

Enthusiastic Parents' Guide to Education

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Introduction

Education Quizzes is delighted to present the Enthusiastic Parents' Guide to Education to help you chart a course through the complex world of children's education in the UK. Many of the visitors to our site are what we call "Enthusiastic Parents" – those who show an active, enthusiastic interest in their child's education.

That's you!

If you have children between the ages of 4 and 16, there are many different options available to you. We know how complicated it can seem, particularly to first time parents; so this guide aims to convey the basics. We give links to other valuable online resources for subjects that you might like to explore in greater depth.

Our document has been written for us by Linda Innes, who has over 20 years' experience as a teacher and education manager, working across a range of schools and educational organisations.

Politicians ensure that the world of education is never static – proposals come and go on a weekly basis. Some proposals get implemented – often at great cost and upheaval to parents, students, schools and teachers. Linda keeps abreast of the changes and will separate the wheat from the chaff. We will be pleased to email you her monthly update, free of charge.

Maybe you would like extra information about specific subjects? If so, we would love to hear from you so that we can amend this document and/or inform you within the monthly news. One of the wonders of the Internet is that we can update our information instantaneously (we constantly do this with our quizzes), so you might be surprised at just how quickly things happen.

You can contact us at colin@educationquizzes.com or telephone us on 01406 371799.

Philosophical and Financial Considerations

Parents can choose one of 3 broad channels for the education of their children – “Do-it-yourself”, “Let the state pay,” or “Pay, yourself”!

In education parlance, these 3 routes are known as Home Education, State Education and Private Education. To give you a perspective on the options, approximate numbers of children in each group in 2016 were:

- Home Educated: no official figures; estimated 60,000 (0.6%) of all school-age children in the UK
- State Educated: 7,800,000 (91% of all schoolchildren in the UK)
- Privately Educated: 750,000 (9% of all schoolchildren in the UK)

We will look at each in later sections. But first – what does the government think children should be taught?

The National Curriculum

The National Curriculum specifies the subjects and schemes of work taught at different stages of your child's education, ensuring that children across the UK are all taught the same things. The advantage is that if your children move school, there is continuity in their education.

The National Curriculum dictates what every child at any state school in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is taught and tested on. Scotland has different arrangements (see <https://education.gov.scot/>).

As long as they keep to the standards and guidelines, schools are free to decide *how* they teach the curriculum in practice, allowing teachers some creativity.

We only have space for a brief overview of the National Curriculum, but there's a detailed document available from the government website www.gov.uk, specifically: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4>

School, Key Stages, Years and Ages

The National Curriculum in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is taught in 'Key Stages' (KS). Each Key Stage includes more than one year of education. So teachers and schools also refer to the "Year" that your child is in. The table below summarises this (EYFS stands for Early Years Foundation Stage):

School	Key Stage	Year	Age
Nursery	EYFS	-	3-4
Nursery	EYFS	Reception	4-5
Primary	1	1	5-6
Primary	1	2	6-7
Primary	2	3	7-8
Primary	2	4	8-9
Primary	2	5	9-10
Primary	2	6	10-11
Secondary	3	7	11-12
Secondary	3	8	12-13
Secondary	3	9	13-14
Secondary	4	10	14-15
Secondary	4	11	15-16

Key Stages and Assessment

At the end of every key stage, your child's performance will be formally assessed to measure their progress. Testing young children has proved contentious at times. Teachers can be under pressure to raise standards – and if their stress transfers to children, schooldays may not be the 'happiest days of your lives'. However, when the assessments and tests are done discreetly, calmly and well, children should hardly notice them.

Schools must report to you on your child's progress, e.g. at parents' evenings or end-of-term reports. If you're not seeing these happen, contact the school (and check your child's school bag or bin for those tell-tale letters and reports!).

