

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE 11+ EXAM



A2ZLEARNING

# Table of Contents



Introduction	3
Looking a little Closer	4
English Papers	5
Maths Papers	6
Verbal Reasoning	6
Non-Verbal Reasoning	7
When should you start preparing?	11
Top Ten Tips for 11+ Preparation	13
Last Minute Preparation	15
Revision Tips	18
Your Child's Mental Health	20
Registering for the 11+	21

# Introduction



I'm not here to give an 'instant fix' learn how to pass the 11+ in a week kind of deal. No parent would be dumb enough to buy that. What I am going to discuss over the next few chapters is this:

- 1) Exam tips
- 2) Mental Health
- 3) Practicalities

I have been teaching in the primary sector for over 20 years. In the last 5 years I have been tutoring methods and strategies to help students answer questions on the 11+ papers within our local area.

In fact, I tutored both my children who were successful in getting into the local grammar school. I have learned a lot over the past 5 years of tutoring for the exam. I am passionate about being able to give children the best start in their lives and more choice of secondary school. Getting the 11+ gives more options for you and your child. If that is your wish for your child, let us dive in.

## Key terms:

**GL Granada Learning (formerly NFER)**

**CEM Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring at Durham University**



# Looking a little closer



The '11+' is a term used to describe a variety of tests used to determine whether a child is eligible for entry to a Grammar School or to a selective Private School. The exact contents and format of the tests can vary a lot from region to region, as can pass marks.

The first thing I advise you to do as a parent is check with the local authority, research the local grammar schools and the tests, ask what type of papers they ask the children to sit. See if they offer a sample paper for you to have a look at with your child. This will give you and your child an opportunity to see the question types and have an idea of the topics you need to study. This is essential for the Non-Verbal and Verbal reasoning papers because these are nothing like anything your child will have experienced at primary school. Be careful when asking past parents as the exams tend to change from year to year!

Always remember that your child should be of grammar school standard to take these tests, tutoring them to death simply to get through the tests will be counter-productive in the long run. If they need large amounts of tuition, should they really be going to a grammar school at all?

The timing of 11+ papers vary between regions, and you should check the actual times for the test your child will be sitting. It is common for children to not finish the paper – but fear not, this is not necessarily a problem. There should be a clock visible in the room and the start and finish times (or the time allowed for the paper) should be clearly displayed for all students to see. Top tip: make sure your child can calculate time intervals so that they can quickly work out how much time to have left.

The majority of 11+ exams are either Multiple Choice format or Standard Answer format.

Multiple choice exams are where students are given a small list of possible answers to choose the best one from. Often, answers are recorded on a special answer paper with a grid format where children mark their chosen answers. In the list of possible answer choices, there is often at least one 'silly' answer choice, along with a few obvious 'wrong answers' which are designed to catch out children who have not read the question fully or who have not completed all the steps in a word problem.

It is useful to practice filling out the special answer paper and to look at the answer options with your child and discuss the types of wrong answers which are shown.

Standard format exams are where the child is asked to write their answer in a space provided. There will often be space for jottings in subjects like Maths and you should encourage your child to show their working as this sometimes means they are awarded 1 point in a 2-point question for example. In Standard Format English exams, children will normally be expected to write in full sentences with good spelling and punctuation. It's important to check what the question is asking for e.g. 'find and copy a word or phrase from the text' means that they must quote directly from the text, not write their own idea.



In most cases, stationery will be supplied for the exam, or a list of requirements will be given in advance. Make sure your child knows how to use a protractor and ruler properly if these are allowed. When rubbing out and changing answers, children need to be thorough and ensure their answer is clear, especially in Multiple Choice formats.

Encourage your child to make jottings, underline keywords and phrases and show their working.

Many children worry about running out of time in the exam or finding the questions too hard and there are some important things to remember if this happens.

1. Children do not need to gain 100% to pass the exam. It is important that questions they do answer, are answered accurately and carefully.
2. If a question is simply too difficult, they should make an educated guess and move on.
3. They should try not to leave any questions blank. Particularly in the Multiple-choice format, it is worth giving an answer to every question even if some are guesses towards the last few minutes.
4. Pace – do some timed practice with your child. Discuss techniques, such as finding and completing the easier questions first and returning to tricky ones later.

If your child finishes the paper with plenty of time to spare, it is likely they may have made some mistakes. Practise how to check their answers with them, as many children do not understand how to do this effectively and just check they have not missed any! Encourage them to go back to the first question and rework as many answers as they can before their time runs out.

## English Papers

These tend to consist of a reading comprehension paper and a writing paper.

The text used for the comprehension may be factual or fiction, and in some areas (notably Essex) extracts from classic texts – Dickens, Hardy, Orwell – are used. These may contain language that children have rarely encountered before. Once again, it is essential that your child has read at least a few books from previous eras. "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens is a particularly good starting point as many children are already familiar with the storyline, and it is quite a short book. In some areas the text may have been specifically created for the test.

Questions will generally cover skills such as retrieval, inference and vocabulary.

