

Year 7: What to Work On and What to Try This Year

Year 7 is a **transition year**: a new school, new friends, a different teacher for every subject and more independence. This year, **habits** matter more than test scores. This guide shows how families can make the most of the year together: what to work on at school and at home, what to try outside school, and which skills these build for what universities and employers will look for later.

"Success is being better than you were yesterday." — Anonymous

Every flower blooms in its own time

No two flowers in a garden are alike. Some bloom on the first day of spring, others in midsummer. Some love the sun, others the shade. But they are all flowers, and each one blooms in its own time.

Our children are the same. Settling into a new school, new routines and sometimes a new language or country can take time. Taking longer does not mean falling behind; it means putting down roots.

Our job is not to compare them with someone else's garden, but to make sure they never go without water, sunlight and patience.

Three goals for this year

1. Routine: homework, study and sleep habits. **2. Discovery:** trying different activities and finding interests. **3. Record:** noting down what they do and what they learn. The small notes kept today become the raw material for DofE, a CV and university applications years from now.

"As the twig is bent, so grows the tree." — Proverb

Why now? What do universities and employers look for?

Year 7 grades are never asked for directly in any application. But what universities and employers want is built from habits and experiences gathered over the years:

University	Employer / Apprenticeship	The AI era
Academic results: GCSE and A Level (or equivalent) grades. Interest in the subject: reading, projects and competitions beyond school. The 3 UCAS personal statement questions: 1) Why do you want to study this course? 2) How have your subjects and education prepared you? 3) What have you done outside education, and why are these experiences useful?	Core skills: communication, teamwork, problem solving, reliability, initiative, digital skills. "Can you give me an example?" Interviews test skills through real examples (the STAR method). Experience: volunteering, responsibility, work experience. Apprenticeship applications ask the same questions.	What stands out: curiosity, creativity, people skills, critical thinking and using AI well (checking information, citing sources). In Year 7 this means: a reading habit, a club, a skill, a little volunteering, and short notes about each.

A good answer to question 3 ("What have you done outside education?") years from now starts today. Doing something is not enough; writing down what was learned matters too.

12 core skills

Unifrog, the careers platform used by many schools in England, asks students to record which skills they developed in each activity under these 12 headings. The suggestions in this guide are matched to the same skills.

Skill	What it means	Year 7 example
Reading	Understanding a text and picking out information	20 minutes of reading a day, a research project
Writing	Expressing ideas clearly and in an organised way	Book summary, project, activity log
Numeracy	Working confidently with numbers	Times tables, tracking pocket money
Planning	Setting goals and mapping out how to reach them	School planner, termly goals, route planning
Listening	Taking in information and ideas accurately	Note-taking in class, interviewing someone about their job
Speaking	Explaining your ideas out loud	Talking about a book, a class presentation
Teamwork	Working with others towards a shared goal	A club, a team sport, volunteering
Leadership	Motivating and guiding others	A role in a team, leading the route on a walk
Problem solving	Finding a solution to a situation	Maths, coding, chess
Creativity / Innovation	Coming up with new ideas	Drawing, music, projects, video
Independence	Working effectively on your own	Doing homework without reminders
Adaptability / Resilience	Adjusting to change and keeping going after setbacks	A new school, a new sport, a lost match

At school and at home: what to work on

"The more that you read, the more things you will know." — Dr. Seuss

What?	How?	Skills it builds
Homework and study routine	Same time, same spot every day; use the school planner	Planning, Independence
20 minutes of reading a day	Novels, science, history, graphic novels: variety matters	Reading, Writing, every subject
Maths fluency	Times tables and basic operations; the school's platform (Sparx, Hegarty etc.) + IXL	Numeracy, Problem solving
Vocabulary notebook	English and a foreign language; 10 words a week	Reading, Writing, Speaking
Mini research project	One topic, a poster or 3 slides; check AI answers against 2 sources	Reading, Problem solving, Creativity

Revision with flashcards	A short review of each subject during the holidays	Planning, Independence
Digital basics	Touch typing, organising files, staying safe online	Independence, Problem solving
Competitions	e.g. the UKMT Junior Mathematical Challenge (Years 7–8), school writing and science competitions	Numeracy, Adaptability / Resilience

Outside school: what to try

The five areas below follow the sections of the **Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE)**, the best-known programme for young people in the UK. DofE Bronze usually starts in **Year 9**. An activity started in Year 7 gives a ready-made head start when that time comes.

