

Parent Guide



@twinklparents

We're excited to share this activity with you. If you are interested in finding more engaging, fun and interesting activities for you and your children, then check out these links to different areas of the [Twinkl Parents](#) website.

games



crafts



puzzles



experiments



word searches



What is this resource and how do I use it?

This assessment pack features a quick guide to the non-verbal reasoning tests, as well as an introduction to the analogy-style questions your child might encounter. Then, there are two sets of questions for your child to have a go at. We have included an answer guide too so that you can help your child to spot patterns and similarities.

What skills does this practise?

Non-Verbal Reasoning

Observation

Logic

Further Activity Ideas and Suggestions

For more non-verbal reasoning practice, check out this [11+ Non-Verbal Reasoning Code Breaking Assessment Pack](#) and this [11+ Non-Verbal Reasoning Week of Workouts](#). You can encourage your child to get in some bite-size practice of all the 11+ skills with this set of [11+ Activity Mats](#).

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How to Prepare for the 11+: A Guide for Parents and Carers

Knowing how much preparation to do beforehand can always be a tough balancing act for any parent. You want to support your child so that they have the skills to pass the test and hopefully get a place in their first-choice school. However, you don't want to cause your child to suffer 'burnout' due to constant revision, preparation and pressure. This could have a detrimental effect on your child and their motivation for learning.

One of the best methods of revision is to do it little and often. That way, your child can stay focused during shorter, frequent study sessions. It's also important that your child has 'downtime' during busy revision periods. Ensure you go out and do some exercise together (a walk, bike ride, football, etc.) and get plenty of rest too.

As part of the preparation process, it's a good idea to prepare contingency plans in case your child doesn't get the result they wanted in the test. If your child takes the 11+ test and doesn't receive a place in their first-choice grammar school, this can be very disheartening for you and your child. Therefore, it is best to have other options so you know what next steps you'll need to take if they don't get a place. This will also help your child as the school will be one of several options rather than the sole option for the future. By not pinning all your hopes on one option, it will help lessen the feeling of disappointment if your child doesn't get a place.

The tips included in this survival guide will help you to choose what approach to take when supporting your child to prepare for the 11+ test.





Practising at Home



In preparing your child for the 11+ test, the most practical advice is to practise, practise and practise!

Using sample test materials that are similar to the ones set by the school you wish your child to attend is a great way to help your child prepare. This is especially important for verbal and non-verbal reasoning which most children are unfamiliar with. Using practice test papers is a great way to identify where your child's strengths lie and where they may need further support. If you notice your child struggling in a particular area, that's the test you should practise and the topic you will need to work on more often in order to help them improve.

When preparing at home, set an agreed amount of time each week to revise and practise for the test. This should be a time when the house is quieter and you and your child can focus on work.

Ensure you celebrate your child's effort with lots of positive praise such as: 'Well done! You tried really hard and didn't give up!'. By praising effort, rather than the number of correctly answered questions, you help your child develop a growth mindset when it comes to learning - this means that they can feel confident even when getting things wrong as it fosters resilience and determination to not give up on the task - they see their errors as opportunities to improve rather than indications of weakness.

Hiring a Tutor

One option you may wish to consider is hiring a tutor to help support your child's preparation.

Due to the increasing competition for places at grammar schools, personal tutors and agencies have flooded the market so in many places you have a wide choice to choose from. You can look online for local agencies and tutors but also ask friends, family and parents of other children if they have had a tutor for the 11+ test. Word-of-mouth recommendations are usually a good starting point.

When speaking to a tutor or an agency, see if they have had any experience in preparing children for the 11+ test and if they know what tests are set at the school or schools you wish to apply for. If selecting an independent tutor, do ask them for a current DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service check – previously CRB check) and references.

Once you have found a tutor, decide how much tutoring you would like your child to have and when you would like it to start. Most 11+ tests are taken in the autumn of Year 6, therefore you should be starting practice and revision during Year 5 of primary school. One to two hours a week is usually a sensible amount; anything more could be excessive and counter-productive for your child.

Bear in mind that your child should be grammar school-ready. Spending lots of time and money on tutors to get them through a test could be the wrong option in the long run. If your child needs large amounts of revision and support, is grammar school a realistic or the most appropriate option for them?



Fun and Games

Children (and adults) learn best when they are engaged and having fun. Therefore, try to make the revision and practice for the 11+ test as fun and as informal as possible. This can help keep your child engaged, especially if they don't realise they are learning and doing work!

