects, or just those subjects they feel less confident in teaching themselves. Flexi-schooling,

where the child attends school some of the time and is home educated for some of the time, is a good choice for some families. Distance learning courses are a way to provide structured learning with tutor support at GCSE and A level.

## SUPPORTING AND MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

### Resources for home educators

To home educate effectively, you need to be able to offer your child a range of materials and resources. Here are some low-cost sources:

- books, newspapers and magazines you have at home in paper or digital format
- the free online courses available through the Open University's Open Learn website <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/>, including languages, maths, the sciences and the social sciences
- books, CDs and DVDS borrowed from your local library (there is usually a small fee for borrowing CDs and DVDs)
- creative and craft items, science kits, flash cards, board games and card games
- the reference section of your local library, and the library catalogue, which you can use to request resources kept in the archive
- museums, art galleries, botanical gardens and other venues open to the public often have educational resources that are free or low-cost
- if you live near a university, the university library, which anyone living locally can join as a guest member for a small fee
- online resources about the topics your child is interested in (it's important to take care to check which organisation published them so you know they are authoritative)

You will also find lots of useful resources on the websites of the exam boards.

### How NEC can help

NEC offers online courses in 16 subjects at GCSE level, including English language, English literature and maths, and 20 subjects at A level, including modern foreign languages, physical and social sciences, and the humanities.

All NEC students are supported by a DBS-checked tutor \* who is a subject specialist and has a teaching qualification.

NEC's additional services for young people are available when you enrol on our GCSE and A level courses. They provide a structured approach to guiding and supporting students through the course and preparing them for the exam.

\*The Disclosure and Barring Service is run by the Home Office for applicants to certain jobs that involve working with children and young people and in healthcare.

**NEC has published a series of study skills guides aimed at 16-18 year olds planning to go to university. Understanding and answering exam questions, How to present an argument, Time management, Proofing and editing your work and Academic essay writing are available to download free from the UCAS website at <https://wwwucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support/preparing-your-studies/study-skills-guides>.**

Monday  
GCSE maths  
10-11am

Monday  
Eng lit 'A'  
1-3pm

Tuesday  
History 'A'  
9-10.30am

Wednesday  
Natural  
History  
Museum

Thursday  
Biology 'A'  
10.30-11.30

Friday  
Spanish  
- Sofia  
10am

## GCSES AND A LEVELS FOR HOME EDUCATORS

Parents who home educate are responsible for bearing the cost of GCSE and A level examinations. Parents are also responsible for finding an examination centre willing to enter their child and allow them to sit the papers alongside other candidates. This may be a local school or a specialised exam centre like Tutors and Exams in Coventry <https://www.tutorsandexams.uk>.

Most of the subjects offered through a mainstream secondary education can be taught just as successfully in a domestic environment. Students learning online and at a distance achieve results that are at least as good as those achieved by their peers in the conventional education system.

### Managing GCSE and A level subjects with a non-examined assessment component

As a result of changes to GCSEs and A levels from summer 2017, 'there is a requirement for subjects with non-examination assessments (NEA) such as a **science practical endorsement, spoken language endorsement, or coursework** to be examined in the same **entering** exam centre'. The subjects affected by NEA include English GCSE and A level English Language and English Literature, A level History, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. These are all popular choices for home educators. Schools and colleges are able to enter students for exams and look after NEA, as they always have done. Private candidates (those taking exams under their own steam rather than through a school or college), including those being home educated, will need to find an exam centre willing to handle the NEA elements as well as the written papers. This may be difficult. Another option is to find a distance learning provider which is also a registered exam centre and is therefore able to handle exam bookings and manage the NEA elements. NEC is a distance learning provider able to offer this full service. This was achieved as a result of NEC's successful 2016 campaign *An exam system that works for everyone*.

The approach taken to studying for exams will depend on the needs of the young person. Some are highly self-motivated and able to study independently by the age of 15 or 16. Others may need the support of a tutor for a period of months, or for a limited period of time as the exam approaches. Many parents opt for distance learning, with structured course materials written by subject specialists, and built-in assignments and assessments. The best distance learning providers offer one-to-one support from a subject-specialist tutor with a teaching qualification. A few, including NEC, are also able to handle exam bookings and non-examined assessment.

### NEC GCSEs and A levels

#### NEC offers:

- 📌 **16 subjects at GCSE, including English language, English literature and maths**
- 📌 **20 subjects at A level, including modern foreign languages, physical and social sciences, and humanities**
- 📌 **Handling of exam bookings and management of non-examined assessment as a registered exam centre.**

Visit [www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk) for detailed course information and course samples. We also publish a free home educators guide to GCSEs and A levels which you can download from our website <http://bit.ly/2uamEvO>.

