

How Can I Help My Teen Choose Subjects?

Consider exploration, enjoyment, success, and aspirations when helping your teen choose their school subjects.

Some subjects like English, Maths, and Science may be compulsory through to a certain year level but most schools offer students choice through elective subjects.

In Years 7 – 9

Most subjects are compulsory in Years 7-9, but if your teen has a choice of electives this is the time to encourage broad exploration.

Review teacher feedback and school reports with your teen to encourage them to identify and articulate what they:

- Are good at.
- Have aptitude or skills in.
- Enjoy/dislike and why.
- Find challenging.

As teenagers develop their interests and learn about themselves through their school subjects, this reflection will provide valuable insights to inform their senior subject and pathway decisions.

In Years 10 – 12

In Years 10-12 students have more options and the stakes are higher as their subject choices can broaden or narrow their post-school pathways. Students in these year levels usually have the option to choose a VET subject and/or accelerate in a subject.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Senior students have the opportunity to choose a VET (TAFE) subject as part of their school program. A VET subject may be a good choice if your teen:

- Likes hands-on learning.
- Has interest in a specific subject area.
- May want to pursue an apprenticeship or traineeship.
- May want to study VET after finishing school.

Acceleration

Most schools allow students to accelerate by studying a Year 11 subject when they are in Year 10. If your teen is mature, academically capable, and is well organised, this can provide them with a:

- Taste of senior subjects so they know what to expect.
- Sixth or seventh subject which may contribute to their ATAR.

Specific subjects

When it comes to selecting specific subjects, encourage your teen to read the subject handbook so they understand what each subject is about and what they require. If they have questions, encourage them to ask the staff who teach the subject/s as they are the experts.

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Enjoyment

- Encourage your teen to select subjects they will enjoy.
- They are more likely to put in their full effort when they like what they are learning.

Success

- When your teen gives their best effort they are more likely to do well.
- If they are choosing a subject because it is a prerequisite, encourage them to reflect on whether their previous learning indicates they are likely to experience success.

Aspirations

- If your teen is unsure about their future pathway, encourage them to choose subjects that will keep the most options open.
- If your teen has some idea of their direction, they need to know which school subjects are prerequisites for the VET (TAFE) and/or Higher Education (university) courses they're interested in. Contact your school's Careers Advisor for further information about these.
- Even if a subject isn't a prerequisite, encourage your teen to consider how it could support their preferred pathway. For example, Biology isn't usually a prerequisite for Medicine or Nursing, however, what they learn in it

will be advantageous if they want to study or work in a health-related field.

Myths

Discourage your teen from selecting subjects for any of these reasons:

Myth	Fact
<p>Choosing 'hard', higher-level subjects or ones that 'scale up' because they will lead to a high ATAR.</p> <p>Thinking 'easy' subjects or subjects that 'scale down' will lead to a low ATAR.</p>	<p>Scaling ensures that you are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged based on the subjects you choose. Whether they scale up or down, you still need to do well in your subjects to get a high ATAR.</p>
<p>Choosing a subject because it has a reputation for being 'easy'.</p>	<p>All Year 11 and 12 subjects require effort to do well, even if you're naturally talented in the area. You're better off choosing a subject you enjoy and will be engaged in rather than one that doesn't really interest you but that you think will be easy.</p>
<p>You should choose a subject because a teacher you like will be taking it. Or, you shouldn't choose a subject because you don't like the teacher.</p>	<p>Subjects are allocated to teachers based on the demands on the timetable, and changes can be made at the last minute. This means you can't guarantee who your teacher will be.</p>
<p>You will enjoy your subjects more if your friends are in your classes.</p>	<p>There is no guarantee your timetables will align, and if you're prone to distractions, you may learn more independently.</p>