Area	Year 7 examples	Skills it builds	Tip
Physical (sport & dance)	Swimming, Football, Netball, Basketball, Judo, Karate, Climbing, Street dance, Badminton, Athletics, Gymnastics, Cycling, Orienteering	Adaptability / Resilience, Teamwork, Independence	At least one regular session a week. A team sport plus an individual sport is a good balance.
Skills	Playing a musical instrument, Coding, Chess, Cookery, Drawing, Photography, Reading, Language skills, Public speaking, Astronomy, Gardening, Film & video making, Money management, First aid	Creativity, Problem solving, Independence	Choose by interest; try it for 3 months before deciding.
Volunteering	Litter picking, School council, Peer education (school “buddy” schemes), Helping older people, Fundraising, Supporting a charity	Teamwork, Leadership, Listening	At this age most organisations want a parent alongside; some set a 14+ or 16+ age limit.
Expedition	A family walk or bike ride with the route planned by your child; a photo guide following the Countryside Code; stargazing	Leadership, Planning, Adaptability / Resilience	Scouts, Guides and Cadets (depending on age) are a great way into outdoor experiences.
Residential	The school's Year 7 trip, a Scouts camp, a sports camp, bushcraft or field studies courses	Independence, Teamwork, Adaptability / Resilience	A first time away from family builds independence and confidence.

Full list: more than 440 activities (sport, arts, science, volunteering...) and the skills each one builds are included in the UKER guidance pack.

Unifrog: through your school or UKER

“Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.” — Aristotle

Unifrog is the careers and applications platform used by many schools in England. If your school uses Unifrog, your child logs in with the account the school provides. If your school doesn't provide Unifrog, you can request an account from UKER (ukegitimrehberi.co.uk). Year 7 students see these age-appropriate tools:

Section	What is it for?	A small step for Year 7
Courses: Unifrog 101: 11-14	A starter course introducing the platform	Finish it in the first month
Interests profile	Interests quiz (Holland model); lists careers and subjects that match	Do it at the start and end of the year and compare
Quiz profile	Summary of all quiz results, including personality and work-environment quizzes	Talk about the results as a family: a starting point, not a verdict
Careers library	Hundreds of career profiles: what the job involves, pay, routes in	Add 3 interesting careers to favourites
Know-how library	Guides and videos (school, health, careers)	Read one guide together and talk about it
Read, Watch, Listen	2,000+ books, TED talks, podcasts and documentaries; searchable by subject and interest (under "All tools")	Watch or listen to one suggestion a month (see the list below)
Courses	Short online courses: tasters of careers and subjects, virtual work experience	Finish at least one "Starter" course a year
Activities	Activity log: type, who was there, what was learned, which skills	At least 10 entries over the year (Unifrog's recommendation)
Interactions	Meetings, trips and workshops recorded by the school or an adviser	Students don't add these; tell a teacher if something is missing

Tip: Be specific in Activities entries (e.g. "We collected 40 parcels for the food bank"). More tools open up as students get older: the Subjects library, Skills and personal statement tools. Your school may use a different platform (e.g. Xello, Start); the idea is the same: explore, record, update regularly.

10 tips for parents

"Do not be afraid of growing slowly; be afraid only of standing still." — Chinese proverb

- **Process, not results:** instead of "What did you get?", ask "What did you find hard today?"
- **Let your child choose:** offer 3 options and let them decide; children who own a choice stick with it.
- **The 3-month rule:** try a new activity for 3 months before giving it up.
- **Little and often:** one regular weekly activity is worth more than five done once a month.
- **Keep a record:** date, activity, time spent and one "what I learned" sentence. A notebook or phone note is enough.
- **Sleep and screens:** 9–11 hours of sleep is recommended at Year 7 age; keep screens out of the bedroom.
- **Stay in touch with school:** go to parents' evenings and read teachers' comments together with your child.
- **AI:** rather than banning it, teach good use: ask a question, check the answer, note the source.
- **Be a role model:** an adult who reads and learns at home is the best example.
- **Don't compare:** every child has different interests and moves at their own pace.

