

Future Sparks

AIB First Year UNLOCKED

A first-year transition programme.

Find your feet. Build your skills.
Make first year your own.

Student workbook

Name:

Class:

School:

Welcome to AIB UNLOCKED



Starting post-primary school brings a lot of new things to figure out: different classrooms, new teachers, a bigger timetable, lockers, friendships, choices and more responsibility.

You are not expected to know how everything works straight away.

AIB UNLOCKED will help you find your way around your new school, make confident choices, recognise the skills you already have and become more independent.

You will take part in discussions, practical activities, team challenges and personal check-ins. Some will help you think about school and friendships. Others will help you plan ahead, set goals, look after your wellbeing and become more confident making choices about money.

There are no prizes for having everything figured out already. The purpose is to try things, learn from other people and recognise how your confidence and skills grow over time.

Your first year has already begun.
Let's start unlocking it.

How the programme works

Four Unlocks. One first year.

The programme is divided into four blocks. Each one will help you unlock something different.

As you complete activities, challenges and check-ins, you will record your progress on the **My Unlock Progress** page at the back of your workbook.

01 Unlock your SCHOOL

Find your feet, understand how your new school works and develop the confidence to ask questions and find support.

You will explore:

- Your school environment
- Feelings about starting first year
- Timetables and subject codes
- Lockers and equipment
- Organisation, planning and preparation
- Looking after belongings and resources

02 Unlock your CHOICES

Explore friendships, influences and how everyday choices can lead to different outcomes.

You will explore:

- Friendships and peer pressure
- Asking for help
- Digital and social influences
- Wants and needs
- Planning time and money
- Making thoughtful decisions

03 Unlock your STRENGTHS

Recognise the strengths and skills you already have and the ones you would like to develop.

You will explore:

- Personal strengths
- Junior Cycle Key Skills
- Responding to challenges and setbacks
- Developing skills through practice
- Working towards goals
- Skills that support money decisions

04 Unlock your INDEPENDENCE

Apply what you have learned to your responsibilities, money, wellbeing and goals.

You will explore:

- Habits and influences
- Money coming in and going out
- Planned and unplanned choices
- Saving towards goals
- Skills used in CBAs
- Wellbeing and future goals

At the end of each block, you will complete an **Unlock Check**. This is an opportunity to pause, recognise what you have learned and decide what you would like to work on next.



01 Unlock your SCHOOL

Finding your feet and building confidence

Starting post-primary school means getting used to new people, places, routines and responsibilities. Nobody expects you to understand everything immediately.

In this Unlock, you will explore how your new school works, practise using your timetable, think about how you are feeling and develop ways to stay organised.

You will also begin thinking about the value of your belongings and how planning ahead can help you look after the things you need.

In this unlock, you will...

- Explore what you already know about post-primary school
- Identify questions and find sources of support
- Compare primary and post-primary school
- Recognise and describe different feelings
- Understand subject names and abbreviations
- Practise navigating a timetable
- Prepare for lessons and organise a locker
- Recognise the value of looking after belongings and resources

Skills you'll develop

- Organisation
- Communication
- Emotional awareness
- Planning
- Decision-making
- Responsibility
- Self-management

Activity 1:

What do we already know?

You probably know more about post-primary school than you realise.

Use the spaces below to record some things you already know. You can write words, draw pictures or use symbols. Print this page or use some paper for your drawings and symbols.

When you are ready, share some of your ideas with your teacher and class.

Things I already know...

What would you still like to know?

Starting a new school can bring lots of questions.

Write one question on a sticky note. Add it to the class question board under the heading that fits best:

Who?	What?	Where?
When?	Why?	How?

Your class can return to these questions as you work through the programme.

Activity 2: Let's compare



Moving from primary school to post-primary school brings changes, but some things may also feel familiar.

Complete the two school profiles as best you can. Do not worry if you cannot answer every question. The purpose is to notice what is similar, what is different and what you are still getting used to.

My primary school

Then:	Answer:
Name of school:	
Address of school:	
Age when I started:	
Age when I graduated:	
How I travelled to school:	
Number of subjects I had:	
Number of teachers that were in my school:	
Number of students that were in my class:	
Time I used to leave my house:	
Time I arrived at school:	
School started at:	
Small break times:	
Lunch break times:	

Then:	Answer:
Time school finished:	
How I got home:	
Principal:	
Deputy Principal(s):	
SNAs:	
Secretary:	
Caretaker:	
Website/Social Media Page:	
School Motto:	
Date the summer holidays started:	
Something I'd like to keep on from primary school:	
Something I am glad to leave behind:	

My post-primary school

Now	Answer
Name of school:	
Address of school:	
Age when I started:	
Age when I will graduate:	
How I travel to school:	
Number of subjects I take:	
Number of teachers in my school:	
Number of students in my base class:	
Time I now leave my house:	
Time I now arrive at school:	
School starts at:	
Tutor time (if this is in your school):	
First class starts at:	
What I will do before class:	
Small break times:	

Now	Answer
Lunch break times:	
Time school finishes:	
What I do before I leave school:	
How I get home:	
Principal:	
Deputy Principal(s):	
Year Head:	
Tutor:	
SNAs:	
Secretary:	
Caretaker:	
Website/Social Media Page:	
School Motto:	
Date of summer holidays this year:	
Something I am looking forward to:	
Something I am a little worried about:	

01 My check-in

One thing I would like to carry with me from primary school is:

One thing I am looking forward to in post-primary school is:

One thing I may need help getting used to is:

Activity 3: How am I feeling?



Starting first year can bring lots of different feelings. The same situation can also make different people feel very differently.

There are no right or wrong feelings.

Refer to the powerpoint slide. Choose at least three of the situations below.

For each one:

1. Imagine you are in that situation.
2. Choose the emotion that best describes how you might feel.
3. Give the feeling a volume from 1-10.

A volume of **1** means the feeling is very quiet.
A volume of **10** means the feeling is extremely strong.