## APPLYING TO SIT GCSES AND A LEVELS

Exam boards publish specifications, past papers and timetables online, with the deadlines for applying to enter GCSE and A level exams in all the subjects the board offers. This is invaluable information for home educators, enabling them to plan a timetable, including revision, for all the GCSE and A level subjects being taken. If you are living overseas it may not be easy to find a local exam centre. It is always worth contacting the British Council for help. Some families make arrangements to return to the UK to take the exams.

### CASE STUDY Elliott Stevens

Elliott Stevens was home-educated from the age of 11. He first studied with NEC when he was 13, taking a number of GCSEs and IGCSEs before moving on to A levels in Government and Politics, History and Law, achieving A and A\* grades in all three subjects. He was accepted to study law at Cambridge University and is now a law postgraduate at Harvard University in the US. Elliott's story shows that with commitment and hard work, young people can achieve top results without going into a classroom. Elliott says: *'Being home educated gave me the opportunity to choose the subjects I wanted to study, and allowed me to set my own timetables and plans for learning. This allowed me to learn the way I wanted to, when I wanted to, and gave me a greater degree of freedom.'*



### Q&A Is there a way of finding out if other parents are home educating where I live?

Start by contacting your local authority. Government guidance recommends that local authorities should have a written policy statement on home educating and be willing to provide guidance to parents upon request. Visit the website of the local authority where you live to find out how this guidance has been interpreted for your local authority. Organisations like Education Otherwise, listed at the end of the guide, can help.

### What kind of GCSE and A level grades do home educated young people achieve?

NEC has been supporting home educating families for many years. Our experience is that young people educated at home consistently achieve GCSE and A level grades above national averages. That's because they tend to be highly motivated and want to do well.

### Where does my child sit their GCSEs and A levels?

If you make the decision to home educate, it is your responsibility to make arrangements for

your child to take their exams. Students enter for exams as private candidates and you should make sure that the exam centres (usually schools) you approach are aware of this. Centres charge fees for entering exams. NEC can help by making arrangements for your child to sit their exams at one of our partnership centres.

### What is an IGCSE?

The International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) is an international qualification. Typically studied by 14- to 16-year-olds, it prepares students for further academic work, including progression to A level study and the IB (International Baccalaureate) diploma programme. The university admissions service UCAS recognises IGCSE as equivalent to the UK GCSE.

### Is there any funding available for home educating families?

Some local authorities make funding available for this purpose. Contact your local authority to find out if a virtual head has been appointed to be responsible for the oversight of young people not being educated at school.

## FIND OUT MORE

### Five organisations that offer information and resources for parents who are home educating, including those considering whether home educating is the right choice for their family

Education Otherwise

<https://educationotherwise.org>

Ed Yourself

<http://edyourself.org>

Home Education Advisory Service

<https://www.heas.org.uk>

Home Education in the UK

<http://home-ed.info>

Home Education UK

<http://www.home-education.org.uk>

### GCSEs and A levels

'Studying GCSEs and A levels with NEC: The home-educators guide to choosing GCSEs and A levels'

<http://bit.ly/2uamEvO>

'Starting GCSEs' and 'Starting A levels' are two guides for students and parents to help them understand and navigate their way around the new GCSE and A level courses, published by Cambridge University Press in partnership with business management consultant Breslin Public Policy Limited

<http://www.cambridge.org/gb/education/news/revised-gcse-and-level-transition-guides-free-download>

### Two UK government publications about home educating

Guidance from the Department for Education for local authorities about children educated at home

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education>

A report on home educating published by the House of Commons in January 2017

<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN05108>

### Home education and inspection

Local authorities in England and Wales currently have no statutory duty to monitor the quality of home education. Some local authorities send parents an annual letter up to the age of 16 offering a home visit or requesting a written report on the approach parents are taking to home education.

### Keeping your child safe online

Advice from Children's Charity the NSPCC developed with digital communications company O2, to help parents keep children safe when they're using the internet, social networks such as Snapchat and Instagram, apps, games and other online applications

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety>

**For advice on GCSEs, A levels and NEC's service for parents and carers, call our Advice Team on 0800 389 2839.**

*Disclaimer:* the information in this NEC Brief Guide was up-to-date when it was published at [www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk). If you are thinking of a home educating your child, you are advised to review the sources of further information listed in this guide.

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