A great way to encourage your child to read and to develop their comprehension skills is to read the same books. That way reading becomes more like a book club in which you can discuss the book with your child in an informal way to develop their comprehension. You can ask their opinion on characters, the writer's use of language, what they think is going to happen next and the meaning of particular words.

For the verbal and non-verbal tests, try to encourage your child to play a range of word and puzzle games to develop their vocabulary, understanding of language and related words, spelling and ability to see patterns. These could include hangman, letter tile games or crosswords - in fact, any word games that they enjoy!

Play games and sing songs to help practise times tables and the inverse operations. There are also many online games and apps that can be used to practise English and maths skills such as spellings and times tables. Search for them with your child and find which games they like to play best!



During the Holidays

At the end of Year 5, children have the summer holidays before they start in Year 6, which is a very intense year due to the build-up for the SATs. For a parent preparing for the 11+ test, this can be something of a dilemma: do you let your child have a full rest after a busy year of learning before starting another busy year? Or, do you keep revising as much as possible in preparation for the 11+ test in Autumn? The best advice is to keep it light – little and often is usually a good way to do this. Try to practise with games and puzzles rather than formal learning sessions.



The Test

Before the Test

Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and sleep the week before the test. Ensure they eat well, especially on the day of the test, choosing food that will give them the sustained energy they need to complete the tests.

Remain calm and positive! Your child will pick up on your emotions so try to stay positive and relaxed (even if you are feeling anxious and nervous on the inside). Encourage them to try their best and try to create a little excitement by saying positive things such as, 'This is exciting! It'll be like completing all those puzzles we've been practising and you'll get to have a look around the new school!'

If you make it seem fun and exciting, it will help reduce any stress your child feels which will help them to complete the test.



After the Test

Praise, praise and praise!

Celebrate your child's hard work and effort regardless of the outcome. It can be disappointing if they don't get their first-choice school but your child has tried their best and as a parent, your role is to make them feel confident and secure by celebrating their efforts and attitude towards the test.

If the outcome isn't the one you were expecting, remain positive and ensure you have contingency plans in place so you know what your next steps will be. It's best to be prepared for all eventualities.





Choosing a School



Choosing the right secondary school for your child can be one of the most difficult decisions you ever make as a parent as you worry about which is the right choice. There is also the possibility that the choice may be taken out of your hands based on the results of the 11+ test which can make the decision even more daunting.

However, if you start planning early, it can relieve much of the stress for you and your child. Also, the area you live in may affect the choice of grammar schools you have to choose from. Some areas will have lots of grammar schools and some will have only a few. Use the tips below to help you when choosing the right school for your child.

Make a List

Make a list of all the possible schools that your child could attend in the area where you live. You will need to consider the journey time to each school as well as the amount of traffic and decide whether it is feasible or not to travel to that school. Include all options at this stage in case your child doesn't get the grades needed in the 11+ test.

