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**Your  
guide to KS1  
SATs  
success**



## The parents' guide to Key Stage 1 SATs

If your child is in Year 2 you may have started to hear other parents talk about the SATs tests in May. As your child is just 7, or even 6, you're bound to feel anxious about them being tested at such a young age, but there's no cause for concern.

Education writer and primary-school teacher Phoebe Doyle answers parents' most common questions about KS1 SATs and offers suggestions to help you prepare panic-free.

National Curriculum Assessments currently take place at the end of Year 2 (KS1) and at the end of Year 6 (KS2).

The Key Stage 1 SATs (Statutory Assessment Tests) have been a source of controversy over the years; some teachers have expressed unease with testing children who are so young. The unrest has led to most schools taking a more relaxed, less pushy approach to Year 2 assessment and the tests themselves are viewed more as a part of the curriculum and teaching than a one-off event in the school calendar. KS1 SATs should be done in a way that's so unthreatening that often the children aren't aware they are being tested.

### Q. What are the Key Stage 1 SATs?

Your child's teacher will be assessing your child all the time; it's how teachers inform their planning and decide what and how to teach.

At the end of Key Stage 1 (end of Year 2), SATs are simply another form of assessment. The purpose of the SATs is to show whether each child is working below, above or at the

national average level for children of their age. KS1 SATs help the teacher check and confirm what has been understood and retained by each child. Children taking the tests do so in a relaxed environment, with teachers on-hand to answer any questions they might have.

The Key Stage 1 SATs cover English and maths. These tests take up to three hours altogether; there is no specific week in which they must be done but they usually happen in May.

Teachers also give a KS1 SATs level for science. For this there is no specific task or test but assessments are made throughout the year as each science topic is completed. Children are assessed on their investigative skills and their level of understanding.

#### **Q. What is tested in KS1 SATs?**

In the 2016 summer term children at the end of KS1 will sit new SATs papers. That means that if your child is currently in Y1 or Y2, they will be among the first pupils to take the new test. SATs are being overhauled in both KS1 and KS2 to reflect the changes to the national curriculum, which have been phased in since September 2014.

At the end of Year 2, children will take SATs in:

- Reading
- English grammar, punctuation and spelling
- Maths

#### **Q. How does the KS1 English SATs test work?**

Two separate papers make up the new KS1 SATs reading test:

- Paper 1 consists of a selection of texts totalling 400 to

700 words, with questions interspersed

- Paper 2 includes a reading booklet of a selection of passages totalling 800 to 1100 words. Children will write their answers in a separate booklet

Each paper is worth 50 per cent of the marks, and should take around 30 minutes, but children will not be strictly timed as the ability to work at speed is not assessed. Teachers will have the option to stop the test at any point that they feel is appropriate for a particular child.

The texts in the reading papers will cover fiction, non-fiction and poetry. There will be a variety of question types:

- Multiple choice
- Ranking/ordering, e.g. 'Number the events below to show in which order they happened in the story'
- Matching, e.g. 'Match the character to the job that they do in the story'
- Labelling, e.g. 'Label the text to show the title'
- Find and copy, e.g. 'Find and copy one word that shows what the weather was like in the story'
- Short answer, e.g. 'What does the bear eat?'
- Open-ended answer, e.g. 'Why did Lucy write the letter to her grandmother? Give two reasons'

The new Key stage 1 Grammar, spelling and punctuation test is made up of three papers:

- Paper 1: a grammar and punctuation written task, taking approximately 20 minutes, and worth 15 marks. Children will be provided with a prompt and stimulus for a short piece of

writing, with a clear text type, audience and purpose. Handwriting will be worth four per cent of the marks.

- Paper 2: a grammar, punctuation and vocabulary test, in two sections of around 10 minutes each (with a break between, if necessary), worth 20 marks. This will involve a mixture of selecting the right answers, for example through multiple choice, and writing short answers.
- Paper 3: a 20-word spelling test taking approximately 15 minutes and worth 10 marks.

### Q. What does the KS1 maths SATs test consist of?

The new Key Stage 1 maths test is made up of two papers:

- Paper 1: arithmetic, worth 15 marks and taking around 15 minutes.
- Paper 2: mathematical fluency, problem-solving and reasoning, worth 35 marks and taking 35 minutes, with a break if necessary. There'll be a variety of question types: multiple choice, matching, true/false, constrained (e.g. completing a chart or table; drawing a shape) and less constrained (e.g. where children have to show or explain their method).

Children will be allowed to use some maths aids like a number line or a ruler, but not a calculator.

### Q. How are KS1 SATs marked?

Although the tests are set externally (and are the same for every school and child in the country), they will be marked by teachers within the school. Instead of national curriculum levels (used until summer 2015), children will be given a standardised score, although this may not be communicated to parents. Teacher assessments will also be used to build up a

picture of your child's learning and achievements. In addition, your child will receive an overall result saying whether they have achieved the required standard in the tests. The Department for Education aim is for 85 per cent of children to reach the required standard.