**Retrieval questions:** where the answer will be found in the extract, and it is just a case of finding it and copying the answer.



**Inferential questions:** where the answer is not obvious in the extract, so the answer is inferred by using evidence/clues from the text.

**Vocabulary questions:** where children are asked the meaning of certain words and phrases.

**Author's intent:** where the children may be asked why an author used a particular word/phrase or what they think the author's intended message was.

These are all question types that the children will have met in primary school and so should have a reasonable idea what to do.

- Read the text carefully through once before you look at the questions.
- Incomprehension tasks, check every answer against the text and ensure you have found evidence to prove your answer.
- In proofreading tasks, bear in mind that there are unlikely to be more than 1 or 2 questions where the answer is 'N' for no mistake!
- Encourage your child to write one or two words in the margin next to each paragraph just to remind themselves of the key points being made.
- The exercise may have sub-headings within the text, and these are the first key to speed in comprehension. Children tend to ignore headings and move straight to the text. Teach your child to read the sub-heading and absorb it, because often it will help them to navigate back to the relevant information required for an individual question.
- Encourage your child to refer to the text and not try and answer the questions from memory.
- Make sure your child knows key terminology such as simile and metaphor as they might be asked to pick out an example of a particular term.
- Answers will be in the text.

The writing paper usually consists of a couple of scenarios from which the children choose one and then write creatively about the scenario. For example, 'write about a time when you lost something'. The children need to use all the skills they have learnt to create a piece of writing that is interesting, grabs the reader's attention and is grammatically correct.

The time given for these papers can vary around the country from anywhere from 20 minutes to 50 minutes. Examiners in different areas may have different priorities. In some areas they will mainly be interested in the content of the work, rather than demanding good spelling or punctuation. In other areas accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling may be required as well. All examiners will be looking for one key thing: the "beginning, middle and end" that most children find so difficult to achieve in essays.



**Fiction writing:** elements that need to be planned:

- Characters: Who are they? Can you describe them?
- Setting: Where is the story set?
- Plot: What will happen in the story?
- How will the story begin?
- What will happen in the middle?
- How will it end?

### Helpful Tips:

It may be helpful to come up with a couple of endings together so that your child does not end with 'Then I woke up and realised it had all been a dream'. This makes the hearts of teachers and examiners sink.

Make some vocabulary lists with your child so that they will have some great adjectives and adverbs to make their writing interesting. You could sort the list by story setting. If the story is spooky, make a list of scary adjectives and adverbs, such as scary, blood-curdling, scarily, spookily, creepily etc.

Help your child come up with phrases that they could adapt and put into any story but that show good literacy skills and techniques. These could link the mood to the weather 'Tears like waterfalls' 'Eyes bruised like rain filled clouds' 'Eyes twinkling like dew on fresh grass'.

Think of different ways to describe surroundings- patchwork of autumn leaves, shafts of sunshine, leaves rustling in the breeze, trees whispering to one another.

Examples of titles from past papers around the country: (I have listed these into sections below just to shorten the length of the list).

- **Events:** (a) Moving Houses (b) Moving School (c) Taking a holiday (d) Visiting Relatives (e) Something happening at school, during break or lunch perhaps (f) The new pupils
- **Personal:** (a) Doing something exciting or achieving something ('the best day of my life was . . . ') (b) My favourite memories or favourite day out (c) A farewell party, celebration (d) My Brilliant Idea (e) A place that inspires you
- **Feelings/opinions:** (a) What makes a good friend? (b) Are Jamie Oliver's new school dinners a good idea? (c) What are your reactions to discipline? How far is it necessary both at home and at school? (d) How does the life of your generation differ from that of your grandparents? (e) Being lost, scared or alone (f) Story about losing something e.g. a key (g) Discuss the good and bad effects of competition in modern life (h) Is life too hectic to enjoy fully? (i) The school rules



- **Settings:** (a) Being in a city or in the countryside (b) Describe the scene and the activities at a bus station. (c) At the Zoo/Animal Park
- **Adventure/Mystery:** (a) Having an adventure (b) A surprising spy (c) An attempted robbery (d) It was a while before I realised my cat could talk (e) I don't know what that noise was ..... (f) The Burglary (g)The storm (h) Panic (i) The Balloon

## Maths Papers

Some areas use a mental maths paper and then a problem-solving paper, other areas use just a problem-solving type paper. Again, like the English papers the children will have had experience of the type of questions throughout their primary education. The 11+ maths tests will cover only those topics that have been taught during Key Stage 2. It is therefore essential that your child is secure in their understanding of the maths they are learning at school.

- Jottings, workings and notes! Always make notes and check your working.
- Read the question carefully! Most 11+ questions are two-step or multi-step.
- Have a firm grasp of place value, times tables and fraction, percentages and decimals - this is essential for 11+ success.