Research

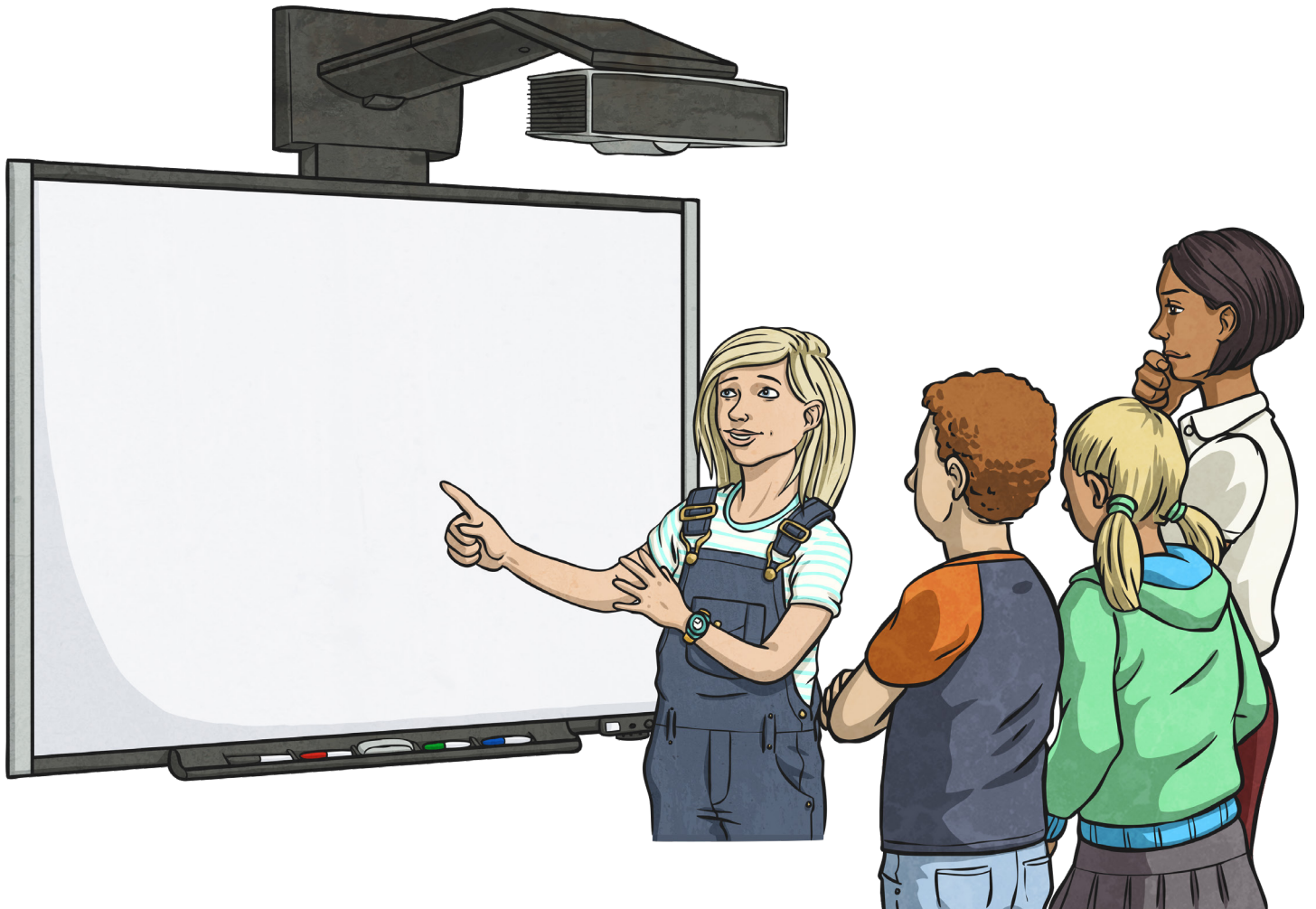
Begin by looking at the school website. It will contain lots of information about the school and what the curriculum looks like. It's a great way to get a feel for the school. Have a look at the school's academic achievements, extra-curricular activities and trips. Also, see whether there is any specific information about the 11+ exam on the school website.

Here are some more research ideas:

- Check the school's admission policy.**
- Read the current and previous Ofsted reports.**
- Ask to visit the school.**
- Speak to parents who currently or previously had children at the school.**

Discuss

Discuss the options with your child and seek their opinion too. Arrange to visit each school with your child; this will give both of you a sense of the school and whether it is suitable. Your child will probably be making their choice of school based on the social perspective and may have different views to you. If your child has a marked preference for a school, try to uncover the reasons for their preference and discuss it with them. Your child's opinion and preference is key to making any decision. It is best to try and sell the benefits of the other school to them such as the quality of the facilities, the extra-curricular activities and the trips they go on. It is also worth checking with other parents which school they are considering as it may be different to the 'playground chatter' going on at school.



What is the 11+ test?

The 11+ is an examination taken by some children in their final year of primary school to get into the grammar or private school of their choice. When a school is over-subscribed or has limited places, the 11+ examination is often used to rate a child's ability as part of the application process for the school.

There are up to four different disciplines in the 11+ test which are:

Verbal Reasoning

Non-Verbal Reasoning

Maths

English

The combination of test papers varies considerably throughout the country and is dependent on how each individual school wishes to assess the applicants. If you are considering sending your child to a private/grammar school, it would be useful to discuss with them beforehand about which disciplines they assess in the 11+ test.



Verbal Reasoning



Verbal reasoning is the ability to understand and reason using concepts that are framed in words. It aims to assess a child's ability to think constructively with a series of verbal reasoning questions.

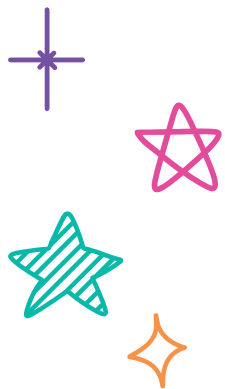
Children perform better in verbal reasoning tests if they read widely and have an extensive vocabulary. Playing lots of word games at home can also help your child with verbal reasoning tests. Try activities such as letter tile games, crosswords and word searches.