The table below from the government website, www.gov.uk, charts the KS assessments:

Age	Year	Key stage	Forms of assessment	Average attainment
3 to 4		Early years		
4 to 5 years	Reception Teacher assessments	Early		
5 to 6	Year 1	KS1	Phonics screening check	
6 to 7	Year 2	KS1	National tests and teacher assessments in English, maths and science	2
7 to 8	Year 3	KS2		
8 to 9	Year 4	KS2		
9 to 10	Year 5	KS2		
10 to 11	Year 6	KS2	National tests and teacher assessments in English, maths and science	4
11 to 12	Year 7	KS3	Teacher assessments	
12 to 13	Year 8	KS3	Teacher assessments	
13 to 14	Year 9	KS3	Teacher assessments	5/6
14 to 15	Year 10	KS4	Some children take GCSEs	
15 to 16	Year 11	KS4	Most children take GCSEs or other national qualifications	

Curriculum subjects for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3

Compulsory National Curriculum subjects are:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- Art and design
- Design and technology
- History

- Geography
- Music
- Physical Education (PE), including swimming
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Modern Foreign Languages (at Key Stages 2 and 3)
- Citizenship (at KS3)

Other compulsory subjects that schools must provide:

- Religious Education – although you can ask that your child be taken out of the whole lesson, or part of it
- Sex and relationships education (year 7 onwards)

Schools often also teach:

- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)
- Citizenship (before KS3)
- Modern Foreign Languages (at KS1)

Curriculum Subjects for Key Stage 4

During this stage, most pupils work towards qualifications - usually GCSEs. The number of GCSE subjects studied depends on the school. There are compulsory subjects your child *must* learn, which are the 'core' and 'foundation' subjects listed below. Your child will also have some options to select from, allowing them to specialise or play to their strengths.

Core subjects:

- English
- Maths
- Science

Foundation subjects:

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Physical Education
- Citizenship

Schools must also offer at least one subject from each of these areas:

- Arts
- Design and Technology
- Humanities
- Modern Foreign Languages

Schools must also provide Religious Education and Sex Education at Key Stage 4.

English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

If you see EBacc in performance tables, it refers to the number of students achieving GCSE grade C or above in English, Maths, two sciences, a Language, and History or Geography.

Details are taken from www.gov.uk/national-curriculum.

The 11-Plus

The 11+ Exam is taken by some school pupils in their last year of primary school, as a test for admission to certain grammar schools or to private schools. Most grammar schools ask your child to sit these exams in the autumn term of Year 6 in primary school. Private school entrance exams tend to be a bit later, at the beginning of the spring term of Year 6.

Some areas of the UK still offer the opportunity to apply to a state grammar school – traditionally a more academic school – instead of a state comprehensive school.

The Eleven Plus exam (and grammar schools) still exist in certain areas of the following counties and cities:

- Essex and South-End-on Sea
- Lincolnshire
- Barnet, Bexley, Bromley, Enfield, Kingston-upon-Thames, Redbridge, Surrey, Sutton
- Calderdale, Kirklees, North Yorkshire
- Cumbria, Lancashire, Liverpool, Trafford, Wirral
- Buckinghamshire, Kent, Medway Towns, Reading, Slough
- Bournemouth, Devon, Gloucestershire, Plymouth, Poole, Torbay, Wiltshire
- Birmingham, Stoke on Trent, Walsall, Warwickshire, Wolverhampton; The Wrekin
- Northern Ireland

Grammar schools are usually very popular and over-subscribed, and the Eleven Plus pass or acceptance level varies. Some grammar schools only take the top 3% of applicants, while others accept the top 30%.

There is no standard Eleven Plus exam – it varies – but it usually covers four areas – Verbal Reasoning, Non-Verbal Reasoning, Maths and English. Find out which one your child will do by contacting the school, or the education authority (where the grammar system exists).

If the grammar school system is standard in your area, preparation for the exam is usually available in your child's primary school as well as in prep schools. Otherwise, parents often turn to private tuition to prepare their children. You can also coach your child yourself, and practice papers and resources are widely available. For example, www.educationquizzes.com/11-plus/ and www.bond11plus.co.uk.

Your child may also be asked to attend an interview at your chosen school before acceptance.

There are active parents' forums online for advice and support, such as www.elevenplusexams.co.uk/forum/11plus. Also see sites like www.elevenplusadvice.co.uk.

The Common Entrance Exam

To be accepted into a private, independent or public school, a child is usually expected to take the Common Entrance Examination ('Common Entrance' or 'CE') at age 11 or 13.