The following topics have all appeared on past eleven plus exam papers, and you should go through this checklist with your child to ensure that they are familiar with all of these concepts:

- **Number and Calculations:** Prime numbers, Prime factors, Highest common factor and lowest common multiple, Averages, Algebra, Simple ratio, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, Fractions, Decimals, Money, Percentages, Simple probability, Sequences and number patterns
- **Measures:** Metric system, Time, Distance, Speed and Time, Marking and interpreting scales
- **Shape and Space:** Perimeter and Area (Squares, Rectangles, Compound Shapes), Angle calculations, Co-ordinates, Reflection and Rotation, Volume of cube and cuboids, Bearings, Nets of shapes
- **Statistics:** Column graphs, Pie charts



- Following rules and instructions in more unusual problem solving and investigative activities

## Verbal Reasoning Papers

It is believed that verbal reasoning is an effective way of testing a child's potential, not just learned ability. Children who enjoy wordsearches, crosswords, Sudokus and jigsaws tend to have a flare for these questions. So, if you can encourage your child to enjoy these activities they make for a great informal way to gain skills for the test.

These papers contain a mixture of question types including:

- Finding two words that need to change places for a sentence to make sense.
  - Words that have similar meanings.
  - Words that have opposite meanings.
  - Similarities between facts.
  - Taking a letter from one word and adding to another, to make 2 new words.
  - Making new words out of two smaller words.
  - Finding a four-letter word hidden between two adjacent words in sentences.
  - Changing a word into a new word in a set number of steps.
  - Finding patterns between words.
- 
- Simple crossword type grids.
  - Finding connections between words.
  - Categorising words.
  - Finding the odd one out.
  - Ordering items.
  - Solving Codes- both alphabetical and numerical.
  - Completing sequences of letters and or numbers.
  - Calculating using both numbers and letters.

This list is not exhaustive but gives you an idea of the broad scope of the paper.

- Vocabulary questions can be the trickiest type in this area. If you don't know the meaning or the words, look carefully at their roots and any prefixes or suffixes for clues as to their meanings.
- Look and listen carefully in the practice section (if there is one), some question types look very similar and it is important you listen to, or read, any instructions really carefully.
- Verbal reasoning is almost universally used as one of the test papers in the 11+, in the CEM papers it is included in the English paper whereas GL has a separate paper.
- While some of the question types simply test a child's logical deduction skills or their ability to decipher codes, much of an 11+ verbal reasoning test will require a good vocabulary and strong basic maths skills.



- There are many different verbal reasoning questions the GL papers alone have 21 different sorts of question. In areas that use the CEM tests or the Moray House Papers it may be necessary to cover even more examples.

## Non-Verbal Reasoning Papers

Non-Verbal reasoning questions are designed to test a child's ability to work out problems regardless of their knowledge of English. These papers involve abstract figures which require the child to work out similarities in sequences of shapes or codes. As with the verbal reasoning there are a number of informal ways to practice these skills, try some of these activities like sudoku, Nine men's Morris, visual logic games, interlocking puzzles, jigsaws and model making kits.

The papers contain a mixture of question types including:

- Odd one out.
- Completing a sequence.
- Finding a relationship.
- Solving codes.
- Finding an image to complete a grid.
- Finding figures that are most alike.
- Finding a figure most unlike the others.
- Completing patterns.
- Finding a shape within an image.
- Symmetry.
- Rotation and angles.
- Linking nets to cubes.
- Combining shapes.

This list is not exhaustive but gives you an idea of the broad scope of the paper. (Confidence in angles, reflection, lines of symmetry, rotation and 3D shapes will help your child solve these puzzles.)

- Look carefully for similarities and differences – this is key to many NVR questions.
- Patterns feature heavily in NVR too, look for alternative patterns or parts of patterns which increase or decrease in size or number.
- Think 'What has stayed the same, and what is different?' when you look at patterns and shapes. This can help you spot 'like' and 'unlike' shapes.
- Each question will have a sequence of 3-5 shapes and the child is required to find the shape that will best complete the sequence.
- Elements to take into account in each non-verbal reasoning question are the outline shape, the fill, the direction of the shape. The shape may rotate, be inverted, have different layers, increase or decrease in size. Some also require basic counting skills.
- Non-verbal reasoning requires good spatial awareness and it is a skill that some children will have naturally. For those who do not it is still possible to learn how to solve the questions by being systematic, looking at each element in turn and ruling out options one-by-one.



# When should you start preparing?



Most parents and tutors will only begin to prepare children in the September or January of year 5.

There are aspects of your child's knowledge you can work on prior to this, just to make sure they have a good grasp of the basics. This can just supplement your child's schooling if necessary. If your child's school is providing a good grounding in the basics and challenging the children, achieving good SATs results then supplementary work at home will not be needed. So, spend that time reading with your child to help widen their vocabulary- another tool they will need in the exam.

If you are only starting out when your child has begun year 5 do not panic. Other parents may seem like they have been preparing their child for months. Some may have but most probably have not. Keep calm and decide how you want to help your child get acquainted with the exam. Are you going to do it yourself? Will you get in a tutor?