The types of questions a child might be asked could focus on:

- finding synonyms and antonyms;
- finding a letter that will complete two words, e.g. woo (d) oor;
- finding a word hidden inside another word, e.g. the word pen hidden inside independent;
- spotting the odd one out in a list of words;
- breaking a code where each letter of the alphabet is represented by a different letter or number.

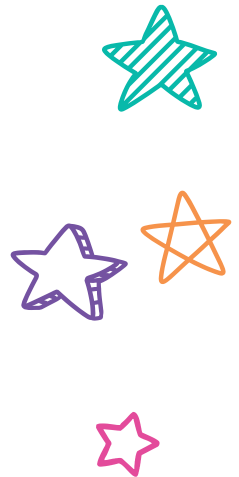


Here is an example of the type of question you may get in this section:



1. Circle the pair of words which are closest in meaning:

mean, scary	horrible, repulsive
repugnant, repulsive	scary, repulsive



The answer to this question would be 'repugnant, repulsive' as they can both arouse strong feelings of disgust.



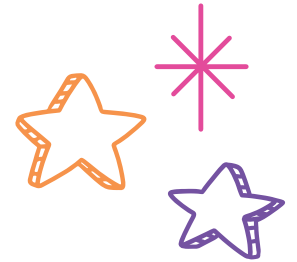


Non-Verbal Reasoning







The non-verbal reasoning test involves solving problems that are represented with pictures and diagrams. There are a number of different types of questions for the non-verbal reasoning test which could include:

- finding shapes that are like each other based on similarities (for example colours and number of sides);
- finding the odd one out in a group of pictures;
- identifying a shape which has been rotated;
- breaking the code in a sequence of images;
- spotting the missing shape in a sequence;
- identifying the nets of 3D shapes.



Here is an example of the type of question you may get in this section:

7. Which is the correct code for figure 4?

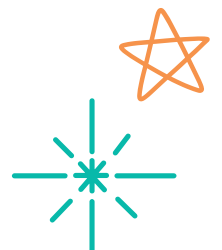
 M B	 R B	 M Q	 ?
1	2	3	4

B	Q	B	R
Y	M	Q	Q
A	B	C	D



The answer would be D. The letter common to the first two shapes is B which represents the cross-hatching pattern they both have. Therefore Q represents the solid orange colour. The M is the letter representing the shape of the moon and it comes at the top of the box. Therefore the answer is D (R to represent the irregular dodecagon and the Q at the bottom to represent the solid orange colour).

The non-verbal reasoning test, for many children, can be very intimidating. The best way to prepare for this is through practice. Complete many different type of practice non-verbal reasoning tests with your child and discuss how each question is solved. This will give your child the experience needed to tackle the on-verbal reasoning tests.





Maths skills are an integral part of the 11+ test. The maths test varies across areas and schools, so it is important to visit individual schools' websites to find out more information. In some schools, the maths portion of the 11+ is a separate paper which can last from thirty minutes to one hour.

