

Subject Choice Guide

Junior Cycle

2024 - 2027

Choosing Subjects for Junior Cycle

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with information that should prove useful in making decisions regarding Junior Cycle subjects.

In Sandymount Park ETSS, in addition to the **core** subjects, each student chooses **two** subjects from the optional subjects offered and **one** Short Course.

Core Subjects	Optional Subjects	Short Course***
English	Business Studies	Artistic Performance
Gaeilge*	Classics	Coding
Maths	Geography	Philosophy
History	Music	
Modern Foreign Language** (French/Spanish/German)	Spanish	
Science	Visual Art	
Ethical Education		
P.E.		
S.P.H.E. (Social, Personal & Health Education)		
C.S.P.E. (Civic, Social & Political Education)		

*Gaeilge – All students will study Gaeilge, except for those who have an Irish Exemption and resource classes are provided to support the student at this time.

All students will study French **or Spanish **or** German. Students can also study a second Modern Foreign Language as an option subject.

***Students choose **one** Short Course to study at Junior Cycle – Students will experience a taster of each of the four Short Courses in Aug/September before making their final choice.



When making subject choices, you should consider the following points:

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| • Choose subjects you are good at |
| • Choose subjects that you like/enjoy/are interested in |
| • Choose subjects which tie in with any career aspirations you might have at present, bearing in mind that such aspirations may change over time |

This guide gives details about the **6 optional subjects** and is designed to help you decide which of these optional subjects would be best for you. As a rule, the subjects you choose should be ones that you think you will be good at and that you think you will enjoy.

Students must choose one subject from **Block 1** and one subject from **Block 2**

Please Note: Students cannot choose the same subject in more than one block.

Block 1	Block 2
Business Studies Geography Spanish Visual Art	Classics Business Studies Music Visual Art

[This guide should be read several times with your parent\(s\)/guardian\(s\) before coming to a decision on your subjects.](#)

For further information, there are two websites which you may find useful.

1. [Curriculum Online](#)
2. [Careers Portal](#)

If parents require more detailed information than the information contained in this short guide, or on these websites, they may contact the Guidance Counsellor, Anne, at amulhall@sandymountparketss.ie



Junior Cycle Subject Information

Business Studies

This subject focuses on improving students' understanding of the business environment and on developing skills for life, work, and further study through the three inter-connected strands: Personal finance, Enterprise and Our Economy.

Course Content

Budgeting (household / businesses), consumer rights, banking, cheques, accounts (final accounts, club accounts), running your own business, industrial relations, etc. It covers a wide range of business information and knowledge about the world of business.

Who would this subject suit?

This subject would suit students who are interested in business and who show an interest in setting up their own business and inventiveness. It is a basic requirement for anyone who wishes to work in a business environment.

Type of Homework/Projects/Assignments

- 10% Classroom based assessment in Business
- Projects, Research, Presentations
- Visits to the bank and local enterprise
- Written questions and answers
- Business competitions (smartbusiness)

Other Points

Students must remember that to achieve high grades at Junior Cycle, they will have to work hard.

Career Note

It is particularly useful though not essential for courses in accounting, advertising, banking, business, commerce, finance, management (incl. hotel management), marketing, and taxation. It would be a very useful subject for students who intend to set up their own business.

Progression after the Junior Cycle

To do Economics, Business or Accounting at Leaving Certificate Level, it would be essential for the student to choose Business at Junior Cycle as it provides a basis for the three Leaving Cert subjects.

Further Information on Junior Cycle Business Studies

[Business Studies Information Leaflet](#)



Classics

Students will study the classical civilisations of Ancient Greece and Rome, which continue to inspire and stimulate today's generation as they have every generation since classical times. Students will learn how they continue to help to shape the Ireland they live in today.

Course Content

Some of the things you will learn include:

- Ancient Greek and Roman mythology
- daily life in Ancient Greece and Rome
- the ancient Olympics
- classical architecture and art
- Pompeii
- famous characters such as Socrates and Julius Caesar.

Who would this subject suit?

This subject will appeal to students interested in History and those who enjoy reading and writing about the ancient world.

Type of Homework / Projects / Assignments

Examining sources to gain an understanding of the classical world, writing their own myths using Ancient Greek motifs, creating projects based on architecture in the ancient world. Writing essays critically analysing Greek myths and poetry.

