

Practical ways to prepare for SATs

A Guide for Parents

Children in Year 6 take national tests in reading, maths and SPaG (spelling, punctuation and grammar). These tests take place in May and are administered in school and marked externally. Children's writing is also assessed by their teacher.

Many children become anxious as the SATs approach, but there are ways in which schools and parents can work together to make the process as stress-free as possible and ensure all children have the opportunity to do their best.

Support at home

Much of children's school time and homework time in the run up to SATs will be focused on revising and consolidating their knowledge. Parents have a vital role to play in supporting children with their revision and maintaining a calm environment.

Use the resources available

Try to provide a mixture of worksheets, revision guides and past papers for your child. Since the SATs were changed in 2016 to reflect the new curriculum, there are few past papers available, but education resource websites such as Twinkl have sample papers to download. Make sure that any guides or resources you buy are based on the new tests.

Strike a balance

Children have to complete these tests without any support, so keep a balance between independence and support. Encourage your child to complete papers and worksheets independently, and to note any areas of difficulty which they can then discuss with you or their teacher.

Teach good time management

Children often lose marks because they fail to complete all the questions in a test. The tests are strictly timed, so children need to learn to leave a question they are struggling with and move on to the next one. When they get to the end of the test, if time allows, they check their answers and return to any unanswered questions. Remind your child to do this as they work through practice papers and worksheets.

Plan ahead

Talk to your child about how they would like to structure their revision. Some prefer 10-20 minutes every day, whereas others may do better with a longer session at the weekend. Once you have agreed how the work will be completed, draw up a timetable and stick to it. Make sure your child doesn't overdo it - build in regular breaks for downtime, plan some extra treats and try to leave one day a week 'work-free'.

Change things around

Don't just focus on paper-based revision methods. Try some practical activities such as testing spellings or times tables during a car journey, or trying some maths when out shopping (e.g. estimating the cost of the things in your basket).

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Keep mental maths skills sharp

A sound knowledge of the multiplication tables is essential, as it underpins a lot of the mental calculations the children are required to do. There is no longer a calculator paper in the SATs, so having good mental maths skills to support written methods is vital. Help your child to practise their tables as often as you can – try just throwing the odd question at them whilst you are cooking dinner or walking to school. There are colourful posters available online and in stationery shops – put one up in the house if this will help. You could also try the [Parents' Guide to Useful Strategies for Learning Multiplication Tables](#).

Read and discuss

Read with your child as often as you can, and discuss what they are reading. Ask questions that require them to recall what has happened, as well as deeper inference and prediction questions, for example: 'Why do you think that character said that?', 'Which words tell us this character is unhappy?', 'What do you think he will do now?'

Be positive

Keep reminding your child that it is not possible to 'fail' their SATs – the tests are simply a measure of where they are at this point in time. Remind them that they have worked really hard and prepared for a long time, and that they should just go in and do their best.

In SATs week...

Make sure your child is in school every day, and that they arrive at school as punctually as possible. If your child is too unwell to be at school, let the school know as soon as possible. Make sure your child has had a good breakfast and a good night's sleep, and send them with a snack and a water bottle if these are not available at school.

Practise spellings

Find a method that suits your child and keep practising those spellings. Look back through the words your child has been asked to learn so far and focus on these. Have a regular test, use commercially available spelling workbooks, or try the [Parents' Guide to Useful Strategies for Learning Spellings](#).

Track progress

Record how your child is doing in the practice papers and worksheets, or how well they are remembering their spellings and tables. Record their progress on a calendar or chart and praise/reward them for their effort as well as their progress.

Talk to the teacher

If you are at all unsure what you should be doing with your child, or you have concerns, talk to the teacher, who will be able to give you the information you need and put your mind at rest.