Whatever you decide, try to find out a bit about the paper your local schools use, some areas do not produce past papers and others are said to be 'tutor-proof' (areas that use Durham CEM papers). It is worth noting that many areas that now use the CEM paper have seen a rise in private tuition centres! Many of the questions on these papers are like other areas papers, meaning that there are opportunities to familiarise your child with examples. Children with a wide vocabulary and solid mental maths skills often achieve higher scores in any paper.

**GL papers** have been the exam of choice for over 20 years. They are split into four core subjects which are English, Maths, Verbal and Non-Verbal reasoning.

**CEM papers** arose because some regions and schools felt that GL exams were too predictable and therefore, children could be taught to them. The CEM 11+ exam is seen as more 'tutor-proof' than GL. CEM places much emphasis on:

- not producing or endorsing any published practice papers.
- basing the test more closely on the National Curriculum, which is followed by all state school children.
- a perceived increase in difficulty.

However, recently there have been publications of CEM 11+ books meaning it will now be no less preparable than any other exam board.

CEM have Verbal reasoning (including comprehension and cloze passages), Non-Verbal and Numerical Reasoning as their core subjects. Furthermore, CEM's assesses on very similar core elements as the GL question styles:

- Word Recognition
- Word Decoding



- Comprehension
- Spelling
- General Mathematics
- Mental Arithmetic
- Picture Vocabulary
- Non-verbal Ability

### Reading:

*GL-Assessment* will test Comprehensions in a traditional style by having up to a two-page passage followed by up to two dozen questions whereas, *CEM exams* are known to have both mini passages and short passages with as little half a dozen or less questions. However, CEM have also adapted 'Cloze tests' which are passages where some words or some letters of the words are removed and the student is asked to complete these words such that the passage maintains integrity (the missing words are either chosen from a multiple-choice list, a word bank or partially revealed by exposing some of the letters).

**Regions that use CEM:** Berkshire, Bexley, Birmingham, Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Redbridge, Essex, Shropshire, SW Herts Consortium (Verbal), Slough, Berkshire, Walsall, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, Wolverhampton & Wrekin

**Parts of the following regions also use CEM:** Berkshire, Reading – Kendrick School, Reading School (Boys), Devon Grammar Schools, Essex – Chelmsford County High School, North London – Latymer School, Henrietta Barnet School, Trafford Consortium Schools – Altrincham Grammar School for Girls, Sale Grammar School, Stretford Grammar School and Urmston Grammar School, Wiltshire – Bishop Wordsworth's, Wirral Grammar Schools. Yorkshire – Heckmondwike Grammar

**Regions that use GL:** Bromley, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Kent, Lancashire & Cumbria, Lincolnshire, Medway, Northern Ireland

**Regions that use both GL and CEM:** Devon, Essex, Hertfordshire, Trafford, Wirral, Yorkshire

### CSSE (Consortium of Selective Schools in Essex):

These lists are not exhaustive and is subject to change without notice.

See the next section for my Top Ten Tips for 11+ Preparation.



# Top Tips for 11+ Preparation



## **1. Make sure the school you are trying for will really be right for your child.**

Think carefully about which schools you want to try for, think about travelling distances and how those schools will fit in with your life. Giving children a good balance between work and other activities is essential if they are to perform to the best of their ability. There is a lot of homework in secondary school so if your child has a long commute, it will limit the time they have for homework or out of school activities. Remember a selective school will not be right for every child. Check with the school about their 11+ as they can vary from school to school and region to region.

## **2. Choose your preparation route with care.**

Make sure you select your chosen preparation with care (Private Tuition, Tuition Groups, Guided 11 Plus Courses and using 11 Plus books at home are the main routes chosen by most parents).

They each come with their price tags and their own benefits and drawbacks. The most important aspect to think about when choosing is whether you can deliver it within the family. Any of the four main routes of preparation suits different families in different ways, one or two are likely to be more suitable for you than others.

## **3. If you start early concentrate on core Maths and English skills.**

There is no harm in starting early (in years three or four for instance) as long as the principal focus of your effort is on core Maths and English skills. Reading and times tables every day or even some mental maths and spelling will help your child's education in primary and build a good base for skills required for the 11+.

## **4. Actively developing a wide vocabulary will be essential.**

Remember that a wide vocabulary is best developed over time: through reading each and every day, through talking with adults at meal times, even through watching the odd bit of television or listening to the radio. Children who do well at the 11 Plus are likely to know something in the region of 1000-2000 words more than their less successful peers. Vocabulary will be particularly important if your child will be sitting the CEM paper.

## **5. The secret of good Maths skills lies in rock solid times tables.**

Children without a good knowledge of their times tables are not able to work quickly enough to get the required results. To be successful the children need to be as confident with their 6, 7 and 8 times tables as they are with their 1s and 2s.

## **6. Avoid the urge to move too fast in Maths.**

It is important to build your child's mathematical foundations- do not rush their maths learning by continually stretching their abilities. This will lead to their foundations being shaky and any skills learnt will not be embedded within their maths 'building'. The 11+ exam only looks at the curriculum taught in primary.



