

# KS2 Test Techniques

English reading

English grammar,  
punctuation and spelling

Mathematics

Techniques and approaches to support you in the classroom and enable your pupils to achieve the marks they deserve.



**Norfolk**  
County Council

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# Wellbeing

The KS2 Tests can cause pupils a mixture of feelings hope, excitement, pressure; but the feeling they may tend to associate it most with, is worry or stress. Having some level of anxiety is normal. When something feels important to a pupil or to their parents, especially when it is new and unfamiliar, this worry is a natural response that is designed to help deal with the situation. Small and manageable amounts of nervousness can be helpful, giving some pupils the focus, they need to prepare and do their best.

If pupils are feeling worried, there are strategies you can try, to help reduce their uneasiness. Pupils with manageable amounts of apprehension can then see the KS2 Tests as a challenge they can cope with.

## Actively managing pupils' well-being

It is important to look after our pupils' physical, mental and social well-being during the preparation weeks before the KS2 Tests and the week of the Tests. It is also important to share these messages with parents/guardians, so they can also help in managing the wellbeing of the children during this time.

There are five fundamentals which you can support with, in the period preceding and during Test week:

- 1) Socialising – Actively encourage parents to ensure their children spend time with friends and family on the weekend before test week.
- 2) Relaxing – This can be active or passive. During the week of the tests, allow more time during the school day for pupils to read a book or play a game.
- 3) Exercising – In test week during school time, take pupils outdoors and try some fun activities to encourage exercising as this will help to reduce anxiety levels. Encourage parents in the period preceding test week to ensure pupils are outdoors and active where possible.
- 4) Eating – Remind parents to ensure pupils have a good breakfast each morning during test week, you may want or need to provide breakfast for your pupils, to ensure they have a good start to each day.
- 5) Sleeping – Remind parents of allowing for 'wind down' time, quality sleep and early bedtimes in the run up and during the week of the tests. This includes the use blue screen devices e.g., tablets, games consoles, TVs, which can interfere with natural sleep cycles if used in the hour before bedtime.

# English – Reading, Grammar, Punctuation & Spelling

## Tip 1: Pupils should be Active readers

The reading test requires readers to read 3 passages which together can amount to up to 2300 words. As you know when we read, sometimes our mind can wander off and we can lose the gist of what is going on in a text. Encouraging pupils to continue to use all the comprehension monitoring strategies that you have taught them in class will help to keep them on track.

Encourage pupils to ask themselves questions as they read, such as:

- Does this make sense?
- Why did he/she do or say that?
- How does this connect to X part of the text?
- How does this fit with what I already know? If it doesn't, look back

### Attend to the key facts

Sometimes it can help pupils to circle/ underline parts of the text to keep track of who, what, where, when, why, how. Highlighting and annotating can help also to make connections between events and to summarise paragraphs. The STA Access Arrangements document for the test papers, clarifies that pupils can highlight and annotate their reading paper during the test, if this is part of their standard classroom practice to help monitor their own comprehension.

## Tip 2: Think vocabulary

### Vocabulary in the 3 texts

As you know, understanding the words in the text and having strategies to work out the meaning of words in the text is essential to making meaning. Before the test, and in any lessons that you have in the run up to the test to support them to tackle them with confidence, remind pupils to think about the strategies that you already use in class:

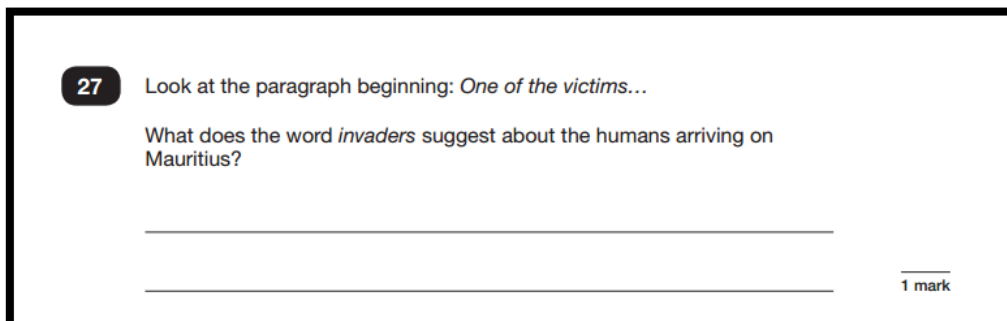
- Which words don't I understand? Are they essential to make meaning or can I just skip over them and still understand what is going on?
- Can I use the context to help me make meaning? What events have already happened that might give me a clue to what the word means?
- What word class is this word? Does that help me to work out what it might mean?
- Could I replace this word with another similar word and it will still make sense? Does that give me a sense of what the word might mean?

