

Maths prodigies

Task 1 School subjects – anagrams

With a partner, sort the letters to make school subjects:

1 THAMS _____ 3 TRYMISECH _____

2 SISCPYH _____ 4 GOLYIBO _____

Make some more anagrams of school subjects for another pair to sort:

Task 2 Education and ages

A) With a partner decide what age most people do these things:

Go to nursery school _____

Go to primary school _____

Do homework _____

Go to secondary school _____

Do official school exams _____

Go to university _____

B) Ask your teacher questions about his/her education.

1 When did you go to nursery school?

2 When did.....?

3.....?

4.....?

5.....?

6.....?

Task 3 Reading: Maths prodigies

Read about Arran and Ruth. Find three things that they have in common.

Arran

14-year-old Arran Fernandez, will become a student at one of Britain's top universities if he passes his physics exam. Arran, from Surry in the southeast of England, has been offered a conditional place at Cambridge University after passing the university's entrance exams in 2009.

Arran first made headlines in 2001 when, aged 5, he gained the highest grade in the foundation maths paper. He passed GCSE maths in 2003 with an A grade. Now he only has to pass physics A-Level to become a university student.

The teenager has been educated at home by his father. Arran says that his favourite subject is maths and that he enjoys home schooling because he can see the mark scheme and can help his dad decide the curriculum. Arran wants to be a research mathematician and his ambition is to find a solution to the Riemann hypothesis – the unsolved theory about the patterns of prime numbers that has baffled mathematicians for 150 years.

Ruth

Ruth Lawrence's CV is a fascinating read. She was just 13 when she started university. She was home-tutored by her father, Harry, and passed her maths O-Level (now called maths GCSE) when she eight. She then became the youngest Brit to gain an A at A-Level pure maths.

In 1981 Ruth took the Oxford University pre-entry exams in mathematics and came first out of all 530 candidates. As a 13-year-old she attended lectures at this prestigious British university with her father and did her degree in two years. She had completed a second degree at Harvard in the USA by the age of 19.

In 1996 she married an Israeli mathematician and a year later they emigrated to Jerusalem where she became a professor at the Hebrew University. She now has 4 children and she says she wants them to grow up 'normally'.

Task 4 Time lines

Read the texts in more detail and complete the time lines for Arran and Ruth with numbers or words:

Arran's time line

- 1 Arran was born in 19_____.
- 2 He gained the highest grade in foundation maths when he was _____.
- 3 He passed GCSE maths in 2_____.
- 4 Cambridge offered him a university place when he was _____.
- 5 His ambition is to _____.

Ruth's time line


- 1 Ruth passed her maths O-Level (GCSE) when she was_____.
- 2 She took the Oxford University pre-entry exams in _____.
- 3 She started university when she was _____.
- 4 She finished her second degree when she was _____.
- 5 She got married in _____.
- 6 She emigrated to Jerusalem in _____.
7. She wants her children to _____.

Task 5 Make a time line.

A) What can you remember about your teacher's education and life? Make a time line for your teacher on the board.

B) Now make a time line for **you** in the box.

My time line.



Task 6 What the students say.

A) Read these comments from the Cambridge students' online magazine and read what the writers think about Arran joining their university at age 14. Look at the glossary to help you. Do you agree or disagree with the writers? Or maybe you're not sure. Circle an option in the 'your opinion' column. Compare and explain your opinions with a partner.

B) Imagine you are a Cambridge University student. Add a comment to the website.

Glossary

Bunch = group

Fitz = Fitzwilliam college. Cambridge University is divided into colleges, each with a different name.

Sorted = a problem solved

Subsides = is reduced

Thrills = exciting events

Uni = university

<i>Online magazine comments</i>	<i>your opinion</i>
<p>Jim Much as I'm sure it will do wonders for his Maths, as a fourteen year-old he's not going to have the chance to experience any of the other thrills of university life (parties, the student bar, girlfriends etc. etc. - the list goes on). I think that Fitz would have done much better in offering him the place but telling him to take a couple of years out before coming up.</p>	<p>I agree I disagree I'm not sure</p>
<p>Mahesh Fair play - I wouldn't want to come here aged 14, but I suppose Uni will just be like an extension of school for this kid.</p>	<p>I agree I disagree I'm not sure</p>
<p>Jan He's been home schooled until now – being with a bunch of people in a class is going to be a real shock for him.</p>	<p>I agree I disagree I'm not sure</p>
<p>Ted Home-schooled? What does that mean exactly? Was his dad his teacher all day, every day? I don't think that would be much fun.</p>	<p>I agree I disagree I'm not sure</p>
<p>Sara He'll already have a Cambridge degree by the time he's 18 so at least won't have his education to worry about: sorted. I might even be jealous.</p>	<p>I agree I disagree I'm not sure</p>
<p>Peter It's a sensible decision to come to Cambridge, with his academic background, rather than another university. Let's hope for his sake that the publicity subsides and he can just get down to some hard work when he arrives.</p>	<p>I agree I disagree I'm not sure</p>
<p>Suzy I'd like to meet Arran. He sounds a bit more interesting than your typical uni boy.</p>	<p>I agree I disagree I'm not sure</p>
<p>Doggy I'd like to meet his dad.</p>	<p>I agree I disagree I'm not sure</p>
	<p>I agree I disagree I'm not sure</p>
	<p>I agree I disagree I'm not sure</p>

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