Resources: which platform? Where can I find books?

Which online platform? Little and often

This is the question parents ask most. The rule is simple: **use no more than 3 platforms**: the one your school provides + IXL + one free resource for revision. Too many platforms means none of them gets used regularly.

Platform	What for?	Cost	How to use it in Year 7
Your school's platform	Sparx, Hegarty, Seneca, Educake etc. homework	Paid by the school	Always first: complete all set homework
IXL	Year 7 skills practice in Maths, English and Science; instant feedback	Membership (can be requested from UKER)	2-3 x 20 min a week on that week's class topics
Oak National Academy	KS3 video lessons + short quizzes	Free	Rewatch a topic that was missed or not understood
BBC Bitesize (KS3)	Short explanations, videos and tests	Free	Topic revision, a quick review before tests
Corbettmaths	Maths videos and "5-a-day" questions	Free	A daily maths habit with 5 questions
Duolingo	Foreign language practice	Basic version free	10 min a day in the language learned at school
Unifrog	Career exploration, activity log, Read-Watch-Listen	School account; otherwise can be requested from UKER	1-2 tasks a month (see the monthly checklist)

Where can I find books?

- **School library:** the easiest route in Year 7; ask the librarian for suggestions suited to your child's age.
- **Local council library:** membership is free. If a book isn't on the shelf, it can be reserved from another branch.
- **E-books and audiobooks:** borrow them free with the same library card through your council's app (Libby or BorrowBox).
- **Second-hand:** charity shops, Oxfam Books and online second-hand booksellers are great value for children's books.
- **Books in your home language:** many council libraries have world-language collections (ask your library); community centres and supplementary schools often lend books; visits to family abroad are a good chance to stock up.
- **Swap with friends:** a "book swap" with families of the same age is both cheap and motivating.

Two languages, one advantage

"To have another language is to possess a second soul." — Attributed to Charlemagne

For children who speak another language at home, being bilingual is one of their biggest advantages. Strengthening the home language through reading and writing deepens family ties today and opens academic and career opportunities later:

- **GCSEs in home languages:** exam boards such as Pearson Edexcel and AQA offer GCSEs (and often A Levels) in many community languages, including Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Polish, Turkish and Urdu. If your school doesn't offer one, your child can sit it as a private candidate by finding an exam centre. It's an extra GCSE and a real plus on sixth form applications.
- **In the eyes of universities and employers:** a second language is concrete evidence of communication, cross-cultural understanding and adaptability. The Unifrog talk *Grow Up, Learn Another Language* (Gaston Dorren, TED) covers this.
- **Practice at home:** speak the home language at home; read in it for 15 minutes twice a week; read a book your child already knows in English (e.g. *The Little Prince*) in the home language and compare; listen to audiobooks.
- **Start at the right level:** if reading in the home language is weaker than in English, begin with easy books (jokes, fairy tales) and read aloud together.

Month-by-month checklist

“Little drops of water make the mighty ocean.” — Proverb

Each month: 3 small steps (Academic · Activity · Growth & Careers) + 1 suggestion from Unifrog's Read, Watch, Listen + 1 book. If you speak another language at home, add a book in that language too. The calendar is flexible: if you finish a month early, move on; if you fall behind, just carry on in order. Tick the boxes together with your child.

September · New school, new routine

- ☐ **Academic:** homework routine + planner: 2 weeks of on-time homework
- ☐ **Activity:** join at least 1 school club
- ☐ **Growth & Careers:** Unifrog: “Unifrog 101: 11-14” + interests quiz; a “5 things I love” list
- ☐ **Watch (Unifrog):** Forget multitasking, try monotasking – Paolo Cardini (TED talk)
- ☐ **Read:** Wonder – R. J. Palacio

October · A reading habit

- ☐ **Academic:** 20 minutes of reading a day; finish 1 book
- ☐ **Activity:** 1 regular physical activity (once a week or more)
- ☐ **Growth & Careers:** log the club and sport in Unifrog Activities
- ☐ **Watch (Unifrog):** The brain-changing benefits of exercise – Wendy Suzuki (TED talk)
- ☐ **Read:** Holes – Louis Sachar