Situation	Emotion:	Volume:
It is your first day in a new school and you do not know many people.		
You have saved for several months and finally have enough to buy the runners you wanted.		
You are struggling in a new class, but you find a teacher who listens and supports you.		
You see an expensive product promoted on social media and immediately want to buy it.		
You get Maths homework and cannot work out how to do it when you get home.		
You do not know anyone in your new Art class, but someone you recognise sits beside you.		
You miss a ticket presale and discover that the remaining tickets cost much more.		
You have €50 and are trying to decide whether to spend it, save it or use some of it.		

Continues overleaf >

Situation	Emotion:	Volume:
You are given a large project with a deadline four weeks away.	☐	☐
You discover that you have lost your PE gear bag.	☐	☐



Think about it

Did every person in your class choose the same emotion or volume?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Why might people respond differently to the same situation?

02 My check-in



One feeling I have experienced since starting first year is:

Something that helps when this feeling becomes loud is:

Someone I could talk to is:

Activity 4: Crack the timetable code

Timetables can look as though they are written in code. Once you understand the abbreviations, they become much easier to read.

Write the abbreviation commonly used for each subject in the blank columns below.

GEO	TECH	PE	SPN	TG	WB	MTW	SPHE
VA	CSPE	MAT	MUS	GAE	HEc	ENG	WT

Remember: Some schools use slightly different abbreviations.

Subject name	Code	Subject name	Code	Subject name	Code
Mathematics	Mat	Woodwork		Metalwork	
Gaeilge		Home Economics		Music	
English		Geography		Science	
French		Technical Graphics		Technology	
German		Social Personal Health Education		Art	
History		Physical Education		Civic, Social and Political Education	
Business Studies		Spanish		Wellbeing	

Quick question:

Which subject abbreviation was the hardest to work out?

Which abbreviation did you recognise immediately?

Activity 5: The timetable challenge

Every school has slightly different starting times, class lengths and timetable codes.

The sample timetable below uses 40-minute classes. Each class shows subject, room, and teacher initials.

Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
8:50-9:30	CSPE M 32 JB	MAT E 56 GC	TECH E 14 NS	MAT E 56 GC	MUS M 04 MM
9:30-10:10	GAE E 01 NM	SCI M 22 NC	TECH E 14 NS	MUS M 04 MM	SCI M 22 NC
10:10-10:50	ENG M 52 MT	SCI M 22 NC	ENG M 52 MT	MUS M 04 MM	GAE E 01 NM
10:50-11:10	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
11:10-11:50	GER M 16 NC	HIS E 02 CC	HIS E 02 CC	ENG M 52 MT	PE S 14 MC
11:50-12:30	GER M 16 NC	GAE E 01 NM	MAT E 56 GC	MTW M 37 SP	PE S 14 MC
12:30-13:10	MAT E 56 GC	ENG M 52 MT	GAE E 01 NM	SPHE M 32 AN	MAT E 56 GC
13:10-13:40	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
13:40-14:20	WB M 17 AM	MTW M 37 SP	Free	RE E 55 AR	ENG M 52 MT
14:20-15:00	HIS E 02 CC	MTW M 37 SP	Free	GEO E 06 EMG	GEO E 06 EMG
15:00-15:40	GEO M 22 EMG	GER M 16 NC	Free	GAE E 01 NM	HIS E 02 CC

Timetable True or False

Work alone or with a partner to answer ten True or False questions.
Use evidence from the timetable before locking in each answer.

Number	Statement	True	False
1	CSPE is timetabled twice per week.	☐	☐
2	German is held in room M16.	☐	☐
3	Maths is in the first period three times in the week.	☐	☐
4	Irish is the class just before break on Friday	☐	☐
5	Break starts at 10:50 every day.	☐	☐
6	There is a half day on Friday.	☐	☐
7	There is a Maths class every day.	☐	☐
8	On Tuesday at 14:20 the student is in M37.	☐	☐
9	Monday first period the student is in E01.	☐	☐
10	There are three periods of Science in the week.	☐	☐

Challenge result:

Our score out of 10 was:

One timetable clue that helped us was:

Activity 6: My timetable



Now apply what you have learned to your own school timetable.

Use your timetable to complete the grid. Ask your teacher or work with a partner if you need help.

Subject	Abbrev	Room	Teacher	Teacher Initials	No. of Lessons weekly	New Subject (Y/N)	Do I know anyone in this class? (Y/N)
Maths							
Irish							
English							
Geography							



Check your progress

When your teacher reads each statement, stand up if it applies to you.

If standing is not comfortable or possible, use the alternative response method agreed by your teacher.

After the activity



One part of my timetable I now understand better is:

One thing I still need to check is:

Someone who can help me is:

Activity 7: The locker challenge

Your timetable and locker skills work together. The better you can plan ahead, the easier it is to arrive at class with the things you need.

For this challenge, use your own timetable or a teacher-provided example.

Round 1: Before morning break

Imagine it is the beginning of the school day. You are standing at your locker and preparing for your first three classes.

You have seven minutes.

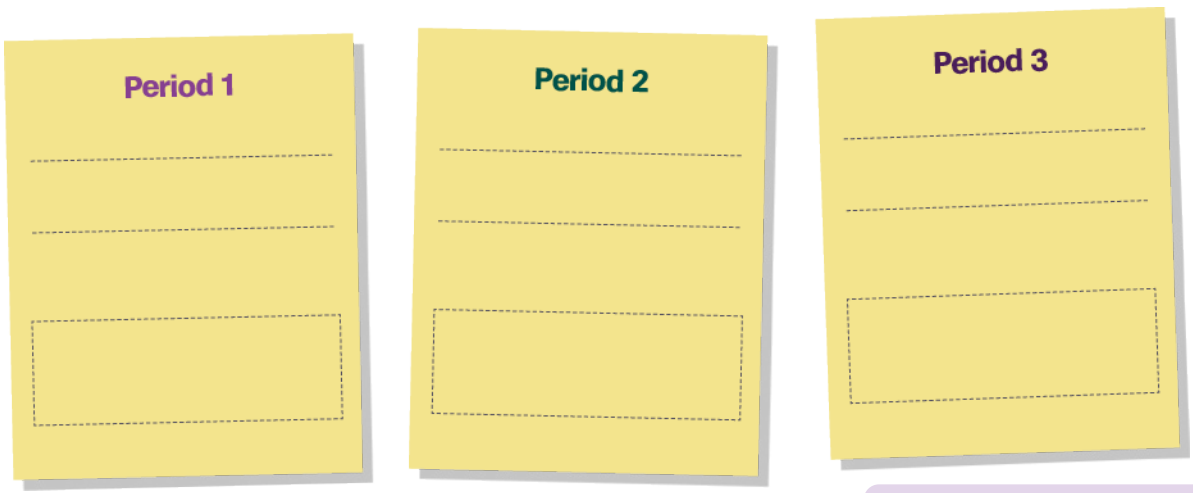
For each class, record:

- The subject
- Whether it is a single or double class
- Whether it is a practical subject
- The books and equipment you need
- Whether you have homework to hand in

Start time:
07:00 minutes

My Locker

Now is a good time to look at how our timetable skills can help our locker organisation skills. To begin, open up your timetable to help you complete this activity. Imagine it is Monday morning and you have arrived at your locker to prepare for the first three classes. Use the sticky notes below to fill out what you will pack for each of the three periods between now and first break.



Time remaining:

Round 2: Before lunch

Choose a different school day.

Imagine morning break has just ended. **You have seven minutes** to prepare for the three classes before lunch.

Start time:

07:00 minutes

Great work!

Now, imagine it is just after your morning break on a different day (you choose). You have had your snack and have seven minutes to get set for the classes up to lunch. Use these sticky notes to get organised for the classes ahead.



Time remaining:

Resource check:

Some school items can be expensive or difficult to replace.

Look back at what you packed.

Use the table below to tick off the items that you packed:

School item	Check
Something you need to handle carefully	☐
Something that could be expensive to replace	☐
Something you could easily forget	☐
Something you can leave safely in your locker	☐

One way I can look after my belongings is:

One way planning ahead could save me time or money is:

03 My check-in

One thing I will practice is:

One person I can ask for help is:

01 Unlock your SCHOOL

Unlock Check: I can find my way

After completing **Unlock your School,** I can:

I can...	Yes	Getting there	Not yet
Identify some of the people who can support me	☐	☐	☐
Recognise and describe how I am feeling	☐	☐	☐
Understand common timetable abbreviations	☐	☐	☐
Find information on my timetable	☐	☐	☐
Prepare the things I need for class	☐	☐	☐
Explain why looking after belongings matters	☐	☐	☐

✓ **Unlock complete**

02 Unlock your CHOICES

Relationships, influences and planning ahead

First year brings new friendships, greater independence and more choices. Some decisions are small, while others can affect your wellbeing, relationships, time or money.

In this Unlock, you will explore some of the situations young people can face. You will consider different options, recognise influences and practise planning ahead.

In this unlock, you will...

- Explore friendship challenges
- Recognise positive and negative influences
- Consider different choices and consequences
- Identify people who can provide support
- Explore wants and needs
- Recognise how online content can influence decisions
- Plan for a busy period
- Make choices about limited time and money

Skills you'll develop

- Empathy
- Listening
- Critical thinking
- Decision-making
- Asking for help
- Planning ahead
- Time management
- Financial awareness

Activity 8: What would you do?

Jodi, Alex, Robbie and James have all recently started post-primary school. Each student is facing a different challenge.

As you explore their stories, think about:

- What is happening?
- How might the student be feeling?
- What choices do they have?
- Who could support them?
- What advice might help?

There is not always one correct answer. Listen to other people's ideas and be prepared to explain your own thinking.

Meet Jodi

Jodi often stays up late scrolling through social media and chatting with friends. She finds it difficult to get up in the morning and sometimes leaves home without breakfast or the things she needs.

At school, she struggles to keep her bag and locker organised. She is often tired, late and stressed.

Jodi has also started spending time with older students. She wants to fit in, but they have encouraged her to skip classes.

Jodi's main challenge:

Organisation, sleep and managing influences.

Key question

What is one change Jodi could make that might improve her situation?

Meet Alex

Alex came from a small primary school and does not know many students in her new school. She finds the canteen busy and noisy and often sits alone with her lunch and a book.

She would like to make friends but feels nervous about starting conversations.

Alex has noticed that some students have expensive new trainers, bags and accessories. Her own school bag is older but still works well. Sometimes she worries that people might judge her because she does not have the same things.

Alex's main challenge:

Building friendships and feeling confident while remaining true to herself.

Key question

What could Alex do to begin making friends?

Meet Robbie

Robbie wants to make friends and feel included. He has started spending time with a group who often break school rules and get into trouble.

Some of their behaviour makes him uncomfortable, but he worries that leaving the group will mean being alone.

Robbie recently lost his sports bag. He was worried because replacing the equipment inside would cost money. The experience made him think more carefully about looking after belongings and respecting other people's property.

Robbie's main challenge:

Peer pressure, organisation and making choices that reflect his values.

Key question

What choices does Robbie have?

Meet James

James is friendly, funny and well liked. Some students make jokes about his handwriting. James usually laughs along, even though the comments upset him.

James has dysgraphia, which can make writing difficult and tiring. He worries that people might treat him differently if they know.

He has also misplaced a special pen that helps him write more comfortably. Replacing it could be expensive, but James feels nervous about telling his family or asking for help.

James's main challenge:

Confidence, minding his things, self-advocacy and asking for support.

Key question

How can James get the support he needs while feeling comfortable being himself?

My group discussed: ☐ Jodi ☐ Alex ☐ Robbie ☐ James

The main challenge we identified was:

The student might be feeling:

One person who could support them is:

One choice available to them is:

Our advice would be:

Four corners challenge



Your teacher will assign one corner of the room each to Jodi, Alex, Robbie and James.

Move to the student you think may need support most urgently.

Be ready to:

- Use evidence from the profile
- Explain your choice
- Listen to other opinions
- Change your position if another argument changes your mind

There is no single correct answer. All four students deserve appropriate support.

01 My check-in



One challenge a young person might face is:

One person who could help is:

One thing I learned about choices or influences is:

Activity 9: The road to Christmas



Time is a resource too

The weeks leading up to Christmas can be enjoyable, busy or stressful. There may be schoolwork, activities, family events, plans with friends and things you want to save for.