**Q. How are the results used?**

KS1 SATs results are used by teachers and schools as a whole to check against national averages and to help ensure that their teaching is effective. The results for each individual child are not reported but are used by their teacher to assess their progress. Individual results are also provided to parents, usually at the end of the school year.

## Understanding what kind of learner your child is

It's important to know that children learn in different ways. Some learn by doing (kinaesthetic learning) and others are more visual or auditory – we all learn slightly differently. This inevitably means that some children are less predisposed to certain assessment-type situations, and you might be concerned that your six or seven year old will not shine in 'exam' conditions.

Firstly, be reassured that while the tests do have a sit-down / paper element they are carefully devised to ensure that all learning styles are catered for as much as possible; for example, in maths there are questions on shape and space as well as problem-solving and calculations.

Secondly it's important to reassure your child that a SATs assessment simply highlights a certain part of their learning; it

doesn't show everything about them! If they're worried they might not do as well as their peers, it's vital they know that all of their talents are valid and celebrated.

## KS1 SATs preparation: what you can do at home

Above all encourage confidence in your child's ability to do well; explain that SATs are just for showing off what they already know and have learned during their time at school.

If you think knowing more about what will be expected of them will help your child to relax then consider looking through some past papers together. The official KS1 SATs papers available for parents (those used in 2003 and 2004, available for free download from TheSchoolRun) are "old-style", pre-2016 format papers, though they can still be used for practice purposes. To offer extra practice for parents who would like the option, TheSchoolRun has also commissioned SATs-style papers which replicate the kind of questions your child might be asked to answer, so download a few to boost their confidence.

When first looking at past papers work through them together, noticing any patterns in the questions and discussing what your child is supposed to do. Keep these sessions fun and relaxed, always stopping if your child seems stressed or tired as this will only cause them to have negative expectations of what the tests will be like.

As well as looking through past papers and revising school subjects there are lots of ways to reinforce what your child is learning as part of your day-to-day life.

- **Read as much as possible at home** – have your child read to

you and share reading books together. Talk to them about what they read, about plot, character, what the author is achieving.

- **Use everyday activities to help them develop their maths skills.** Trips to the supermarket, for example, can be packed full of opportunities for problem-solving and calculation practice.
- **Last, but most certainly not least, play!** Playing is how children learn; it's not instead of studying, it *is* studying. Set up a little toy shop where they can buy objects or work out change; have fun playing with traditional nursery rhymes or making up fun, silly rhymes together; make a water or sand tray where they can learn about measures and capacity. The best learning occurs when children are relaxed and happy, so never feel that play and school work are separate – they're entirely, intrinsically linked.
- For loads more practical ideas to reinforce your child's learning at home read the rest of this pack.

## **Don't worry about KS1 SATs – and don't let your child worry about them either!**

Finally, on a personal note, I'd like to add that as a primary-school teacher I have experienced parents getting enormously stressed over KS1 SATs, but really they shouldn't be anything to worry about. Try not to see them as a one-off event to spend months getting anxious about, but as an integral part of the teaching and learning your child experiences. At 7 (or 6!) it's important that both you and your child know that they cannot fail these assessments; the Year 2 SATs are simply used to help teachers to teach children and move them forward.

## 26 activities for at-home KS1 SATs practice

Children learn so much when at play, happy and enjoying themselves. We've got 26 fun suggestions to help your child practise vital SATs skills – they'll be so engaged they won't even realise they're working and learning!

### English: Reading comprehension

**1 Play schools** The 'teacher' reads a story, then the 'pupil' describes what happened. Switch places and ask your child to share a story they know and then question you to check you were listening!

**2 Be a character detective** Add a new twist to bedtime stories. When reading much-loved books together, think about what each character's motives are at different points of the story. For example, ask, "Why do you think she said that?" "What did she mean by that?" or "How did he know that was going to happen?"

**3 Offer a taste of delights to come** Write a letter to your child telling them all about a future plan – a treat day out, say, or a playdate you've arranged, a cinema trip or a holiday. They'll be very motivated to understand and savour every detail!

**4 Become a mini book critic** Read some children's book reviews with your child, then help them write their own and post them on age-appropriate websites so they can be proud of being published online.

**5 Play with silly sentences** Write some words on Post-it notes and jumble them up to make silly sentences, for example: the /

sat / cat / on / mat / the. Ask your child to rearrange the words so the sentence makes sense.

**6 Put your child in the story** When reading a favourite book, ask them to imagine they are a character in the story. What would they do in a particular situation, and why?