The 11+ examinations may be taken in the autumn or spring term of Year 6 prior to entering secondary school the following September.

13+ exams take place in the autumn, spring, or summer term of Year 8, again before starting secondary school the following September. The senior schools decide when the examinations are to be taken.

The exams are set by the ISEB (Independent Schools Examinations Board, www.iseb.co.uk) but are marked by each secondary school, and scored according to their own criteria, with acceptance on the basis of minimum scores and, sometimes, interviews.

Most children applying to independent secondary schools have attended independent primary schools (preparatory, or 'prep' schools) that are all geared up to prepare a child for the CE. A child who has not attended a prep school can also take the CE (most schools will accommodate this) but might need extra help to get up to speed with the exam requirements.

The syllabus covers a wide range of subjects including Maths, English and Science, which are compulsory. Other subjects such as Latin, Greek, Modern Foreign Languages, Geography, History and RE may also be included. Most schools set minimum admission requirements. Academically selective senior schools usually require a minimum of 60% correct answers for admission, and in practice, most children accepted will achieve scores of 70% or more.

In addition, your child often has to attend an interview, and their head teachers' reports are also considered. Some schools, particularly the most competitive, also want candidates to take a pre-test some years before Common Entrance.

More advice and support can be found at:

- www.isc.co.uk
- www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk
- www.independentschoolparent.com

The Independent Schools Examining Board - www.iseb.co.uk - gives details of Common Entrance at 11+, Common Entrance at 13+, Common Academic Scholarship at 13+, Common Pre-Tests and Online testing.

Home Education

Home education, or 'home schooling', is an increasingly popular choice for parents. Educating your own child at home gives you the freedom and flexibility to tailor your children's educational experience to their needs and abilities. You don't have to be a qualified teacher.

Reasons for home schooling vary. Some parents' philosophical view of education differs from traditional schooling; some children have had unhappy experiences in school, such as bullying. Or they have particular emotional, physical or educational needs best met in the home environment.

Legally, parents have reasonably free rein: they can provide their children's education 'in school or otherwise' as long as it is suitable for the child's age, ability and aptitude. Government guidance on 'Elective home education' can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education.

You only need to notify the local authority of your decision to home-educate if your child has already been allocated a place or is enrolled in a state school. Otherwise, you are free to educate your child yourself, anyway. In reality, it is useful to inform the local authority of your decision from the outset, to access support and opportunities through local education services. The local authority can make an 'informal enquiry' if you're educating your child at home, to check on their progress and offer support. They can intervene if they believe your child is not receiving an adequate education, but in practice, this is rare.

Some home-educating parents like to follow a semi-formal programme, loosely based on the National Curriculum; others like to be more child-led, allowing educational experiences to develop from the child's interests and enthusiasms. Your child can take national exams as an external candidate at examination centres like schools or colleges.

Teaching your child at home need not be a solitary or isolated way of life. You can please yourself how you use the outside world as your classroom and engage with others. Many home educators create informal networks with other parents, enabling joint educational and social activities with other families, so that home-educated children are not isolated or alone.

There is a wide range of published material and online resources to help parents in home educating – see the 'Online education sites' section below. Several organisations offer support and advice on the legalities and practicalities of home education in England and Wales. Try: www.education-otherwise.org and www.home-education.org.uk.

State Funded Schooling - Overview

Every child between the ages of 5 and 16 has a right to free education and a place at a state school. All state schools are funded by government. Some are under the control of the local council, whilst others are not.

Schools that are under the control of the local council are generally known as Maintained Schools ("maintained" by the local council), and there are a number of different types – see the section below. Maintained Schools must follow the National Curriculum and are not allowed to select students on the basis of academic ability (unless they are state grammar schools).

State schools that are NOT under the control of the local council are generally known as Academies and again, there are a number of different types, listed in the section below. The idea of Academies was first established in 2000 by the Labour government under Tony Blair.

They were then adopted by the Conservative government. In 2014, the Secretary for State Education at the time (Michael Gove) hoped that Academies would become the norm. The perceived major advantage of Academies is that they have flexibility to run their own affairs without oversight by the local authority.