### Answering questions about vocabulary: Impression and Suggest

Impression and suggest are two words that frequently appear in questions in the reading test.

For these types of questions, you need to consider what the words and phrases, and detail in the text make you think of, or remind you of.

If pupils are being asked to comment on the meaning of words and what they might suggest it is important that they don't just repeat the word or phrase used. So, if we take this question as an example:

A screenshot of a test question box. It contains a question number '27' in a black circle, followed by the text 'Look at the paragraph beginning: One of the victims...'. Below this is the question 'What does the word invaders suggest about the humans arriving on Mauritius?'. There are two horizontal lines for an answer. In the bottom right corner, there is a '1 mark' label.

Don't just say something like: 'because the humans invaded/because it was like an invasion.'

Instead, they should imagine that they are a living thesaurus and **think of other words linked to the word's meaning and the various associations and connotations to the word:** Invader=violent, attack, destroy, take over, uninvited.

Then **chose 2 quite different** words from this mental list – e.g. violent & unwelcome.

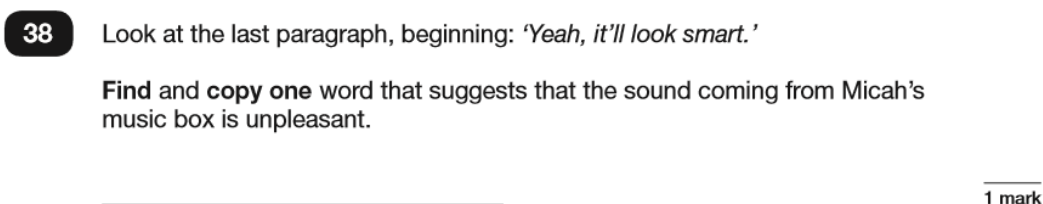
Then **make the sentence for the answer:** "the word invaders suggest they weren't invited and went about destroying."

### Tip 3 : Understand the question

Make sure that pupils understand and are familiar with the question stems in the tests; providing some support on the things that are expected of them in different questions can be very helpful. These prompts may help in the run up to the tests.

*What is the question asking me to do?*

**Find and copy** - make sure that you copy the words and phrases correctly. Sometimes you might need to think of the vocabulary associations and connotations to locate the correct answer, as in the example.

A screenshot of a test question box. It contains a question number '38' in a black circle, followed by the text 'Look at the last paragraph, beginning: 'Yeah, it'll look smart.''. Below this is the question 'Find and copy one word that suggests that the sound coming from Micah's music box is unpleasant.'. There is one horizontal line for an answer. In the bottom right corner, there is a '1 mark' label.

'Yeah, it'll look smart. Just make sure you find a buyer with a stiff hip at the market,' Piper said. 'They're the ones who'll be looking for these kinds of pretties.' She felt the cylinder and its tiny pins. Micah had done a decent job cleaning it, but flecks of dirt still caked the comb, and something was keeping the cylinder from turning. She heard the soft, strangled notes of a song trying to play.

**Tick one** – Make sure that you only tick one! These are not always as easy as they first appear....

**34** When Edward was exploring the bookcase, he noticed *something in the dark recesses of the shelf*.

Which of the following words is closest in meaning to *recesses*?

Tick one.

wood

spaces

contents

design

1 mark

**Explain** – usually means that you will have to interpret some of the content of the texts and use that evidence from the text in your answer.

**36** Look at the paragraph beginning: *Carefully, Michael leaned...*

What does this paragraph tell you about Michael's character?

Explain two features of his character, using evidence from the text to support your answer.

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**Key words** - What are the key words in the question? Sometimes it might be helpful to underline or circle them.

**Synonyms?** Remember also to think about synonyms for those key words. In the example, in part a) similar is a key word and in part b) different is a key word. So, the

synonyms for similar might be: the same as, like and the synonyms for words that might signal a difference might be: however, unlike, in contrast to. Often readers need to use synonyms and synonymous references to help locate the answer in the text.

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Look at page 4.

According to the text, give **one** way that giant pandas are...

(a) similar to other bears.

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1 mark

(b) different from other bears.

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1 mark

### Appearance

Giant pandas have the same type of body shape as other bears. They have thick black and white fur, which some scientists think may be to disguise them in the snowy and rocky surroundings where they live. An adult can grow up to 1.5 metres and weigh up to 150 kilograms. They might look cute but they have razor-like claws. They also have powerful jaws for crushing and grinding bamboo!