It is much better to be able to deliver against the syllabus than train to answer questions of a complexity that will never come up.

### **7. Have a plan and stick to it.**

Do not worry about what others are doing. Do not try to run before you can walk! Your child needs to have solid foundations to do well in the 11+. Concentrate on them learning all the mathematical and English skills they can whilst at primary. This will serve them far better than giving them GCSE questions!

If the 11+ in your area has a non-verbal reasoning paper do not start your child answering these questions in year 4. By year 6 they will be bored and no longer pay attention.

### **8. Remember that children need to learn the material BEFORE being tested.**

Do not give your child test after test. This method become very off putting and draining. It is far better to help your child to learn the different methods of answering questions. Helping children to learn then encouraging them to apply their skills to a timed test is the best way to go.

### **9. Pressure and stress – you can do without it.**

Try not to pile on the pressure your child will want to please you but deep down they often worried about letting you down. Parents mean well, some have a strong work ethic and set high standards but sadly all too often what happens is the child feels too much pressure and underperforms on the day. Too much pressure can reduce mental maths ability and vocabulary recall by around 10%-30%, that is enough for a bright child to not be as successful as was envisaged.

Explain to your child that getting the 11+ gives them more choice about which secondary school they can go to. But that is it- just because they go to a grammar school does not mean they will necessarily come out with better qualifications. It is far more important that your child is happy and feels supported in their chosen school. An unhappy child will not perform as well as a happy one. Bear in mind a grammar school may be OK for one of your children but not the other and this is OK; we are all different.

Be warned, do everything you can to make preparation as fun, relaxed and as enjoyable as possible. Make sure your child knows that the world will not stop turning if they are not successful.

### **10. Stamina is all important- your own and your child's.**

Only start a programme of preparation if you can keep it up. If you do not have the time/desire then think about getting a tutor or enrolling your child on a course.

You will know what will work for you and your child.



# Last Minute Preparation



This happens, despite best intentions some families just do not get round to starting before it is late in the day. If you are thinking of starting at any point from April onwards (especially in competitive areas) then time will be extremely tight. It is also likely that you will struggle to find a tutor and will have to help your child yourself!

Prioritise according to how much time you have. If you have only a few weeks left before the tests, you need to:

- focus on any known weaknesses in your child's knowledge of English and Maths.
- teach them the basic techniques for Verbal Reasoning and/or Non-Verbal Reasoning.
- help them to get used to the length of time that they have for each test.

Make a list of the key areas that you need to address with your child. If your child's teacher is in favour of the 11+ (and not all of them are, by any means – tread carefully!) he or she might be willing to draw up a list for you. A sample list might read as follows:

## English

- More sophisticated vocabulary
- Rule “i before e except after c”
- Use of apostrophes, commas and speech marks.
- Variations on using the word “said.”
- Essay planning – “beginning, middle and end.”
- Underlining key points in comprehension tasks.

## Maths

- Multiplication tables
- Highest common factor and lowest common multiple
- Perimeter and area
- Angles
- Algebra
- Percentages

As soon as you have most of the basics in place you should move on to practice papers. Try to find materials as close to the exam your child will sit. Granada Learning (GL) produce familiarisation papers which mimic the actual exam. Durham Centre for Evaluating and Monitoring (CEM) do not produce official familiarisation papers. It is also important to note that some schools set their own 11+ exams and these again probably do not ‘publish’ familiarisation papers.

If your area uses verbal and non-verbal reasoning it is advisable to get a ‘How to Guide’ and some full 50-minute papers- so your child can see the format, the question types and get used to the time limit. A wide vocabulary and accurate spelling are essential for verbal reasoning and most papers also include mathematical questions which require the children to be secure in the four basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Non-verbal papers require children to be secure in their



knowledge of both 2D and 3D shapes, patterns, reflection and rotation.

Your preparation needs to be very focussed to give your child the best chance in the exam. Set a specific time each week so that you and your child can spend quality time studying the questions they are likely to get. It is also important nearer the exam date to practise answering questions within a time limit- the ultimate objective is approximately 80 verbal reasoning questions in 50 minutes.

Mix up your preparation sessions to include working on different areas and looking at sample papers. Keep the GL papers for the end as these are more closely related to how the actual paper will look. Try to keep sessions fun instead of them writing a story they could make them up out loud. For Maths, make it part of everyday life- how much is this? How much would 5 be?

### **The major drawbacks of starting 11 Plus preparation late**

1. If your child has not been reading for at least half an hour every day for a pro-longed period then it is quite likely that they will not have as wide a vocabulary as others. This will be a drawback and cannot be entirely resolved in a short space of time. Having a weaker vocabulary is the single biggest reason for some children getting through the 11 Plus and others not being successful.
2. If your child has not been working consistently at Maths then it may well be that their tables and/or four operations skills are not as fluent as they could be.
3. In some specialist areas that are not covered in Primary Schools- Like Verbal Reasoning there will be a limit to what can be achieved in a short space of time, however considerable progress can still made so do not give up simply because of the time limitations.
4. In many areas of numeracy and literacy children will be facing questions based on the whole of KS2 study (all the way to the end of year six) and yet in many cases their schools will not have tackled these yet.
5. The challenge for those who start late is that for many there is simply not enough time to cover the ground fully, so you need to work smarter and try to tailor activity to the time you have.