By the end of 2017, 6,493 of the 24,302 schools in England (27%) were Academies.

State Funded - Maintained Schools

Overview

This type of school is funded by central government, and under the control of – or “maintained” by – the local authority. These schools must follow the National Curriculum, and no selection of pupils is allowed on the basis of academic ability (except in the case of state-funded grammar schools – see below).

There is a bewildering range of maintained schools, but the most common types are:

Community Schools

Controlled by the local council, which employs the school's staff, is responsible for the school's admissions and owns the school's estate. Not influenced by business or religious groups.

Foundation Schools

More freedom to change how they do things than community schools. The governing body employs the staff and is responsible for admissions. School buildings and land are owned either by the governing body or by a charitable foundation.

Voluntary Aided Schools (VA Schools)

Schools in which a trust or foundation (usually religious), has substantial influence over the running of the school and contributes to building costs. They have more autonomy than:

Voluntary Controlled Schools

Almost always church schools, with the lands and buildings often owned by a charitable foundation. However, they are entirely funded by the state. The local authority employs the schools' staff and has primary responsibility for admissions.

Special Schools

These may be provided as primary, secondary or all-through (i.e. age 4-19 schools), with specialisms for children with particular educational needs that might include:

- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- social, emotional and mental health
- sensory and physical needs

Within these categories, schools can specialise further e.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorders; Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), or Visual Impairment.

State Funded - Academies

Overview

Academies are funded by central government but are not under the control of the local authority. Like maintained schools, they are not allowed to select students on the basis of ability, but unlike maintained schools they do NOT have to follow the National Curriculum.

Academies usually have sponsors: either individuals, businesses, or other academic institutions. They bring a wealth of experience and opportunities and can support the schools in their chosen specialities, such as art and design, business, or technology. Many academies are now run by 'academy chains': educational businesses operating as limited companies with charitable status.

Because of their independent status, academies have much more freedom than traditional state schools. They have complete control of their budgets and freedom to work outside the National Curriculum, although they are obliged to follow a core curriculum in Maths, Science and English. They also can hire and fire staff as they see fit. This flexibility enables academies to take advantage of opportunities for creative alliances with other schools and institutions to enrich the educational experience of their pupils.

There are two types of academies:

- 'traditional' academy, formed during the first wave of the academy programme, as a brand-new school
- 'converter' academy: an existing school that has applied for academy status to benefit from the freedom and flexibility the status offers

Academies are often popular choices although individual schools in different areas can vary. Check Ofsted reports and performance tables to get an idea of standards and academic achievement. Talk to other parents and ask around the local community to see which academy would be a good fit for your child. A great academy with a business focus might not be ideal for a child gifted in art and design, for example. You may also be able to find information on local academies in the admissions brochure or website of your local council education service, as well as from the school itself.

Free Schools

These are usually not-for-profit organisations run by groups like:

- charities
- universities
- independent schools
- community and faith groups
- teachers
- parents
- businesses

Free schools have more control over how they do things themselves and can:

- decide what they teach and when

- set their own staff pay and conditions
- change school term lengths and the school day (beware of school holidays and school days being different from their siblings' and friends'!)

University Technical Colleges

These are Free Schools sponsored by universities, employers and further education colleges. These sponsors design the curriculum and provide students with work experience. They specialise in teaching subjects like engineering and construction, along with business skills and IT. Pupils still study academic subjects, as well as these practical subjects focusing on achieving technical qualifications.

Studio Schools

Small Free Schools (often around 300 pupils) that use project-based learning (working in realistic situations) to achieve mainstream qualifications, and teach academic subjects. Students work with local employers and a personal coach, and follow a curriculum designed to provide the skills and qualifications young people need for employment, or to take up further education.

State Funded - Faith Schools

Faith schools may be voluntary aided schools, free schools, academies or others, but faith schools are also associated with a religion.

Faith schools are generally run like other state schools with an obligation to follow the National Curriculum – except in the case of religious studies, where they are free to teach only about their own religion. Do check their stance on this if you want your child to have an awareness of diverse faiths.

