

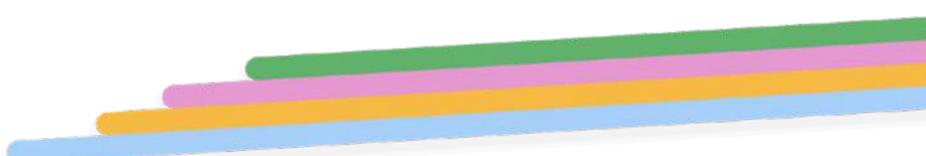


The process of selecting a 6th form centre will run parallel to the stresses of year 11. It is best to know what you're dealing with from the off. If a student wants a choice of 6th form *and* a choice of subjects, then being aware of the barriers is very important, even at this early stage..

## 1. Choose the right subjects

Encourage your child to talk to their teachers about A-level study. Teachers always take more interest if they know the student wants to continue the subject through to 6th form. It's best to know early on if the teacher thinks the step up to A-level might be too much for the student. Will they be honest? . . . you bet! Having a student in an A-level class who is out of their depth is a teacher's second worst nightmare\*. This avoids disappointment later on, and gives a student time to evaluate other options (or work even harder and ensure the teacher is proved wrong!)

\*the worst is the student who doesn't care, doesn't work, is rude, puts others off - there's one in every class and there's a good chance a name has already sprung to your mind...



## 2. Attend a university open day

For those wanting to go to university, (once they've settled in year 12), [book a day](#) for you both to attend a university open day. When they see what lies ahead, it (9 times out of 10) inspires them to work even harder to get there. A short discussion with the course tutor will tell them all they need to do in order to succeed with their application. This discussion won't just be about grades, it will be about work experience and enrichment opportunities away from the classroom.

It might also confirm that university is **not** for them, so they need to focus on CV building and researching apprenticeships instead. Knowledge is power, and the sooner you and your child have the information, the sooner a cunning plan can be formed (hopefully with no Baldrick in sight).



## 3. Talk to them about 'plans'

Follow the 'what do you want to be when you grow up' question with a discussion on the route to getting there in terms of subject choices.

It's a fact that at least 50% of year 12 students don't know what they want to do at the end of their school education. Schools are great at giving advice via the careers advisor or university advice via the 6th form tutor . . .but the discussions need to happen at home too. There should be a theme running through these top tips - **CHOOSE THE RIGHT SUBJECTS FOR 6TH FORM STUDY!**

## 4. Hit the ground running



The step up from GCSE to 6th form is huge, and getting a good start is vital.

Students enter the 6th form after the second longest summer holiday they will get in education (the longest being the end of A-levels to the start of university); they should be refreshed. The first 3 weeks of any course is the key to success at the end. Hard work and being on top of the homework demonstrates to the teachers their ability to succeed on the course.

There is a very good chance the first few weeks will cover some of the more basic concepts (so as to not scare students off), but it is important that students aren't lulled into thinking it's all easy. They're called Advanced level for a very good reason!

If it's not feeling right (wrong 6th form centre, wrong subjects, don't like the teacher, much harder than it sounded), then fix it asap. Making changes within the first 2 weeks of yr 12 shouldn't harm the final results. Such is the pace of A-level / BTEC study, then once you hit October, the amount of content that will have been missed makes it VERY difficult to swap subjects and be successful.

As a 6th form tutor for 12 years, my advice when there was concern over the choice of subjects taken was to select 4 subjects, but be very clear that on October 1st, one of them would be 'dropped'. This way, the student has made a clear choice based on the actual teaching, learning and enjoyment of the subject, rather than what the (usually very glossy) brochure promised during the 6th form Information Evening 10 months earlier.

## 5. Spot the mistake



## 6. Focus!

I've not yet met a single student who can manage 6th form study, a part time job, and a boyfriend/girlfriend . . . and get good grades. 2 of the 3 is absolutely possible, but the holy grail of all three has yet to be achieved by mankind\*.



\*If your child bucks this trend, please contact the Guinness Book of World Records.

What we're not saying is that you insist on the break up of a budding romance, or stopping them developing their financial independence (we need them to leave home before they're 30, right?), but we're urging caution.

## 7. Organise work experience



After a very well deserved break to recover from the stresses of the GCSE exams, starting to build work experience is key.

One week should be a good start.

The bottom line is that the CV of the majority of 16 year olds is very thin, and completing a work experience placement outside of the school term is never a bad idea.

Refer back to point number 2, and you will find universities will more often than not insist on relevant work experience for an application to be successful.

## 8. Beware of part time jobs

Great for building independence and the all important bank balance, helps develop social skills, helps to build the CV. What is there not to like I hear you ask? The answer is 'absolutely nothing', but do ensure that it is limited to a maximum of 10 hours per week. Many employers do not respect the fact that too much work will impact on the final grades for a student. If they want a shift filling, companies using zero hours contracts will try to persuade a student to increase their hours. Parents - please keep a close eye on this as teenagers rarely say 'no' to extra cash!



## 9. Extra-curricular

This is a vital part of any 6th form. Not only does it enrich the lives of the students, but more often than not it helps to hone many of the skills they will need in the work-place, or at university.