If Christmas is not something you celebrate, choose another important date or event during this time of year, like your end of term exams or a family event.

My chosen date or event is:

I have _____ weeks until this date.

Something I need to prepare for:

Something I would like to save for or plan for:

Something I do not want to leave until the last minute:

One small step I can take this week:



Stress check

1 = calm and prepared; 10 = extremely stressed

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

One thing that could reduce this number is:

Activity 10: My roadmap

Working backwards

Choose one important date from the previous activity.

Start with the date and **work backwards**. What needs to happen before you reach it?

My destination

The date or event I am planning for is:

The date is:

Step 4:

The final thing I need to do.

Step 3:

Before that, I need to...

Step 1:

The first small step I can take is...

Step 2:

Before that, I need to...

What resources might I need?

Consider time, information, support, transport or money.

Who could help?

Activity 11: The countdown challenge

Your class has a busy few weeks ahead.

Working alone or with a partner, map out a four week calendar (Monday to Sunday). Place the following commitments into your calendar:

- **A.** Complete a school project
- **B.** Attend football training
- **C.** Study for a test
- **D.** Go to a family event
- **E.** Buy or make a gift for a friend
- **F.** Save €2 each week
- **G.** Spend time with friends
- **H.** Rest and have fun

Before you begin, decide:

- Which commitments happen at a fixed time?
- Which tasks need to be started early?
- Which activities could be moved?
- Which activities involve money?
- How will you make space for rest?

The challenge

Fit everything into your calendar without placing all the difficult tasks at the end.

There is more than one possible answer, but you must be able to explain your choices.

Our planning



The first thing we scheduled was:

We started this early because:

One activity involving money was:

Our plan for it was:

One way we protected time for rest was:

Activity 12: The planner puzzle



Sometimes there is not enough time or money to do everything we might like. Planning involves deciding what matters most.

The situation

A student has a busy Saturday and €15 available.

They need to:

- Complete a school project
- Prepare their bag and equipment for Monday
- Attend a two-hour sports practice
- Eat lunch and take a break

They would also like to:

- Meet friends
- Buy a gift costing €10
- Go to the cinema
- Spend time gaming
- Save €5 towards something they want

There may not be enough time or money for everything.



Your task

Create a realistic plan.

Decide:

- What must happen
- What could happen
- What may need to wait
- How the €15 should be used
- Whether the student can still save something
- Where rest should fit

Our decisions

The things that must happen are:

The things that could wait are:

We would use the €15 by:

One thing we would save for later is:

Link back to Jodi

If Jodi planned her week more carefully, what might improve?

- [ ] Sleep
- [ ] Feeling happier
- [ ] Organisation
- [ ] Time with friends
- [ ] Rembering books
- [ ] Money choices
- [ ] Stress
- [ ] Something else

Now look at the **Stress Bucket slide** and write down 3 things that fill up Jodi's bucket and 3 things that could help her regulate.

Fills up her bucket	Helps regulate the flow

02 My check-in

One thing I need to plan for is:

The first small step I can take is:

02 Unlock your CHOICES

Unlock Check: My choices matter

After completing **Unlock your Choices**, I can:

I can...	Yes	Getting there	Not yet
Identify some influences on choices	☐	☐	☐
Consider more than one possible response	☐	☐	☐
Identify someone who could provide support	☐	☐	☐
Explain how planning can reduce stress	☐	☐	☐
Recognise that time and money are limited resources	☐	☐	☐
Make a simple plan connected to a goal	☐	☐	☐

✓ **Unlock complete**

03 Unlock your STRENGTHS

Recognising what you can do and what you can develop

Strengths are not limited to being talented at sport, music or school subjects. Planning ahead, listening, solving problems, asking for help and sticking with something difficult are also strengths.

Some strengths may come naturally. Others grow through practice, experience and support.

In this Unlock, you will recognise the strengths and skills you already use, explore the Junior Cycle Key Skills and identify something you would like to develop.

In this unlock, you will...

- Recognise personal strengths
- Explore the eight Junior Cycle Key Skills
- Match skills to everyday situations
- Consider how people respond to setbacks
- Identify evidence of your own skills
- Choose a skill you would like to develop
- Apply skills to goals and money decisions

Skills you'll develop

- Confidence
- Self-awareness
- Resilience
- Creativity
- Problem-solving
- Goal-setting
- Perseverance
- Planning

Activity 13: My strengths tree

Write your strengths on the leaves.



A strength can be:

- Something you are good at
- A positive quality
- A useful skill
- A way you support other people
- Something you have improved through practise

Use these prompts if you need help:

- I am good at...
- My friends or family might say I am...
- I am proud that I...
- One thing I keep trying at is...
- I help other people by...
- One challenge I have learned from is...
- One skill I use outside school is...
- Something I have improved is...

Look at your tree

Place a star beside:

- One strength you use in school
- One strength you use outside school
- One strength that could help you reach a goal
- One strength that could help you make a thoughtful money decision

01 My check-in



One strength I sometimes forget I have is:

One strength I would like to use more often is:

Activity 14: Which Key Skill would you use?

Junior Cycle has eight Key Skills. You already use many of them in school and everyday life.

Key Skills bank

A. Managing myself

- Setting goals
- Making decisions
- Staying organised
- Taking responsibility

B. Staying well

- Looking after wellbeing
- Building confidence
- Recognising when support is needed

C. Communicating

- Listening
- Speaking
- Sharing ideas and information

D. Being creative

- Generating ideas
- Solving problems
- Trying different approaches

E. Working with others

- Co-operating
- Respecting other people
- Learning and making decisions together

F. Managing information and thinking

- Finding information
- Comparing options
- Making informed decisions
- Thinking critically

G. Being literate

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Understanding and using information

H. Being numerate

- Using numbers
- Recognising patterns
- Estimating
- Calculating and interpreting information

Match the situation to the Key Skill



Write the correct letter beside each situation.

