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**How to Choose A-Levels**

Choosing your A-Level subjects is one of the most important decisions that you have to make and it can seem overwhelming. It is important that you make the right choices now so as not to limit yourself when it comes to picking a university course. If you already know what you want to study or if you are still undecided, this guide will help you to make the right decisions.

**The Basics**

* The majority of students study four AS Levels (first year) and three A2 Levels (second year)
* Universities make offers based on three A-Levels, so taking more than three rarely offers an advantage
* For some university courses it is **essential** that you study a particular subject and there are some subjects that they deem **useful**
* Universities prefer it if you do not study subjects that are too **similar** (e.g. Business and Economics)
* Universities generally regard Critical Thinking, Citizenship and General Studies as ‘extra’ subjects and they do not normally form part of a university offer

**I don’t know what to study:** *Facilitating Subjects*

* ‘Facilitating’ subjects are A-Level courses picked out by the Russell Group universities which are **more frequently required** for entry to study university courses.
* The facilitating subjects are Biology, Chemistry, English Literature, Geography, History, Maths and Further Maths, Modern and Classic languages and Physics.
* These subjects are generally considered ‘academically rigorous’ and are looked upon favourably by universities.
* If you have no idea what you want to study, choosing to study at least two facilitating subjects will allow you to **keep your options open.**

**I want to study:** *science/engineering*

* Life Sciences:

-Most courses require you to study Biology.

-A second science, preferably Chemistry, Physics or Maths is usually required.

-Geography, Psychology, Environmental Studies and Geology are considered useful

* Physical Sciences

-To study Physics at University, Maths and Physics A-Level are required. Further Maths is considered useful.

-Studying Chemistry at University requires Chemistry A-Level. Physics, Biology, Maths and Further Maths are considered useful.

* Mathematics

-All courses require Mathematics. Many of the top universities also require you to have studied Further Mathematics.

-If your school do not offer Further Maths, suitable allowance is normally made.

**I want to study:** *humanities/social sciences*

* For most Humanities and Social Science courses, no particular subjects are required. Some courses require you to have studied the same course at A-Level (e.g. you will need History A-Level to study History at Durham), but check with the university to make sure.
* Remember that the facilitating subjects can help keep your options open
* Economics usually requires you to have studied Mathematics A-Level. Check with the university to make sure.

**Special Case:** *medicine*

* All medicine courses require Chemistry and one other science subject (Physics, Biology, Maths)
* Many medicine courses, such as the medicine programme at UCL, like a candidate to have a non-science subject. This shows that you are a well-rounded candidate.

**Special Case:** *law*

* No specific subjects are required to study Law. Many universities like to see at least one essay based subject.
* Surprisingly, Law A-Level is not required or even recommended if you wish to pursue Law at university.

**Key things to take away**

* Don’t limit yourself by not choosing a subject/choosing the wrong subject. If you don’t know what you want to study at university, pick a range of subjects to keep as many doors open as possible.
* Double check university requirements - the requirements for the same course vary between universities!
* Study subjects that you enjoy - if you enjoy a subject, it is much easier to study for it and you’ll ultimately do better than if you chose a subject that you enjoy less. But remember that more traditional A-Level choicse can help keep doors open.

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