If you only have a few weeks to three months or so to go then I would suggest the following:

- Work on core skills as part of last-minute preparation.
- Identifying knowledge gaps is essential- even at the last minute.
- Verbal Reasoning and Non-Verbal Reasoning (If your area uses these buy a book to look at with your child- if you can find a tutor that could be another option for you).



As the tests draw closer be aware that your child may have a dip in their performance or even burn-out where they refuse to do any more practice tests and continually talk about failing.

It is vital that you, as the parent, are aware of how your child is feeling- use some of the tips in the following chapter to help you balance your time as the exam draws closer.

**Key Skills:**

- GL: vocabulary, logic, maths and spelling
- CEM: English, comprehension, vocabulary, spelling and maths. CEM verbal reasoning is very different to GL and success is dependent on children having a wide-ranging vocabulary.



# Revision Tips



- Display a calendar with the exam dates on and together plot out revision sessions.
- Do not overload your child! Allow them plenty of breaks, even if they are only 5 or 10 minutes long. Studies show that people are most productive in smaller, uninterrupted bursts of about 25 minutes followed by a short break of 5 minutes, this is known as the [Pomodoro Technique](#). This technique stops the brain from becoming frazzled or distracted.
- Remember a child's attention span ranges between 30 minutes to 50 minutes. Part of the build-up process is to increase the attention span gradually.
- Create a fridge list of the topics within each subject you need to cover.
- Revising different places around the house means that taking an exam in a new place becomes easier.
- Active revision is a great way to learn, this means plenty of past papers or simulated 11+ exam questions in exam conditions.
- If the exam is in the morning, then in the run up to the exams do all the practice papers around the same time as the exam. This will help your child to be in the best position for the actual test.
- Make visual aids such a mind maps (spider diagrams) showing all the different parts of a topic that needs to be learnt.
- Make posters to display around the house of important concepts or methods.
- Try using new methods- post its, videos, flash cards.
- Try using Mnemonics. This is a way of remembering information by using abbreviations, words or phrases. For example, we can remember colours of the rainbow by "Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain"
- Rewards! As each 11+ topic (e.g. question type) is finished or if a better mark than expected is achieved, why not have a mini-treat for your child and yourselves?
- When doing practice 11+ papers, mirror the style that will be in the next test, it could be either the standard (no choice of answers) format or the multiple-choice format. Most grammar schools now use multiple choice style exam papers, and usually most independent schools use standard, but it is still worth checking.



- If you have been using a standard approach with your child make sure as the day gets closer you give them a chance to practise the multiple-choice method. Particularly if that is the kind of paper they will be sitting.
- Doing 11+ papers under exam conditions shows if the student needs to work on the speed by which he/she answers as every mark counts.
- Use the answer book to go through a test paper to catch even the silliest mistake as everybody can make errors under timed conditions.
- Understand what is learnt and apply that knowledge to problems, for example in maths, to reinforce the lesson.
- Allocate more time to the subjects your child is weaker in, e.g. Non-verbal reasoning.
- Get your child into the habits of re-reading questions, not spending too much time on ones they find tricky (marking them so at the end they can easily locate them again) and having a good guess if they are unsure of the answer.
- Focus your energy on the process of studying rather than your eventual goal and ultimate result.
- Remember – Brain is muscle, therefore just as you would after any other exercise, make sure your child rests after each session- away from any talk etc about the papers!
- Plenty of exercise and nutritious food is a must to keep their brains in good working order.
- Make sure your child is sleeping properly so that they are fresh and happy for the next day. If they are having trouble, a mug of hot chocolate could help or a long hot bath or perhaps even an extra 15 minutes of television to get their mind to relax.
- The night before, have a calm evening and early night. In the morning make sure your child has a nutritious breakfast and leave the house in good time to avoid having to rush. On the way chat about the exam so it becomes less scary.
- If your child starts to panic, tell them you are proud of them. All they need to do is to work calmly through the paper and do the best they can.



# Strategies to help your Child's Mental Health



- See rest as valuable for revision.
- Write your worries down.
- Get outside.
- Plan in your breaks.
- Stay realistic.
- Quality over quantity.
- Get enough sleep.

Help your child to set up a programme that is sustainable. There needs to be study time but also free time. Make sure they continue doing sports or scouts/guides etc. Working every hour of every day will not help them.

Encourage them to be realistic and to try their best. Do not let them put extra pressure on themselves, of course, they would like to be successful but let them know it is not the be all and end all.

# Registering for the 11+



This will not be an issue if your primary school is in an 11+ area. The children will automatically be able to sit the exam at the school. You will have just needed to let the school know that you wish to enter your child into the exam. They will sit the papers during the school week- sometime in September.