No.	Situation	Letter
1	I feel nervous about first year and decide to talk to someone I trust.	
2	I receive €20 and need to decide whether to spend it now or save it.	
3	My locker key disappears before PE and I need another solution.	
4	My group cannot agree on how to present a project.	
5	I explain a task clearly to someone who was absent.	
6	I create reminders because I keep forgetting equipment.	
7	I invite someone who is sitting alone to join my group.	
8	I break a large goal into smaller steps.	
9	I gather and compare information about a school trip.	
10	Sports Day is cancelled and my class needs an indoor alternative.	
11	I read the rules for a school competition and explain them to my team.	
12	I want to save €3 each week for six weeks and calculate how much I will have.	



Think about it

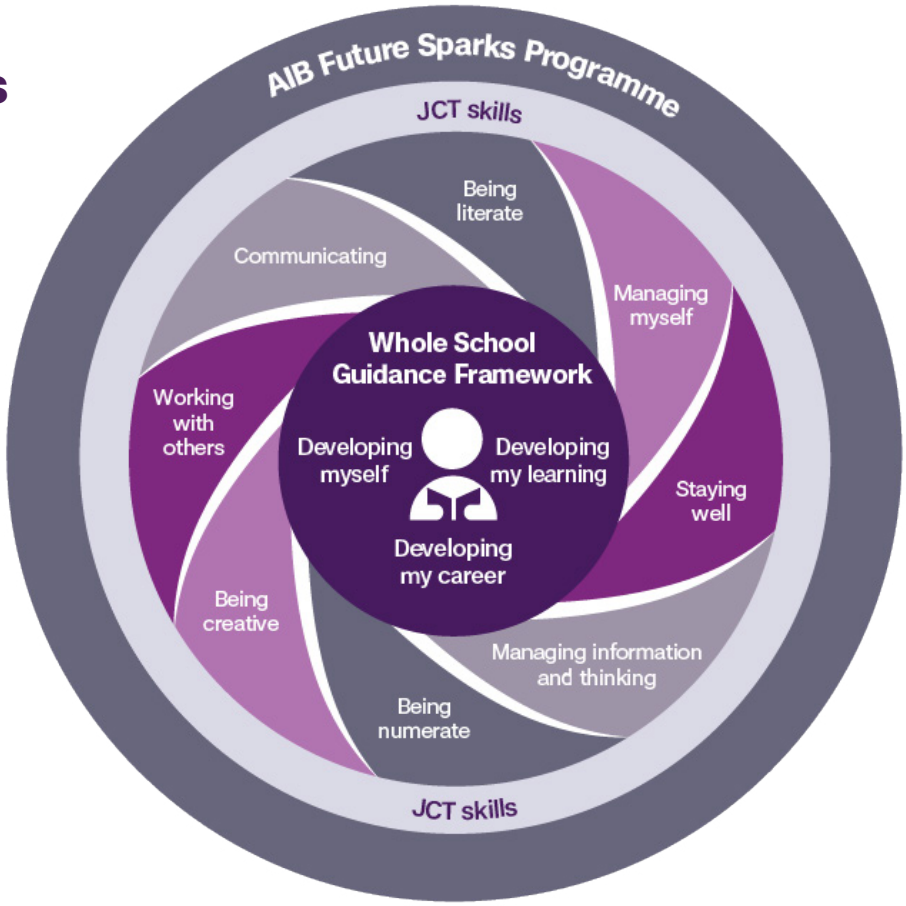
Some situations may use more than one Key Skill. Choose one situation and identify a second skill that might also help.

Situation number:

Another key skill and why it would be useful:

Junior Cycle Key Skills

- Active
- Aware
- Connected
- Responsible
- Respected
- Resilient



02 My check-in

My Key Skills

The Key Skill I use most often is:

One Key Skill I would like to develop is:

One way I could practise it is:

Activity 15: Setback. Skill. Comeback

People who achieve something important rarely do so without challenges, mistakes or support from other people.

Explore the stories in this activity and identify:

- The setback or challenge
- The skill or strength used
- The support or opportunity that helped
- What happened next

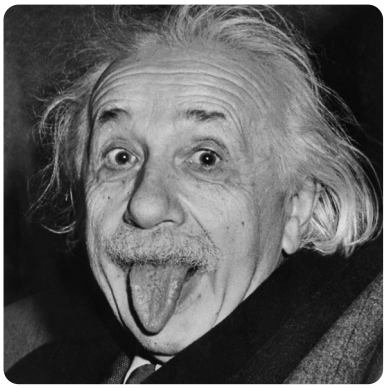


Photo credit: Wikimedia

Profile 1: Albert Einstein

Did you know?

Einstein was considered a rebellious student because he questioned traditional ways of learning. He went on to become one of the greatest physicists of all time. He **demonstrated outstanding critical thinking and problem-solving skills.**

Life lesson:

Sometimes your strengths are not recognised immediately. Investing in your learning and believing in your abilities can create opportunities later in life.

Setback	Skill
Support or action	**What happened next**

Photo credit: Michael Emilio



Profile 2: Katie McCabe

Did you know?

International soccer player Katie McCabe had to join a boys' football team until she was 10 because there were no girls' teams nearby. She later signed for Arsenal, but moving away from home and adapting to professional football was a big challenge at first.

Today, Katie is one of Ireland's most successful footballers, captaining the Republic of Ireland and becoming a star in the Women's Super League. She is also an important role model for the LGBTQ+ community and for young people who dream of succeeding in sport.

Katie demonstrates skills such as **determination, leadership, sportsmanship and resilience.**

Life lesson:

Katie's story shows the importance of investing time in your talents, working hard towards your goals and not giving up when things become difficult. Developing your skills can create opportunities for the future.

Setback	Skill
Support or action	**What happened next**



Photo credit: Gage Skidmore

Profile 3: Tom Holland

Did you know?

Tom Holland was bullied when he was young for playing the part of a dancer in a stage production. He later used that experience to help him understand and play successful roles. Tom has also spoken about finding social media stressful and has taken breaks from it to protect his wellbeing. He was diagnosed with dyslexia when he was younger and says he takes extra time to read and learn lines.

Tom shows skills of **creativity, perseverance and a growth mindset**.

Life lesson:

Tom's story shows that everyone learns differently. Taking extra time to develop your skills, asking for support when needed and looking after your wellbeing can help you achieve your goals.