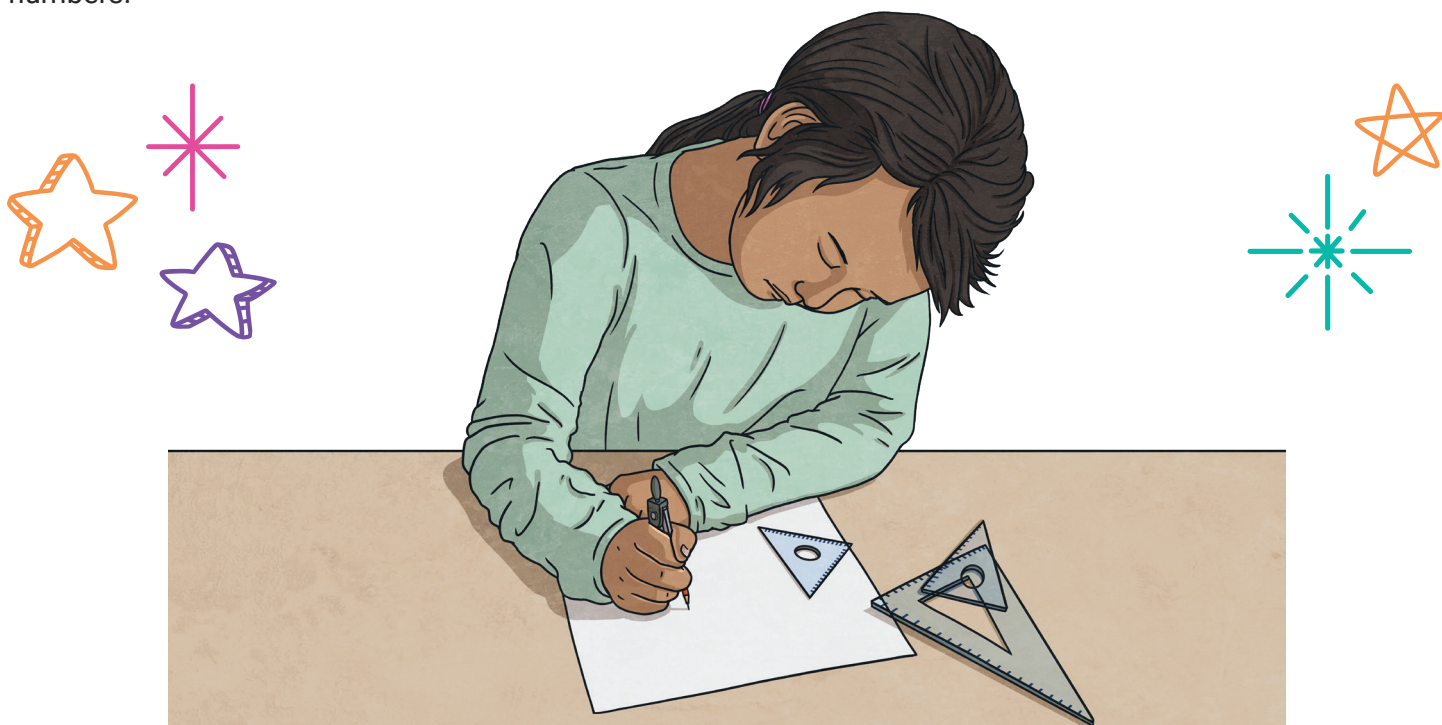
The key skills needed for the maths test are:

- a strong knowledge of the four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division)
- the ability to work quickly and accurately
- a sound knowledge of the times tables
- the ability to apply mathematical skills to problem-solving and reasoning

The test should cover objectives from the maths national curriculum for England. Therefore, you can expect questions on:

- **number**, which includes place value, fractions, decimals, percentages and the four basic operations;
- **algebra**, which includes equations and formulae;
- **geometry**, which includes shapes, length, weight, capacity, area, coordinates and nets;
- **data handling**, including statistics and probability.

Maths skills may also be assessed as part of the verbal reasoning test. This test might include activities involving number sequencing, completing the calculation, finding the missing number and finding related numbers.





The English test can vary considerably depending on where you live, therefore it is important to check the prospective school's website or speak to them beforehand to find out what type of English test they do. An English test could include any number of the following:

- a writing task
- a reading comprehension test
- a multiple-choice English grammar and punctuation test

The writing test usually lasts anywhere from 20 to 50 minutes, with the reading test varying from 30 minutes to an hour.

The English test is used to assess your child's knowledge of grammar, punctuation, spelling, comprehension and, sometimes, their writing ability too. It aims to test children on the skills they have learnt during primary school.

In addition to a sound knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling, they'll need a wide and varied vocabulary, which can also help with the verbal reasoning tests. Their comprehension skills should be strong – especially their ability to make inferences based on clues and information given in the text. However, it is also important that they have experience of reading questions carefully and accurately, working to a time limit and remaining calm.

To help support your child for the English test, encourage them to read, read and read some more! A great variety of fiction and non-fiction across a range of genres will help your child to develop their vocabulary and knowledge. Most children read independently once they reach this age, but it would be a good idea to have a look at the book they are reading, select some words that you may think are tricky for your child and test them on the meaning of the words. If they are not sure, discuss the meaning of each word with your child and practise using it in context. You might also read a book together and discuss their understanding of the character's actions and motives, the plot and what they think the author is trying to achieve. Discussing reading is a great way of developing depth of thinking. In addition to this, reading widely will help your child to become familiar with a variety of spelling patterns and rules as well as common exception words and homophones.

You can also encourage your child to write in a range of styles. Try to contextualise this and link it to something that they enjoy. For example, if you've been on a day trip to the zoo, you could encourage them to write a recount of the visit, an information text about their favourite animal, a persuasive booklet advertising the zoo or even simply a fictional story set there.