However, if your primary school is not in an 11+ area you will need to contact the grammar school you wish your child to attend and register them. These exams are usually at a weekend so be prepared to keep September weekends free.

## Grammar Schools

There are 164 Grammar Schools remaining in England and 67 in Northern Ireland, all of which are fully selective and use various types of 11 Plus testing to determine their intake. There are also some schools that select a proportion of their students by ability- there are two types they are known as Bilateral Schools and Partially Selective schools.

## Bilateral Schools

These are the eight bilateral schools in England. You can find information about the entrance requirements for these schools in the relevant 11 Plus areas within this section.

- Bexley – Erith School (Mixed)
- Lincolnshire – King Edward VI Humanities College (Mixed)
- Medway – The Howard School (Boys)
- Reading – Reading Girls' School (Girls)
- Southend-on-Sea – St Bernard's High School for Girls (Girls)
- Southend-on-Sea – St Thomas More High School for Boys (Boys)



- Torbay – Westlands School (Mixed)
- Warwickshire – Ashlawn School (Mixed)

### Partially Selective Schools

There are a number of schools around the country that have retained the right to select a proportion of their pupils by ability or aptitude. These are the remaining partially selective schools in England. All of them are over-subscribed. All except Old Swinford Hospital, Archbishop Tenison's School and the London Nautical School select the highest scoring applicants under each criteria.

You can find further information about these schools on the relevant regional pages of the site, except for those marked (\*).

LEA	SCHOOL	GENDER	SELECTIVE PROPORTION OF INTAKE
<b>BARNET</b>	<a href="#">Mill Hill County High School</a>	Mixed	10% technology, 10% music, 5% dance
<b>CROYDON</b>	<a href="#">The Archbishop Lanfranc School</a>	Mixed	15% general ability
	<a href="#">Edenham High School</a>	Mixed	15% general ability
	<a href="#">Riddlesdown High School</a>	Mixed	15% general ability
	<a href="#">Shirley High School</a>	Mixed	15% general ability
<b>DORSET</b>	<a href="#">Budmouth Technology College</a>	Mixed	12% general ability
<b>DUDLEY</b>	<a href="#">Old Swinford Hospital</a>	Boys	27% general ability
<b>ESSEX</b>	<a href="#">The King John School</a>	Mixed	15% general ability

<b>HERTFORDSHIRE</b>	<a href="#">Dame Alice Owen's School</a>	Mixed	32.5% general ability, 5% music
	<a href="#">Parmiter's School</a>	Mixed	25% general ability, 10% music
	<a href="#">Queens' School</a>	Mixed	35% general ability, 5% music, 5% sport
	<a href="#">Rickmansworth School</a>	Mixed	25% general ability, 10% music
	<a href="#">St. Clement Danes School</a>	Mixed	10% general ability, 10% music
	<a href="#">Watford Grammar School for Boys</a>	Boys	25% general ability, 10% music
	<a href="#">Watford Grammar School for Girls</a>	Girls	25% general ability, 10% music
<b>KENT</b>	<a href="#">Archbishop's School</a>	Mixed	15% general ability
	<a href="#">Homewood School</a>	Mixed	20% general ability, 1% music
	<a href="#">Westlands School</a>	Mixed	10% maths
<b>LAMBETH</b>	<a href="#">Archbishop Tenison's School</a>	Boys	weighted banding
	<a href="#">London Nautical School</a>	Boys	nautical or sport
<b>LANCASHIRE</b>	<a href="#">Ripley St. Thomas Church of England High School</a>	Mixed	15% language
<b>LIVERPOOL</b>	<a href="#">King David High School</a>	Mixed	17% music
	<a href="#">St. Hilda's C of E High School</a>	Girls	15% general ability
	<a href="#">St. Margaret's C of E High School</a>	Boys	15% general ability
<b>NOTTINGHAM</b>	<a href="#">Nottingham Bluecoat School</a>	Mixed	10% maths and science

<b>PETERBOROUGH</b>	<a href="#">The Kings School</a>	Mixed	10% general ability, 2.5% music
<b>POOLE</b>	<a href="#">Poole High School</a>	Mixed	10% general ability
<b>SOUTHEND-ON-SEA</b>	<a href="#">Cecil Jones College</a>	Mixed	10% general ability
	<a href="#">Shoeburyness High School</a>	Mixed	10% general ability
<b>SURREY</b>	<a href="#">Glyn Technology School</a>	Boys	15% general ability
	<a href="#">The Winston Churchill School</a>	Mixed	9% general ability, 5% music
<b>SUTTON</b>	<a href="#">Greenshaw High School</a>	Mixed	25% general ability
<b>WANDSWORTH</b>	<a href="#">Burntwood School</a>	Girls	25% general ability
	<a href="#">Chestnut Grove Arts College</a>	Mixed	20% art and design, 20% languages
	<a href="#">Ernest Bevin College</a>	Boys	33% general ability
	<a href="#">Graveney School</a>	Mixed	25% general ability

Please see the following pages for your freebies.