Setback	Skill
Support or action	**What happened next**



Photo credit: Bryan Berlin

Profile 4: Lionel Messi

Did you know?

Lionel Messi was diagnosed with a growth hormone deficiency as a child. The treatment was expensive and his family struggled to afford it. Despite this challenge, Messi continued to develop his football skills and eventually joined Barcelona, where he became one of the greatest footballers of all time.

Messi shows skills of **determination, perseverance, resilience and teamwork.**

Life lesson:

Investing in your skills and asking for support when you need it can help you overcome obstacles and achieve your goals.

Setback	Skill
Support or action	**What happened next**



Photo credit: Montclair Film

Profile 5: Jessie Buckley

Did you know?

Jessie Buckley grew up in Killarney, Co. Kerry, and worked hard to develop her talents in music and acting. At 17, she competed in the BBC talent show I'd Do Anything and finished as runner-up, but she didn't let that setback stop her. She continued her training and built a successful acting career.

Today, Jessie is an Oscar-winning actress known for films such as Wild Rose, The Lost Daughter and Hamnet.

Jessie Buckley shows skills of **creativity, resilience, determination and self-belief**.

Life lesson:

Early in her career, Jessie lived on a very small income while trying to establish herself in London. She has spoken about struggling to make ends meet, teaching her the value of perseverance, budgeting and making the most of opportunities. Her journey shows that financial challenges do not have to stop you pursuing your goals.

Setback	Skill
Support or action	**What happened next**

Skills word bank

Creativity	Perseverance	Teamwork	Acting
Determination	Problem-solving	Planning	Career
Leadership	Resilience	Asking for support	Income
Patience	Self-belief	Adaptability	Financial

Choose one story

The story I chose was:

The challenge or setback was:

A skill the person used was:

Support or an opportunity that helped was:

The person's next step was:

Think more deeply

Did the person succeed only because they worked hard?

- [ ] **Yes**
- [ ] **No**
- [ ] **Not Sure**

What other things may have helped?

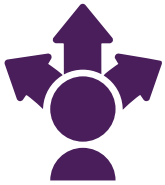
- [ ] Support from other people
- [ ] Access to training or education
- [ ] Time
- [ ] Money or financial support
- [ ] Opportunity
- [ ] Luck or timing
- [ ] Something else

03 My check-in

My takeaway

One thing I learned from these stories is:

Activity 16: My skills profile



Skills help us learn, build relationships, manage challenges and work towards goals.

They can also help us make financial decisions. For example:

- Numeracy helps us calculate and compare.
- Literacy helps us understand information.
- Managing Myself helps us plan and save.
- Managing Information and Thinking helps us compare options.
- Being Creative helps us find another solution.
- Working with Others helps us ask for and consider advice.

Part 1: Skills match

Draw a line matching the skill to:

1. **Its meaning**
2. **An everyday example**

Skill	Its meaning	Everyday example
Staying well	Reading, writing, speaking and understanding information	Planning how to spend or save your allowance
Managing myself	Using maths in everyday situations	Working as part of a sports team or group project
Numeracy	Setting goals, making decisions and staying organised	Reading reviews before buying something online
Being creative	Looking after physical and mental wellbeing	Comparing prices before making a purchase
Managing information & thinking	Sharing ideas and listening to others	Designing a poster, video or fundraiser
Literacy	Teamwork, cooperation and respect	Giving a presentation or explaining an idea
Communication	Researching and solving problems	Going for a walk, exercising or taking a break from screens
Working with others	Generating ideas and trying new approaches	Saving money each week for something you want

Part 2: Evidence of my skills

Choose three times when you used one or more Key Skills.

Skill or skills I used	What I did
For example: Numeracy/Managing Myself/Working with Others/Being Creative	For example: I needed money for new football boots, so I asked my parent to help sell a few items on Vinted.

Your evidence can come from:

- School
- Sport
- A club or activity
- Home
- A friendship
- A hobby
- Solving a problem
- Working towards a goal
- Making a money decision

Explain one of your choices

04 My check-in

One thing I will practise is:

I will practice it by:

03 Unlock your STRENGTHS

Unlock Check: I have skills

After completing **Unlock your Strengths,** I can:

I can...	Yes	Getting there	Not yet
Recognise some of my strengths			
Give evidence of a skill I use			
Identify all eight Junior Cycle Key Skills			
Recognise that skills grow through practice			
Identify skills that can support a goal			
Apply skills to a simple money decision			

✓ **Unlock complete**

04 Unlock your INDEPENDENCE

Using your skills to manage choices, money and goals

Becoming more independent does not mean doing everything alone. It means developing the confidence to make decisions, manage responsibilities, recognise when you need support and learn from your choices.

In this Unlock, you will apply the skills developed throughout the programme to money, CBAs, wellbeing and personal goals.

In this unlock, you will...

- Recognise habits and influences
- Track simple money coming in and going out
- Identify planned and unplanned choices
- Connect choices to a goal
- Explore the skills used in school projects (called CBAs)
- Identify ways to support your wellbeing
- Consider the person you would like to become
- Recognise your progress and next steps

Skills you'll develop

- Financial awareness
- Numeracy
- Planning
- Goal-setting
- Decision-making
- Organisation
- Self-management

Activity 17: My choices, habits and goals

Your weekly choices tracker

This activity helps you notice patterns and understand how choices can connect to goals. It is not about judging whether a choice was “good” or “bad".

You can complete the activity using:

- A real week
- An imagined week
- A fictional example provided by your teacher

You do not need to share personal financial information.

Key Terms

- **Money in:** Money received or available.
- **Money out:** Money used or spent.
- **Balance:** The amount remaining after money out is subtracted from money in.
- **Planned choice:** Something considered before it happened.
- **Unplanned choice:** Something decided at the time.

My tracker

Day	Money in	Money out	What was it used for?	Balance	Planned?
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

Remember you can make the figures up if you can't recall or do not want to share anything personal.