The pupil admissions criteria and staffing policies might also prioritise staff or pupils/ families who actively practise the religion – although anyone can apply for a place if one is available. This sometimes leads to keen parents dashing off to church/ synagogue/ mosque for the first time in years. For extra emphasis, they make sure that they smile at/ wave at/ are seen by the priest/ vicar/ rabbi/ imam...

State Funded - Other Types of School

Grammar Schools

These can be run by the local council, a trust or a foundation. Grammar schools are sometimes referred to as Selective Schools, since they select all or most of their pupils based on academic ability. There is often an entrance exam (11+). In this way, a Grammar School is different from a Comprehensive School whose intake is not dependent upon achievement or aptitude.

City Technology Colleges

As well as receiving funding from central government (not the local council), they're owned and funded by private companies. They particularly emphasise technological and practical skills.

State Boarding Schools

Provide free education, but fees are charged for boarding costs. Local councils run some state boarding schools, while others are run by free schools or academies.

These schools prioritise children with a particular need to board, so they will assess your child's suitability.

The State Boarding Schools' Association www.sbsa.org.uk will give you more information about the schools, eligibility and how to apply.

Alternative Education

Alternative education (instead of school) can usually be provided for children with particular needs. The children who benefit from this may be underachieving and/or challenging, or those who cannot attend school because of things like bullying, anxiety, agoraphobia, school phobia, pregnancy or other reasons.

Local authorities may provide small group teaching in special centres or Pupil Referral Units. Alternatively, local authorities may provide their own private tutors, at no charge, for students unable to attend school or requiring special educational arrangements.

Educational programmes usually aim for the child's reintegration into mainstream school, a smooth transition to further learning, or it can be a permanent arrangement.

State Funded School Inspections

All state-funded schools are inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) who publish reports on the quality of education at individual schools:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Schools judged by Ofsted to be inadequate in the standard of education provided could be subjected to 'special measures', ranging from extra scrutiny to replacing the governing body, head and senior staff.

Private Education

Independent Schools

Independent schools, sometimes called private schools or public schools, are fee-paying, rather than funded by the government. They have elected boards of governors and are independent of many of the regulations and conditions that apply to state schools. For example, they don't have to follow the National Curriculum.

They include boarding schools, day schools, prep and junior schools and international schools. Some private schools specialise in teaching children with special educational needs.

Public Schools

These tend to be the older, more exclusive (and expensive) schools for 11 or 13 to 18-year-olds.

Prep Schools (preparatory schools)

These teach children up to the age of 13 in preparation for going to public and other independent schools.

As well as deriving income from tuition fees, many also have charitable status or receive gifts and endowments.

Fees range from around £3,000 per annum to over £21,000 for day pupils, and can be more than £30,000 p.a. for boarding places. Many schools offer scholarships – sometimes 100% of the fees – and bursaries if your child has great aptitude in certain areas, or if your family has a low income, so it is worth looking into this. The schools themselves and the websites below offer information.

Most top private schools have entrance tests taken 6 to 9 months before entry and interviews, for your child to pass. This could be a standard test, like the CE or 11+, or the school's own test.

The Common Entrance examinations are commonly used to assess children who transfer to senior schools at 11+ and 13+.

Each school sets its own 'pass' mark – the more selective (academically), the higher the score required. It's best to prepare your child – and prep schools specialise in this, but your child may also benefit from extra tuition.

To help you with all areas of private education, look at www.aprivateeducation.co.uk which has a wealth of information and advice.

Which School? www.which-school.co.uk and www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk can also guide you through the process of selecting the right school.

Inspections

Every private school must be registered with the government. About half the independent schools are inspected by Ofsted, but the rest are inspected by other organisations, so ask a particular school which one inspects them. All inspection reports are published online by the relevant organisation.

Private Tuition

Overview

Perhaps your child needs extra individual sessions for specific areas of weakness or strength, or wants to study something they can't learn at school. For example, your child may be struggling with English, or be gifted in Maths, or require tuition in Russian. This is called 'supplementary education' provision.

Or perhaps you would rather employ a tutor – or tutors – to educate your children at home full-time, providing a bespoke education in all subjects. This is ‘alternative education’.

There is provision available for supplementary (after school) and alternative education (in place of school) for underachieving, gifted and/or challenging children and young people. This can be offered in small classes, or one-to-one.