Other points

Classical studies will be useful to students in helping them solve problems and thinking for themselves when working with others, giving them a broader understanding of Europe and Ireland and expanding their vocabulary and general knowledge.

They create posters for homework as well and other visual representations of myths.

Career Note

Classics builds skills and knowledge that are particularly useful for careers in History, Culture and Languages, Government, Media and Publishing and Education.

Progression after the Junior Cycle

After Junior Cycle you may be able to choose Classical Studies as a subject for your Leaving Certificate. After the broad approach at Junior Cycle, you will study topics in greater detail at Leaving Certificate.

Further Information on Junior Cycle Classics

[Classics Information Leaflet](#)



Geography

This subject teaches students about places, people and what shapes the environment. Geography brings an appreciation of the environment and the impact of daily living on the world around us.

Course Content

The Geography Specification consists of three main strands:

1. Exploring the Physical World
2. Exploring How We Interact with the Physical World
3. Exploring People, Place and Change

Students interact with topics while exploring interrelationships and the implications those topics might have for their lives.

Who would this subject suit?

This subject would suit students who are already interested in themes such as global warming, sustainable food production, natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, the spread of disease, the reasons for migration and the future of energy resources.

Type of Homework/Projects/Assignments

Map-reading, drawing maps, explaining studying photographs, drawing and explaining maps, graphs, diagrams and charts, field-study projects.

Other Points

In your studies of Geography, you will develop your communication skills as you would in English. You will study tables and draw graphs as in Mathematics. Geography, like Science, is concerned with the environment. Geography and CSPE both include themes such as care for the environment and issues concerned with the unequal division of the world's wealth and resources.

Career Note

Geography prepares you for careers in town planning, outdoor pursuits education, weather forecasting, tourism, and transport. Geography is accepted as a Science subject for some colleges and courses.

Progression after the Junior Cycle

In Leaving Certificate Geography, some of the topics will be familiar and will be covered in much greater detail. New topics will also be introduced such as regions of the world. There is also a geographical investigation, involving fieldwork, which is a compulsory part of the examination. Geography is a popular subject at Senior Cycle.

Further Information on Junior Cycle Geography

[Geography Information Leaflet](#)



Modern Foreign Languages (French/German/Spanish)

Language learning develops students' general language awareness. It enhances their ability to analyse how language works, to compare languages, and to reflect on how they learn languages. This has a positive effect on their first language skills and on future language learning.

Course Content

Students will learn to read, write, speak and understand the language. Students will also learn about life and culture in France/Germany/Spain and in other French/German/Spanish speaking countries.

Who would this subject suit?

This subject would suit students who have a love of languages and who are willing to work and apply themselves. Students looking to challenge themselves academically are advised to take an additional modern foreign language as language skills are highly valued by future employers.

Type of Homework/Projects/Assignments

Using vocabulary correctly and appropriately with the help of dictionaries. Talking and writing about yourself and your experience of French/German/Spanish. Reading texts. Listening to audio.

Other Points

You will find modern languages useful in your personal life travelling and, in many careers, including tourism, catering, education, business and translation services.

Career Note

Knowledge of a modern foreign language is now highly desirable and graduates with degrees in computers and languages are very much in demand now. In general, a pass in the Leaving Certificate (Ordinary Level) in a foreign language is necessary for entry to the colleges in the National University of Ireland (NUI) – UCD, UCC, NUI Galway, NUI Maynooth, Pontifical University Maynooth and the Royal College of Surgeons. Though increasingly there are exceptions to this rule, particularly for Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths degrees.

Progression after the Junior Cycle

To do French/German/Spanish at Leaving Certificate Level, the student must do the language at Junior Cycle

Junior Cycle Information in Modern Foreign Languages

[Modern Foreign Languages Information Leaflet](#)
[Languages connect.ie](http://Languages.connect.ie)



Why choose German as your Modern Foreign Language?

German is the most widely spoken native language in Europe and is the second most commonly used scientific language in the world.

German is also a phonetic language, which means that it is pronounced exactly as it is written. This makes it easier to learn to speak (and write) German very well and very quickly. German is also easy to acquire if you are an English speaker, as German and English share the same Germanic root. Consequently, there are many thousands of words, which are closely related known as “cognates.” For example, the English chin is **Kinn** in German. Water becomes **Wasser** and father turns into **Vater**. The word for hand is **Hand**.