What did I notice?	Answers
Total money in:	€
Total money out:	€
Final balance:	€
Were most choices planned or unplanned?	☐ Planned ☐ Unplanned ☐ A mixture
What influenced the choices?	☐ Friends ☐ Family ☐ Social media ☐ Advertising ☐ Convenience ☐ Habit ☐ A goal ☐ Something else _____
Did any small amounts add up over the week?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

01 My check-in Through this activity, I practised:

- ☐ Being numerate
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Goal-setting
- ☐ Decision-making
- ☐ Recognising influences
- ☐ Reflecting
- ☐ Managing myself

Activity 18: CBA detective challenge

A Classroom-Based Assessment, or CBA, is an opportunity to show both what you know and the skills you use while completing a task.

The scenario

Your class is organising a Charity Fun Day to raise money for a local cause. The event is three weeks away. Your class has €100 to spend on materials. Different jobs must be completed to make the event happen.

Your task...

For each job:

- Identify the Key Skills required.
- Tick all the skills that apply.
- Circle the skill you think may be the most important.
- Be ready to explain your thinking.

Key Skills bank

- Communicating
- Managing Myself
- Working with Others
- Being Creative
- Being Numerate
- Being Literate
- Managing Information and Thinking
- Staying Well

Task 1: Research 01

Your group must research local charities and decide which one should receive the money raised.

Useful skills

- [ ] Communicating
- [ ] Managing information and thinking
- [ ] Being literate
- [ ] Working with others
- [ ] Another skill: _____

Task 2: Budgeting: 02

Your group has €100 to spend on materials. You need to research prices, compare options and avoid spending more than the available amount.

Useful skills

- [ ] Being numerate
- [ ] Managing information and thinking
- [ ] Managing myself
- [ ] Communication
- [ ] Another skill: _____

Task 3: Promotion

03

Your group must create posters, announcements or presentations that encourage people to attend.

Useful skills

- [ ] Being creative
- [ ] Communicating
- [ ] Being literate
- [ ] Working with others
- [ ] Another skill: _____

Task 4: Planning

04

The event is three weeks away. Your group must create a timeline, divide the work and meet the deadline.

Useful skills

- [ ] Managing myself
- [ ] Managing information and thinking
- [ ] Working with others
- [ ] Communicating
- [ ] Another skill: _____



Detective reflection

The task I would most enjoy is:

The task I might find most challenging is:

A skill that appears in several tasks is:

Activity 19: Find someone who...



Skills for school, life and the future

Move around the room and find a different person who can answer each question.
Ask the person to explain their answer before writing their name. If moving around is not possible or comfortable, complete the activity in a seated group or use the alternative suggested by your teacher.

Find someone who can...	Name:
Explain what CBA stands for	
Name one reason CBAs are used	
Name a Junior Cycle Key Skill	
Explain what the JCPA records	
Name a skill used in teamwork	
Name a skill used when presenting	
Give an example of Managing Myself	
Give an example of Being Creative	
Describe a time they solved a problem	
Give an example of Numeracy outside school	

Find someone who can...	Name:
Name a goal someone could work towards	
Explain why planning can help with money	
Name a job that uses teamwork	
Name somewhere outside school where Key Skills are used	

After the activity

The question people found easiest was:

The question people found most difficult was:

One answer that surprised me was:

02 My check-in:

One skill I now understand better is:

Activity 20: The elephant and the mouse...

Everyone has different strengths, experiences and contributions to make.

Listen to: **The Elephant and the Mouse** by Dr Claire Hayes. As you listen, think about:

Think about it

What message stands out?

Which character do you understand most?

Which skills can you recognise?

How do support and relationships affect what happens?

My take-away

The message I took from the story was:

- [ ] Confidence
- [ ] Teamwork
- [ ] Problem-solving
- [ ] Organisation
- [ ] Perseverance
- [ ] Empathy
- [ ] Goal-setting
- [ ] Decision-making
- [ ] Asking for help

Activity 21: My wellbeing toolkit

Looking after yourself involves finding a balance between relationships, rest, goals and movement. Different strategies work for different people.

Your toolkit should contain things that are realistic and useful for you.

Connect

People and relationships

Activities that help me connect

Things I can do:

Recharge

Rest and recovery

Activities that help me recharge

Things that help me rest, reset or feel calmer:

Achieve

Goals and progress

Activities that help me achieve

Small actions that help me make progress:

Move

Physical wellbeing

Activities that help me move

Physical activities that help my body and mind:

Financial wellbeing



Money worries or decisions can sometimes affect wellbeing.

A thoughtful response might include:

Tick any of the following that you think helps mind our **financial wellbeing.**

- ☐ Pausing before making a decision
- ☐ Making a simple plan
- ☐ Checking reliable information
- ☐ Talking to a trusted adult
- ☐ Choosing a lower-cost or free option
- ☐ Waiting before buying something
- ☐ Another response:



Reflection

One part of my toolkit I already use is:

One part I would like to strengthen is:

Activity 22: Message from My Future Self

Imagine it is the end of your Junior Cycle. Think about the person you hope to be and the progress you would like to have made.

Word bank

Personal qualities

- Kind
- Confident
- Calm
- Respectful
- Curious
- Resilient
- Responsible

Skills

- Organised
- Creative
- Resourceful
- Decisive
- Practical
- Good listener
- Problem-solver

Relationships

- Supportive
- Helpful
- Co-operative
- Empathetic
- Trustworthy
- Team player

Goals and wellbeing

- Healthy
- Focused
- Motivated
- Balanced
- Goal-focused
- Self-aware

Money and independence

- Prepared
- Thoughtful
- Informed
- Responsible
- Financially confident

Message to you at the end of Junior Cycle

Fill in this activity on the next page using words, skills, goals and attributes from the **Word bank** above.

Dear Me,

I am proud because...

Some of the skills that helped me were...

The people who supported me were...

I looked after my wellbeing by...

One money skill I developed was...

One piece of advice I would give you now is...

From, Future Me.

03 My check-in:

One small thing I can do this month is:

Activity 23: My progress Spidergram

No one feels confident in every area all the time. This final activity helps you recognise what has grown and what you would like to continue developing. For each area, **colour or number** your progress from one to five, using the colour and number key to help you decide.