Private tuition can be provided during or after the school day – at home, on school premises, or any appropriate venue. It is offered across the full curriculum throughout key stages 1 to 4.

Private Tuition Agencies

Many agencies employ tutors and source, check, verify quality, and even handle payments. For example:

- www.fleet-tutors.co.uk
- www.carfax-tutors.com
- www.enjoyeducation.co.uk

They are all founding members of The Tutors Association, the professional body setting the standards for the tutoring industry.

These agencies or study schools can offer a range of provisions. They can provide individual tutors in certain subjects, or group classes like summer schools and 11+ preparation classes to supplement your child’s schooling. They can also provide full-time tutors as an alternative to your child going to school.

Kumon Educational offers Maths and English study programmes for children of all ages and abilities at study centres across the UK and worldwide www.kumon.co.uk.

Individual Tutors

Individuals often advertise online or in their local area. Search the Internet using keywords that will bring up specifics e.g. ‘GCSE Maths tutor in Solihull.’ Some online directories exist, like www.superprof.co.uk and www.thetutorwebsite.co.uk, where you can search for tutors local to you. But they are only directories, so do ensure that you make the necessary checks yourself (Disclosure and Barring Service, references, etc.).

Look at notice boards in libraries, community centres, town halls, or search in local newspapers or magazines. Ask other parents who have used a particular tutor to check their quality.

Catch-up Tuition - one-to-one

For young people who have fallen behind or have challenges, individual tuition can enable them to progress faster, improve confidence and engage better in school.

Catch-up Tuition - small groups

Small group sessions offer a cheaper alternative (since costs are shared), and can help students struggling in a large, mainstream classroom.

Exam Revision - small groups

Small group exam revision classes for entrance and national exams; differentiating for weaker students and accelerating stronger students. For 7/8+, 11+, 13+, GCSE and others.

Summer Schools

Programmes may be tailored to an individual school or targeted groups.

Alternative Education

Some of the private tutoring agencies offer full-time (or part-time) education if you prefer your child to be taught in your home.

There are also agencies offering private tutors/governesses for whom full-time salaries can be anywhere between £700 and £1500 per week.

Children with Particular Needs

Several of the private tutoring agencies provide full or part-time provision for children at risk of exclusion, or who have special educational needs, or who are unable to attend school.

Distance Learning

Although usually associated with adult learners, some organisations offer distance learning for children to support home learning.

Companies like Kumon offer distance learning:

www.kumon.co.uk/find-a-tutor/correspondence-courses

Costs

Tutoring prices vary widely, depending on location and the experience or qualifications of the tutor. Tutors charge between £15 and £70 per hour.

Private tutors are available at all Key Stage levels and should be checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), with a valid, recent Enhanced DBS certificate to prove it.

Advice from School

If you feel that your child needs extra help, speak with your child's class teacher. Schools often know of teachers who offer tuition at evenings or weekends.

Online Tuition

Online tuition is a very useful way of children receiving tuition and support, especially if they are home-schooled, or to supplement their school attendance.

Students connect with tutors over the internet through software like Skype or MSN Messenger. Several specialist websites offer online tuition using technology such as virtual whiteboards.

For example, Briteschool live online school offers Primary and Secondary education for home-schooled and expatriate students. Teachers provide live, virtual lessons and tuition in Maths, English, Sciences, French, Spanish, Business Studies and Geography. Additionally, Computing, Art, Digital Photography and History are offered from recordings for private study.

Indicative costs from www.briteschool.co.uk are:

- Upper Primary Home Education Support: £1,200 for the full year, 6 hours per week
- Secondary 1-3 (Years 7-9) / Common Entrance: £2,325 per year
- Tuition / extra subjects:
 - c. £30/ hour one-to-one
 - £16.50/ hour two-to-one
 - £12.50/ hour three-to-one
 - £8/ hour others

Online Education Sites

Overview

The Internet provides a rapidly growing number of resources to help students. We don't believe that any of these resources should pretend to offer a complete course of study, but what they can do is supplement more formal education and greatly assist the process of revision for exams.

