

# Summer Schools, Compared

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The ones worth the money, the ones that are free  
and the few my own children have actually done

*For parents weighing the spend · 2026*

**@EduStrategyCaroline**

# The paid experiences

Immersive and well run. Worth it for the right child, with eyes open on the price. Tap a provider name to open its page.

PROGRAMME		WHAT IT IS, AND WHO FOR	WHERE & FORMAT	COST
<b>InvestIN</b>	★	Career work experience across 15 fields, banking to medicine, law and engineering. Ages 12 to 18.	1 to 2 weeks at UCL, London. Residential option.	£££
Use code EDUCAROLINE10 for 10% off				
<b>Imperial Global</b>	★	Imperial's own pre-uni school. One STEM stream, AI to Medicine and Physics, with labs. Ages 16 to 17.	2 weeks residential, South Kensington. About £7,700.	£££
<b>Immerse Education</b>	★	University-level teaching in real Oxford and Cambridge colleges, PhD tutors, tiny classes. Ages 13 to 18.	2 weeks residential, Oxford or Cambridge.	£££
<b>Debate Chamber</b>	★	Small-group courses, Philosophy to Physics, plus Law and Medicine. Ages 11-18. £195-745, bursaries 80%.	Bloomsbury, London, or online.	££
<b>MPW London</b>		Tutorial-college summer school. 8 streams, Maths and Medicine to Law and Computing. Ages 14 to 17.	London (also Cambridge). 2-week blocks.	££+
<b>Innovate Summer Academy</b>		Pre-uni study plus full UCAS support. 5 faculties incl. CS & AI and Medicine. Ages 15 to 18.	2 weeks at UCL, or a 4-week online course (8 UCAS points).	££+



The four marked with a star are ones my own children have done.

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# Free and seriously prestigious

These cost nothing and carry real weight on an application. The catch is timing, see below. Tap a provider name to open its page.

PROGRAMME	WHAT IT IS, AND WHO FOR	WHERE & FORMAT	COST
<b>UNIQ (Oxford)</b>	Oxford's own free programme for high-achieving Year 12 state-school students. Looks brilliant on a form.	Residential in Oxford. Apply Dec to Jan.	<b>FREE</b>
<b>Sutton Trust Summer Schools</b>	Free residential weeks at leading UK universities, with application support. Year 12, widening-access criteria.	Various universities. Apply around March.	<b>FREE</b>
<b>Nuffield Research Placements</b>	A free, real research project alongside professional scientists. Gold dust for a STEM personal statement. Year 12.	Host labs and unis, 2 to 6 weeks over the summer.	<b>FREE</b>
<b>Smallpeice Trust</b>	Hands-on engineering and STEM residentials. Years 9 to 13, many fully funded by sponsors.	Residential at UK universities.	<b>FREE / £</b>

## The catch is timing

Most free programmes have eligibility rules and deadlines back in winter or spring, so 2026 places are largely gone already. For these the strategy is simple. Diarise them now and apply the moment they open for next year.

# Which one is right for them?

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A summer school only helps if it matches the course your child is aiming for. An EduStrategy session works out which experiences actually strengthen their list, free ones included and which are a lovely but expensive distraction.

[Book a 1:1 or request a report](#)

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