Colour and number key:

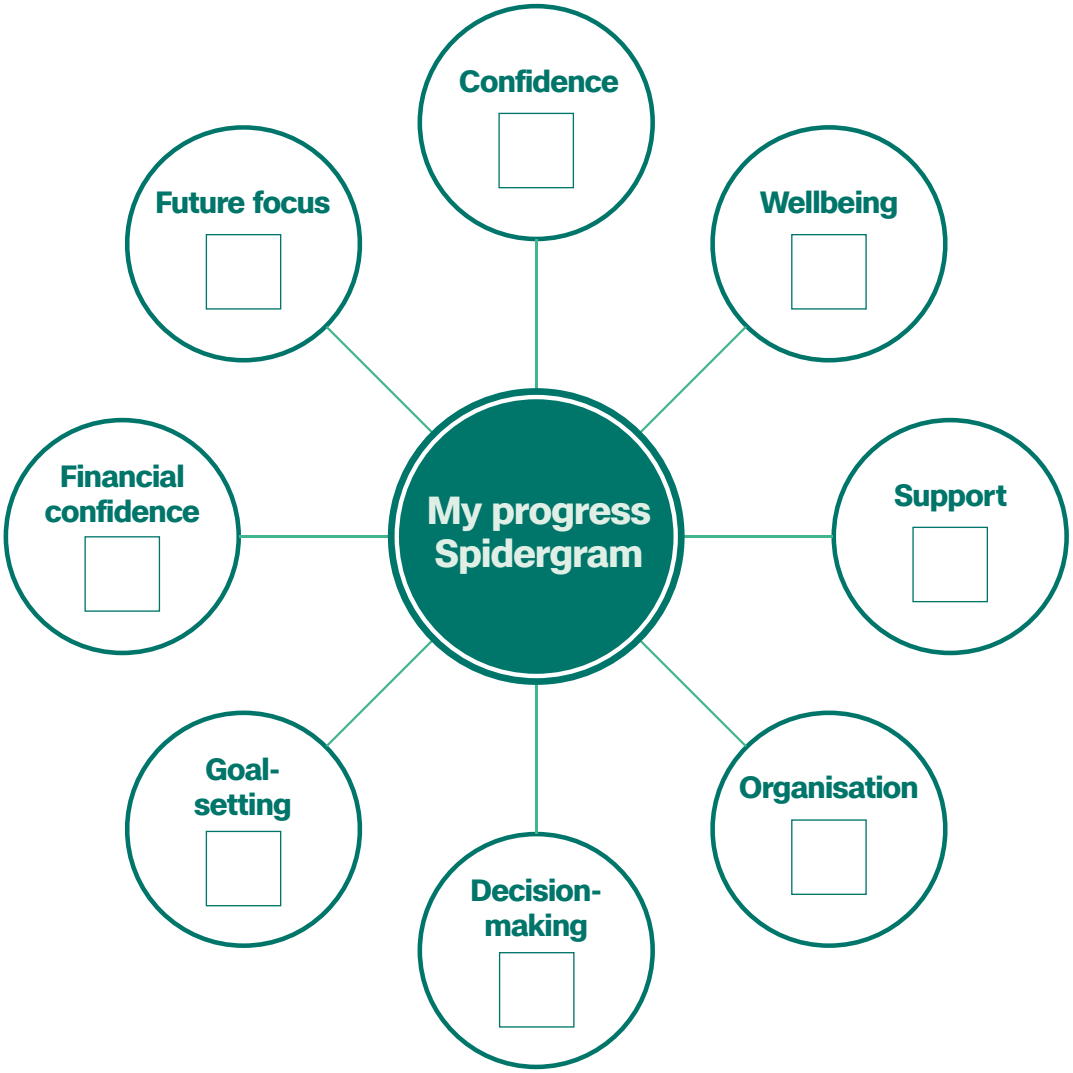
1	2	3	4	5

1 = I am beginning to develop this

5 = I feel confident using this

Spidergram areas:

- Confidence
- Wellbeing
- Support
- Organisation
- Decision-making
- Goal-setting
- Financial confidence
- Future focus



Financial confidence means:

I can use simple information, planning and reflection to make a money decision or work towards a goal.



Reflection

The area I feel most confident in is:

One example is:

The area I would like to develop next is:

One small action I can take is:

04 Unlock your INDEPENDENCE

Unlock Check: Ready for what's next

After completing **Unlock your Independence**, I can:

I can...	Yes	Getting there	Not yet
Track simple money coming in and going out	☐	☐	☐
Calculate a simple balance	☐	☐	☐
Recognise influences on choices	☐	☐	☐
Connect a plan to a goal	☐	☐	☐
Identify skills used in CBAs	☐	☐	☐
Identify support and a realistic next step	☐	☐	☐

✓ **Unlock complete**

AIB Unlocked

You have completed all four Unlocks.

This does not mean you have everything figured out. It means you have developed new skills, recognised your progress and identified what you would like to work on next.

Your next step starts here.

My Unlock Progress

First year brings lots of new experiences, choices and responsibilities.
Use this page to recognise some of the things you have completed and the skills you have developed. Each Unlock contains three **My check-in points.**

When you complete the My check-in points:

1. Tick the corresponding box below.
2. Complete your Unlock Check.
3. Ask your teacher to review your work and sign the block as **UNLOCKED**.

You do not need to complete everything perfectly. The purpose is to participate, reflect and recognise your progress.

01 Unlock your SCHOOL

I completed:

- ☐ 01 My check-in
- ☐ 02 My check-in
- ☐ 03 My check-in

Teacher check **UNLOCKED** ☐

02 Unlock your CHOICES

I completed:

- ☐ 01 My check-in
- ☐ 02 My check-in

Teacher check **UNLOCKED** ☐

03 Unlock your STRENGTHS

I completed:

- ☐ 01 My check-in
- ☐ 02 My check-in
- ☐ 03 My check-in
- ☐ 04 My check-in

Teacher check **UNLOCKED** ☐

04 Unlock your INDEPENDENCE

I completed:

- ☐ 01 My check-in
- ☐ 02 My check-in
- ☐ 03 My check-in

Teacher check **UNLOCKED** ☐

AIB Unlocked



I have completed all four Unlocks.

One thing I am proud of is:

One skill I want to continue developing is:

One thing I now understand better about money is:

My next step is:



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