November · Numbers and careers

- ☐ **Academic:** Maths: school platform + IXL Year 7 Maths (2 × 20 min a week)
- ☐ **Activity:** start 1 new skill (music, coding, chess...)
- ☐ **Growth & Careers:** Unifrog personality quiz + add 3 careers to favourites
- ☐ **Listen (Unifrog):** More or Less: Behind the Stats (1 episode) – Tim Harford / BBC (podcast)
- ☐ **Read:** Hidden Figures (Young Readers' Edition) – Margot Lee Shetterly

December · Giving back

- ☐ **Academic:** school report: 2 strengths / 2 areas to develop
- ☐ **Activity:** volunteer as a family (at least 3 hours)
- ☐ **Growth & Careers:** write up the volunteering specifically in Activities
- ☐ **Watch (Unifrog):** The danger of a single story – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (TED talk)
- ☐ **Read:** The Boy at the Back of the Class – Onjali Q. Raúf

January · Setting goals

- ☐ **Academic:** 3 goals: academic, activity, personal
- ☐ **Activity:** keep going with activities (8 hours this month)
- ☐ **Growth & Careers:** log screen time for 1 week + make a family screen plan
- ☐ **Watch (Unifrog):** Why our screens make us less happy – Adam Alter (TED talk)
- ☐ **Read:** You Are Awesome – Matthew Syed

February · Curiosity and research

- ☐ **Academic:** mini research project (AI + 2 sources)
- ☐ **Activity:** visit a museum, science centre or library
- ☐ **Growth & Careers:** present the project for 3–5 minutes; log it in Activities
- ☐ **Watch (Unifrog):** How not to be ignorant about the world – Hans & Ola Rosling (TED talk)
- ☐ **Read:** The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind (Young Readers' Edition) – William Kamkwamba

March · Your turn to speak

- ☐ **Academic:** vocabulary notebook: 40 words + IXL English (2 skills a week)
- ☐ **Activity:** speak up: school council, debate or a presentation
- ☐ **Growth & Careers:** Unifrog Courses: finish 1 “Starter” course
- ☐ **Watch (Unifrog):** Four reasons to learn a new language (+ the Duolingo app) – John McWhorter (TED talk)
- ☐ **Read:** Pig-Heart Boy – Malorie Blackman

April · Nature and the outdoors

- ☐ **Academic:** holiday revision with flashcards
- ☐ **Activity:** a walk or ride with the route planned by your child
- ☐ **Growth & Careers:** a photo guide or diary; log it in Activities
- ☐ **Watch (Unifrog):** MinuteEarth (short videos) – MinuteEarth (video channel)
- ☐ **Read:** Kensuke's Kingdom – Michael Morpurgo

May · Teamwork and leadership

- ☐ **Academic:** a 2-week plan for end-of-year tests; weaker topics with IXL / Oak
- ☐ **Activity:** take on a responsibility in a team
- ☐ **Growth & Careers:** interview an adult about their job + explore the Careers library
- ☐ **Watch (Unifrog):** How great leaders inspire action – Simon Sinek (TED talk)
- ☐ **Read:** I Am Malala (Young Readers Edition) – Malala Yousafzai

June-July · End of year and summer plans

- ☐ **Academic:** end-of-year report + 1 goal for Year 8
- ☐ **Activity:** plan a summer camp or summer project
- ☐ **Growth & Careers:** retake the interests quiz; 10+ entries in Activities
- ☐ **Watch (Unifrog):** Gaming can make a better world – Jane McGonigal (TED talk)
- ☐ **Read:** A Kind of Spark – Elle McNicoll

The watch/listen suggestions come from Unifrog's Read, Watch, Listen library. If your school doesn't provide Unifrog, you can request an account from UKER or find the same content free on TED and BBC Sounds. TED talks are made for adults: we recommend watching together, talking about them and turning on subtitles if needed. The books are commonly recommended for Year 7 readers; if one doesn't grab your child's interest, choose another for that month. Ways to find books are on the previous page.

Would you like one-to-one support?

The UKER guidance programme offers one-to-one follow-up for each student, with monthly tasks, a skills map and an activity log. Find out more: ukegitimrehberi.co.uk

Sources: Unifrog student dashboard (Year 7 tools and the 12 skills); Duke of Edinburgh's Award activity list (dofe.org); UCAS personal statement questions (ucas.com). Information correct as of October 2026.