Online resources have three major advantages over conventional text books.

1. They provide innovative ways of interacting with the subject matter, in the form of games, tests and quizzes – sure ways to keep the student interested in the subject.
2. The best sites provide instant feedback on answers – no need to wait for parent or teacher marking!
3. The content can be changed instantaneously by the site manager when curriculums change or errors are found. Gone are the days when text books ruled, and you had to wait for months or years for necessary amendments to be made in the next edition.

Here is our pick of the top ten online resources – with brief descriptions of what they do and how much they cost.

BBC Bitesize - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education>

The most widely-used revision source in the UK – and justifiably so. One of the BBC's main objectives is to "Promote Education and Learning". Despite any grumbles people have about the cost of TV licences, the BBC do their job better than most media!

Bitesize offers study and revision of many subjects from KS1 to GCSE in England and Northern Ireland, plus the equivalent stages in Scotland and Wales.

Recently, Bitesize has taken some flak because the layout of the site has substantially changed, but in our opinion the changes are for the better. If you are not familiar with the site, we urge you to take a look around.

- Free of charge
- Offers support and advice for students

EdPlace - <http://www.edplace.com>

Resource that helps parents to monitor the progress of their children through a sequence of worksheet exercises in Maths, English and Science. Broken down into year groups and Key Stages.

- £10.00 per month or £66.00 per year per single subject
- £15.00 per month or £99.00 per year for all three subjects

Education Quizzes - <https://www.educationquizzes.com>

The most comprehensive revision tool for all key stages – 1 to 4. Clearly arranged by Key Stage, level and subject. Interactive quizzes, written by teachers, that aim to cover the entire syllabus in depth.

- The cost is £9.95 per month or £35 per year for access to the entire site – all curricula and all subjects
- Single charge, regardless of number of children or devices

IXL Maths - <http://uk.ixl.com/>

A very well-organised Maths and English site. Not curriculum-specific, but arranged clearly in years, from Reception to Year 13. Vibrant images, colourful illustrations and meaningful content.

- £7.99 per month or £59.00 per year per single subject
- £12.99 per month or £99.00 per year for both subjects

Jim Baker's Online Learning - <http://www.jimbakersonlinelearning.co.uk/>

Jim is a truly inspirational science teacher with a lifelong passion for school teaching and learning. For parents with an hour or two to spare, his website is well worth a look, to glean ideas on how to teach children in an enjoyable and engaging way.

- Useful and fun
- Free of charge

Khan Academy - <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

A wonderful resource thanks to substantial donations from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and, more recently, from Google. Learning is via videos hosted on YouTube.

The site is broken down into generic headings such as “Early Math”, “Geometry” and “Linear Algebra”. Great if you have a few hours to browse around the site, but somewhat frustrating if you want to home-in on revision topics for a specific curriculum.

- Based on American education system, rather than the British one
- Free of charge

Mathletics - <http://www.mathletics.co.uk/>

A charming site, aimed specifically at helping students to enjoy Maths and improve their exam results. Amongst other attractions, the site has an ongoing global Mathletics competition that engages children in an innovative way.

- Free 48-hour trial available
- The cost is £59.00 per year

Sam Learning - <https://www.samlearning.com/>

A system established in schools over a number of years to help children achieve better exam results. Covers English and Maths at KS1 and a large range of other subjects at KS2, KS3 and KS4.

- 30-day money back guarantee
- The cost is £120.00 per individual per year

@ School - <http://www.atschool.co.uk/>

Provides online tests, interactive exercises and worksheets for Key Stages 1 and 2. Subjects covered are English, Maths and Science.

- 3 months subscription costs £9.99
- 6 months subscription costs £18.99
- 12 months subscription costs £29.99

Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

Literally millions of articles, written by tens of thousands of different people – often ordinary people with a passion for a particular subject. Wiki encourages their authors to be bold, and assures them that articles are "allowed to be imperfect" because they can always be improved later. Articles used to have a reputation for inaccuracy, but the most significant areas have now all been reviewed and amended by so many experts that errors are a rarity.

The site is not curriculum-specific, but if you know what you are looking for, their search box is a great place to start.

- Huge amount of content
- Free of charge