Germany is the biggest economy within the European Union and the fourth largest worldwide. It is home to numerous international corporations and on the front line of new technologies. It is therefore a great language to learn for careers in business and science.

As the Germans spend more on travel than any other country in the world except for China, German is a fantastic language to have if you are interested in a career in tourism or the travel industry. In fact, as Germany is home to a large number of economic global players, with companies located all over the world, speaking German will enhance your employment opportunities hugely both in Ireland and abroad.

Germany is the third largest contributor to research and development and offers research fellowships to scientists from abroad. Germany also awards a generous number of scholarships and other supports for Irish students to study in German universities, many of the highest-ranking universities in the world. German speaking countries are renowned for their film, theatre and visual arts, as well as architecture, literature and music, producing some of the greatest literary, musical, artistic and philosophical minds in human history: Goethe, Kafka, Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, to name but a few.

As well as learning the language itself, students will become familiar with the culture and heritage of Germany and German speaking countries, through a broad programme of German film, food, and fun activities. German suits all kinds of learners as it can be approached in a variety of ways.

Learning German fosters problem-solving skills, memory, presentation, and communication skills, as well as abstract reasoning. All language learning fosters confidence and independence and is an important life skill.

For students wishing to pursue a career in business, science, technology, tourism and hospitality, German is a very useful language, which would greatly enhance your employment prospects. German can be studied at third level in a great many broader courses, among them, International Commerce, Law and German, Marketing, Communications, as well as all the courses, which study language specifically, for example, Linguistics, Applied Languages, and related courses.

[\(Why learn German? - Ten Reasons to Learn German - Goethe-Institut\)](#)



Why choose French as your Modern Foreign Language?

French is a language that opens up the world to the learner. Did you know that more than 220 million people speak French in the world? French along with English is the only language spoken on five continents. It is also the second most widely taught foreign language in the world after English.

Learning French will enhance your employment prospects, not just in France, which is the world's fifth biggest economy, but also in Europe, Africa, Canada or South-East Asia. Many multinationals use French as a working language and it's an official language of international organisations like the UN, the EU, the Red Cross, the International Olympic Committee, and the International Courts to name but a few.

French is the world language of cooking, fashion, theatre, the visual arts, dance and architecture. Learning French opens a whole new world of culture and civilization for you. Speaking French allows for study opportunities at renowned French universities and business schools, ranked among the top higher education institutions in Europe and the world. Students with a good level of French are eligible for French government grants to enroll in postgraduate courses in France in the discipline of their choice and qualify for internationally recognised degrees.

French is enjoyable and fun to learn and students develop wonderful communication skills as a result. French is spoken as much as possible in class and students develop the basic skills of language: Listening Reading Speaking Writing Alongside the foundations of language, students will also study French culture, music, film, and French cuisine.

While French is not a phonetic language, which can be a challenge for people who find spelling in English difficult (English is not generally phonetic either), the patterns and logic of its grammar help to develop the analytical and musical side of the brain. Skills such as problem solving and dealing with abstract concepts are also increased.

Learning French enhances creativity as well as listening skills and memory. This subject would suit a student who is interested in... developing communication skills, cultural awareness, business potential, travel and broadening her mind. Having French is useful for courses and careers in business, diplomacy, hospitality and tourism, education, and journalism. French is one of the most popular languages to study in Ireland and because of this, students studying at third level have access to lots of interesting combinations. There are 211 courses available with French in Ireland and you can combine it with anything from architecture to marketing!



Why choose Spanish as your Modern Foreign Language?

Spanish is the official language in 22 countries and is spoken by more than 472 million people worldwide. Spanish is second only to Mandarin as the language with the most first language speakers and most spoken language in the world. Spanish is an official language of many global institutions and organisations including: The United Nations and the European Union.

Learning Spanish will enhance your employment prospects, not just in Spain but also in South and Central America and the United States where Spanish is widely spoken. Studying Spanish opens doors to a world of opportunities where you can appreciate great works of literature, cinema and music, along with history, fashion, sport and art. It allows you to do and see things when you travel that you would not be able to enjoy without knowing the language.

Students develop wonderful communication skills in class. Spanish is spoken as much as possible in class and students develop the basic skills of language: Listening Reading Speaking Writing. Alongside the foundations of language, students will also study the culture, music, film and cuisine of Spain and other Spanish speaking countries.