**7 Look at the images** Picture clues are one of the many ways children decipher what a word is. When reading, sometimes cover up the words first and look at the pictures together; ask your child to tell you about what they see. They can then read the actual words; chances are this will help them work out unfamiliar ones.

## English: Spelling

**8 Get them to test you** It's your turn to exercise your spelling skills! Ask your child to quiz you on some of their tricky words; when you make some mistakes (on purpose – perhaps?!) they have to show you exactly where you went wrong.

**9 Race against the clock** Use a stopwatch and test your child on their weekly spellings against the clock; for each word they get wrong, add five seconds to the end time.

## English: Writing

**10 Create some story props** Let your child pretend to be a favourite character from a story they enjoy – have them write a letter, an invitation or a thank-you note to another character in the story. Perhaps they could dress up to get into character more effectively!

**11 Put together a family cookbook** Do some baking and write down what you did as step-by-step instructions. Your child could draw pictures to illustrate the words, or take a photograph of the finished dish.

**12 Be your own publisher** Encourage your child to compile a non-fiction book about something they love, be it football or kittens! Remind them to include contents pages and indexes.

## English: Handwriting

**13 Get decorating** Curvy patterns and zigzags are great to help practise precise letter formation. Encourage shape-drawing and doodling with fancy gel and glitter pens.

**14 Super-size some letters** Practising writing very big letters is the best way to correct any letter formation problems. Ask your child to write huge letters in the air or in some sand or earth outside in the garden.

**15 Get the red pens out** Write some simple sentences, but make some letter formation mistakes (for example, write your 'd' as a 'b'). Arm your child with a red pen or pencil and get them to correct your work and tell you where you've gone wrong. Hopefully they'll stop short of prescribing some remedial homework....

## Maths: Addition and subtraction

**16 Set up a toy shop** Let your child label teddies and games with different amounts using sticky labels. Help them practise 'buying' them by adding play money together to make the correct amounts (they could also design and use their own currency). Then switch places. This time let them be the shopkeeper; you pay them for an item and they work out what change is needed.

**17 Practise number bonds to 10** Put 10 sweets on the table and discuss the fairest way to share them between you and your child (five sweets each). Then ask them to think of all the

different ways the sweets could be shared, using the actual sweets to help them visualise what their options are, for example, “If I had 3 sweets then how many would you have? What if I had 6?”

## Maths: Telling the time

**18** **Speed races** You’ll need a teaching/toy analogue clock with moveable hands for this activity; alternatively print out the clock practice templates on TheSchoolRun. Write down the time as it would appear on a digital clock – 12:30, for example – then see how quickly your child can show you the same time by moving the hands on the toy analogue clock or by drawing the time on a blank clock face.

## Maths: Shapes and measurements

**19** **Identify shapes** Look at the different shapes of real-life objects around the house. Try at first to help your child find simple 2D shapes; discuss how many sides and corners each has. Then move on to categorising the differently-shaped objects they have found, for example shapes that have more than four sides or shapes that have fewer than four. Encourage your child to think of different ways to group shapes.

**20** **Go 3D** Again, send them off around the house to collect differently-shaped objects. Look at them together and talk about them – are they cylinders or cuboids? (Brush up on your geometry on TheSchoolRun!) Also relate 3D shapes to 2D shapes by looking at the shape faces and asking, for example, “Which shape here has a circular face?”

**21** **Try teddy bear fractions** Prepare for a teddy bear picnic; invite some large bears and others that are small. Explain that you’ll need sandwiches cut in quarters for the small bears and in halves for the large ones, then portion up the food together.

**22** **Be symmetrical** Your child will have learned about symmetry at school. Check their understanding by asking them to collect items around the house that they think are symmetrical. Help them check by placing a small mirror along each object's line of symmetry.

**23** **The longest / shortest challenge** Send your child on a mission to measure things in the house using different rulers or tape measures. Discuss the measurements and establish which objects are longest/shortest. This activity works particularly well when it involves comparisons with siblings!

## Maths: Counting and problem solving

**24** **Order numbers and ages** Write down some numbers on pieces of paper, then ask your child to order them from smallest to largest and then largest to smallest. To add a real-life touch, if you have visitors (including adults who are happy to disclose their ages!) ask your child to put everyone in order from youngest to oldest.

**25** **Supermarket sweep** Use the weekly shop to practise mental maths and demonstrate how useful numbers can be in everyday life. Make your problems practical with questions like "There are 10 paper plates in each pack, how many packs will we need for 30 children at the party?" or "There are 20 biscuits in this box but we only have 10 visitors, how many will be left over if they have one each? What if they have two each?"

**26** **Do some market research** Ask your child what they'd like to investigate (favourite biscuits or films, say). Work together to draw a bar chart showing the results. Using the chart, help your child analyse the data, asking, for example, "How many more people like x than y?" or "Which was liked the least?"