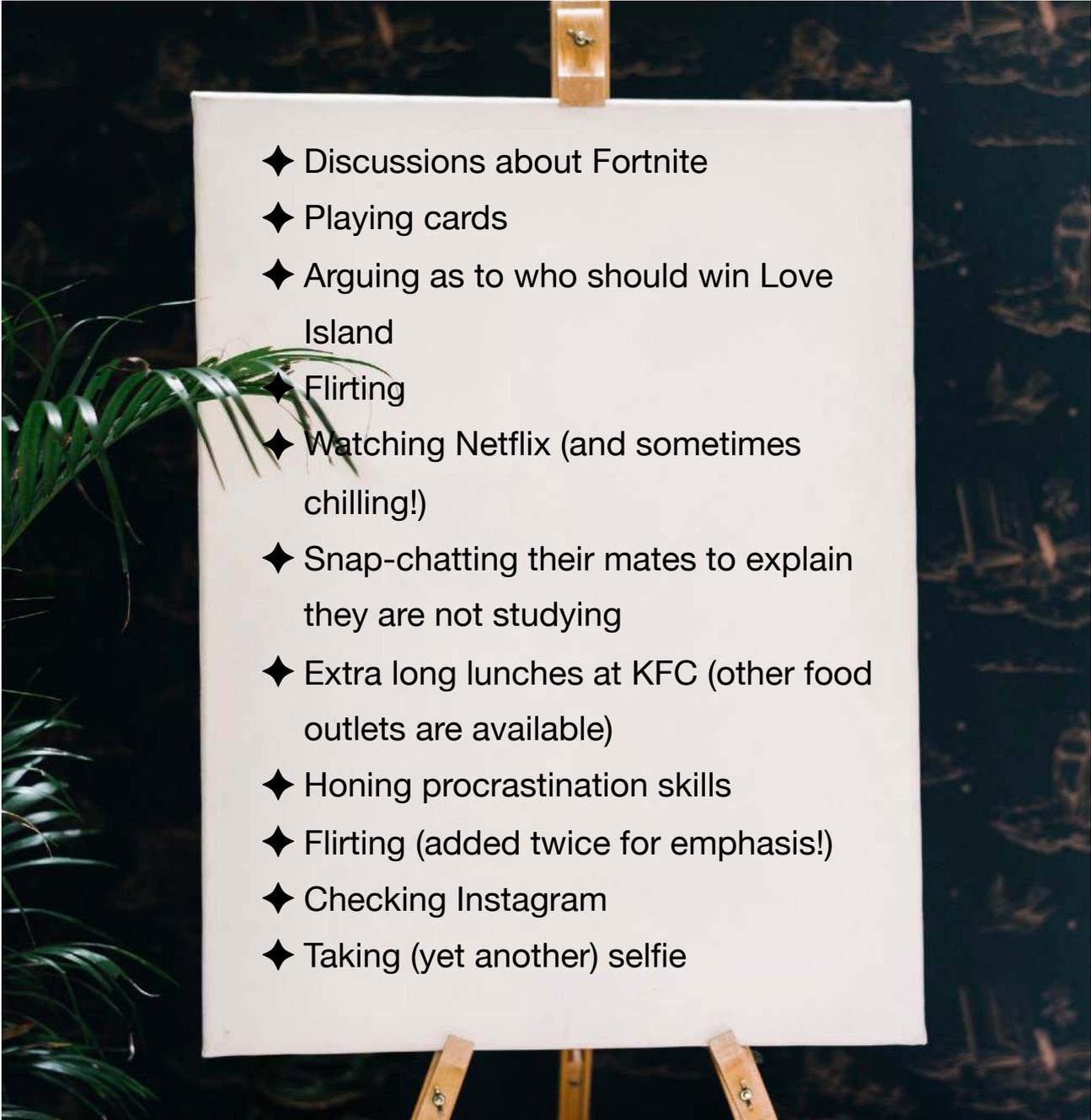
Volunteering for community action projects, National Citizenship Service, the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme are all winners in the eyes of employers and universities.

In addition, it gets them off your sofa and you get the remote control back.

#winning

## 10. Free periods?

There is no such thing as a 'free period' in the 6th form. Students are no longer always in lessons, and the simple fact is that students who use study periods for . . .well . . . **study** do better than students who use study periods for (and these are all real examples):

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- ◆ Discussions about Fortnite
  - ◆ Playing cards
  - ◆ Arguing as to who should win Love Island
  - ◆ Flirting
  - ◆ Watching Netflix (and sometimes chilling!)
  - ◆ Snap-chatting their mates to explain they are not studying
  - ◆ Extra long lunches at KFC (other food outlets are available)
  - ◆ Honing procrastination skills
  - ◆ Flirting (added twice for emphasis!)
  - ◆ Checking Instagram
  - ◆ Taking (yet another) selfie

To be really clear about this, there is more to 6th form life than studying all the time. Whilst embracing the renewed freedom that being at the top of the school brings, it also requires added responsibility. Good grades don't happen by accident, and making the very best use of study periods is vital to this. It also leaves them more time in the evenings!