Spanish is a phonetic language. This means that knowing few rules of pronunciation students can read and speak the language with not many difficulties, and with almost no unexpected events in spelling. English and Spanish both use the Latin alphabet, and some Spanish words are already familiar to English speakers, as English has absorbed many Spanish words such as fiesta, merino, siesta, guerrilla, mosquito or patio. Other words and expressions like guitarra, tortilla, amigo, hombre, sombrero, and hasta la vista are well known thanks to films and popular culture and many others are easily recognisable due to a common Latin origin. In Spanish you can take a taxi, autobús or metro from the aeropuerto to your hotel and have some café, chocolate or té at the cafetería or some paella, gazpacho, or tomates and patatas at a restaurante, and afterwards, listen to a concierto at the teatro.

This subject would suit a student who is interested in... developing communication skills, cultural awareness, business potential, travel and broadening her mind. Having Spanish is useful for courses and careers in business, diplomacy, hospitality and tourism, education, and journalism. Spanish can be studied at third level in a great many broader courses, among them, International Commerce, Global Business, Marketing, Communications, as well as all the courses, which study language specifically, for example, Linguistics, Applied Languages, and related courses.



Music

The music course is not entirely about classical music, but covers all types of music, including traditional music, film music, musicals, etc.

Course Content

The course has three main sections:

- Composing Skills – music notes, and scales, time & key, signatures, rhythm and melody writing, backing chords, etc. are studied.
- Performing Skills – Students can play an instrument for this practical exam or they can sing solo or in a group.
- Listening Skills – All styles of music are covered, including orchestral works, film music, musicals, songs, and traditional music.

Students study a selection of set and choice works and songs. Various aspects of these are examined including style, type of work, instruments played, mood, etc.

Who would this subject suit?

It is not necessary for a student to be able to play an instrument to successfully complete the course, but it does require the student to have an aptitude for and interest in music. Being able to sing can be substituted for a musical instrument.

Type of Homework/Projects/Assignments

Harmony exercises and other written exercises can be given.

Career Note

Music at Leaving Certificate Higher Level is essential for some, but not all music degrees. Music would be a useful (but not essential) subject for students thinking of careers in media, multimedia, film, radio and television, dance, and generally in the entertainment, sports and leisure industries.

Progression after the Junior Cycle

To do Music at Leaving Certificate Level, the student is strongly advised to do Music at Junior Cycle.

Junior Cycle Information on Music

[Music Information Leaflet](#)



Visual Art

This subject enables students to learn and explore the creative world of Art, Craft & Design. It involves practical work in a wide range of media leading to a specific outcome, e.g., an artwork, a design, architectural study, an installation or an event. Making art develops the learner's imagination through developing an idea or concept and allows them to exercise personal responsibility for specific tasks.

Course Content

- Drawing - i.e., drawing people, objects, analytical drawing projects
- Painting and Mixed Media Still Life – drawing inanimate (not living) objects
- Graphic Design – posters, advertising, stamps, book covers
- Craftwork – batik, block printing, calligraphy, embroidery, fabric printing, weaving, puppetry, pottery
- 3D work – sculpture, wood carving, construction, modelling

Who would this subject suit?

This subject suits all levels and abilities, especially those with a creative outlook and imagination. Assessment is project based in sketchbooks so time management and organisation skills are important – students must do a lot of artist research and annotation and so motivation to complete projects outside of school time is essential.

Type of Homework / Projects / Assignments

Drawing, painting, design, and craft and research.

Other points

Students must be enthusiastic, interested and be able to apply themselves to projects when necessary. Natural ability alone is not enough. At Junior Cycle, students develop their skills, explore their creative side and maximise their possibilities.

Career Note

Not all colleges require art as an essential subject for entry to art courses; **however**, any student considering a career in art & design, graphics, industrial design, craftwork, etc., would be strongly advised to consider it for Junior Cycle and for Leaving Cert. It is also very useful for primary school teaching and apprenticeships. Please note that it is a strong advantage to have Leaving Cert. Art when trying to get into architecture. (More so than Technical Graphics.)

Progression after the Junior Cycle

To do Art, Craft & Design at Leaving Certificate Level, it is advisable that the student has studied Art at Junior Cycle.

Junior Cycle Information on Visual Art

[Art Information Leaflet](#)