 <b>Our 11+ Exam Checklist:</b>			Achieved/ Done
Months 1-3	1	Decide which schools to apply for and research the 11+ exam for each school.	
	2	Try to get hold of a past paper/ sample questions to assess strengths and weaknesses.	
	3	Create a learning plan- spending more time on troublesome areas.	
Months 4-6	1	Work through sample questions.	
	2	Read daily to extend known vocabulary. Look up unknown words and make a vocabulary log.	
	3	Use spelling lists, multiplication tables and any other aids to brush up on weaker areas.	
	4	Revise your learning plan based on progress so far.	
Months 7-9	1	Get hold of some sample papers to work through. There are many free and paid for resources on the internet.	
	2	Begin to introduce working within a time limit.	
	3	Revise your learning plan based on progress so far.	
Months 10-12	1	Do daily revision e.g. 10 minutes a day.	
	2	Complete a series of Mock exams, GL produce a full set of mock exams. If your exam board is CEM ask your school for samples.	
	3	As the exam gets nearer remember to have regular breaks.	

### Exam Dates

### Useful websites:

[A2zlearning.org](http://A2zlearning.org)

[Elevenplusexams.co.uk](http://Elevenplusexams.co.uk)

[Parentsintouch.co.uk](http://Parentsintouch.co.uk)

[11plusguide.com](http://11plusguide.com)

[Bond11+.co.uk](http://Bond11+.co.uk)

[11plus.co.uk](http://11plus.co.uk)

[11plusdiy.co.uk](http://11plusdiy.co.uk)

# Tackling the English: Reading Paper

For those sitting an English paper I would advise lots of reading. These papers ask the children to read a text and then answer questions about what they have read. The papers include a mix of literature, here are some of the books that have been used in previous papers.

## Victorian Literature:

- Brontë, Charlotte. **Jane Eyre** (opening chapters)
- Dickens, Charles. **A Christmas Carol** (the descriptions of London)
- Dickens, Charles. **Great Expectations** (the first chapters)
- Dickens, Charles. **Oliver Twist**
- Kipling, Rudyard. **The Jungle Book**
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. **Treasure Island**
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. **Kidnapped**

## Pre-1980 Literature:

- Barrie, J M. **Peter and Wendy**
- Hill, Susan. **I'm the King of the Castle**
- Lewis, C S. **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe**
- Tolkien, J R R. **The Lord of the Rings Trilogy**
- Tolkien, J R R. **The Hobbit**

Exam boards like to use older Literature as fewer of the children are likely to have encountered it before. This makes the assessment fairer if a little harder. They also include unfamiliar vocabulary, the perfect opportunity to test pupils' vocabulary levels and comprehension skills.

Generally, the exam boards use certain types of extract:

- they are usually about children (not always).
- they are usually descriptive.
- they will contain no more than five 'period-specific words'.



The most frequently used extracts include:

- Brontë, Charlotte. **Jane Eyre** (opening chapters)
- Dickens, Charles. **A Christmas Carol** (the descriptions of London)
- Dickens, Charles. **Great Expectations** (the first chapters)
- Dickens, Charles. **Oliver Twist**
- Kipling, Rudyard. **The Jungle Book**
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. **Treasure Island**
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. **Kidnapped**

Occasionally, poetry is selected rather than prose. Again, the poems selected may be from a variety of eras. This is for several reasons:

- Less time is spent on poetry in schools so it is easier to find a piece the children will not have seen before.
- Poetry is packed with literary devices such as similes, metaphors and personification.

I would suggest practising reading and writing poetry.

Bloom, Valerie. **Granny Is**

Frost, Robert. **Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**

Heaney, Seamus. **Digging** (this is pretty challenging)

Kipling, Rudyard. **The Way Through the Woods**

Tennyson, Alfred Lord. **The Eagle**

And... **the poetry collection of A.A. Milne**

Modern texts do appear as well, but for copyright reasons they need to be at least five years old. Authors like Morpurgo could soon be in future papers.

At least one of the comprehension questions will require an in-depth answer. It may help your child to learn to use a PETAL paragraph so they include all the relevant details the examiner will be looking for.

P= Point

E= Evidence – a quote to back up the point

T= Technique - simile, metaphor etc

A= Analysis – this is key to scoring the highest marks

L= Link

Below is an example from a past paper

A despondent mood fills paragraph three: "hopelessness filled him, like an unforgiving concrete block, making him stationary with the weight. Spirits low he slumped where he stood." The simile perfectly captures the despondent mood; he is overcome with hopelessness that metaphorically makes him too overcome with sadness to move, so instead he collapses to the ground.

Point: A despondent mood pervades paragraph three

Evidence: "hopelessness filled him, like an unforgiving concrete block, making him stationary with the weight. Spirits low he slumped where he stood."

Technique: Simile

Analysis: He is overcome with hopelessness that metaphorically makes him too overcome with sadness to move, so instead he collapses to the ground.

Link: Despondent mood

As you can see the letters of PETAL do not necessarily have to be in that order when you answer the question.