### Other interesting facts

- Giant panda bears have to eat every day which means, unlike other bears, they cannot hibernate in the winter.
- Giant pandas' bodies are able to digest meat but they rarely eat it.
- Until recently, scientists thought that pandas spent most of their lives alone, but new studies show that small groups of pandas can share a large territory.

## Tip 4: Read and re-read the instructions carefully... and then follow them!

Some questions might refer the pupil to a part of the text to find an answer, so make sure they remember they need to go to that particular page and section that is referred to, to help them answer the question.

Remind pupils that when the question says, 'find and copy a phrase', that the whole sentence is not copied. Also, when it says, 'find and copy one word', that only one word is copied and not two or three!

## Tip 5: Be Systematic

As you know, the texts in the reading test are organised in ascending order of complexity, and the questions within each section are too; so, it is sensible to approach the texts and questions in the order that they are set out.

In the run up to the tests, help your pupils to consider how they are going to manage their time in the test, and to think about how much time they might spend on each section.

It can be useful to **consider the number of marks** for each question and use this to guide the number of distinct and different points that need to be made.

If it helps, **underline/ circle** key words in questions and key instructions and check.

**Skip and return** - Is a sensible technique to use in the tests. Sometimes we might struggle on a particular question, but if we skip it and move onto other questions it might give us the thinking time, we need to find the solution. This is particularly useful strategy in the grammar paper where pupils might come across a grammatical term that they have a temporary brain freeze about. A subsequent question might just give them that hint to remind them what is being referred to.

**Go back and check for silly mistakes** - Encourage pupils to ask themselves these questions:

- Have I followed the instructions?
- Have I included enough evidence to match the marks allocated to this question?
- Are my points distinct and different from each other to get the 2 marks?
- Have I included evidence from the text to back up my answers?
- Have I thought about the associations and connotations linked to this particular word?



# Mathematics

## Tip 1: Use your remaining time wisely

To achieve the Expected Standard in the 2016-19 tests, pupils needed to achieve 56-60 marks out of 110 which is 51-54% of marks across all 3 papers.

If we use our analysis of the mathematical topics from '10 Teaching Tips for the KS2 Mathematics Tests', a pupil could achieve this by simply completing all the Four Operations and Place Value questions (average 43%) and the Decimals and Fraction questions correctly (average 26%).

As the test approaches, you need to be shrewd with the time you have available and rather than try to cover everything, focus on the specific topics needed for different pupils.

These links will take you to resources split into maths topics, which you can use as part of your revision and practice.

- [David Morse - KS2 Topics](#)
- <https://t.co/JFU13JvfeR>
- [mathsforeveryone - KS2 SATs Practice](#)

## Tip 2: Deepen understanding of routine questions

The focus of the Arithmetic paper is fluency and less on the reasoning and problem solving required of paper 2 and 3. Therefore it can be easier to maximise the marks achievable in this paper, by developing the fluency skills of your pupils.

Regular practice can be useful, so pupils become familiar with the style of questions but do not use a whole test, instead concentrate on 5 -10 questions per day. It's important this practice is not constantly testing, but instead where you are applying a variety of teaching approaches to deepen understanding. Such as comparing different methods to answer the question, using incorrect answers, doing partner explanations without actually answering the question, as well as the traditional modelling how the question could be answered.

These links will take you to resources with paper 1 arithmetic style questions, which you can use as part of your everyday practice.

- [myminimaths - KS2 SATs Practice Arithmetic Papers](#)
- [Gary Smallman - Year 6 Arithmetic Tests](#)
- [Candomaths - ArithmeQuiz](#)
- [Sarah Farrell - Arithmetic Tests](#)

This link will take you to a resource which could be used over the Easter holidays, as it features 5 arithmetic questions

- [Steven Wragg - Ten for Ten KS2 Mathematics Easter Practice Booklet](#)

### Tip 3: Pupils RAG rate questions

If you have not been doing so already in lessons and interventions sessions, you are likely to be presenting pupils with sets of questions based on a specific objective/topic. This allows you as the teacher to identify if it's the whole objective/topic the pupil lacks understanding in, or just specific presentations of questions they are not familiar with.

To make these questions more purposeful and effective to you, I would also recommend that pupils RAG rate these questions. RAG ratings will allow you as a teacher to really prioritise your in class teaching and intervention sessions, in the last few weeks until the test. For example, if in a series of question, most pupils either partially complete or do not attempt to answer them and they also RAG rate the questions as Red or Amber, then it is likely a large amount of teaching time, will be required for them to fully understand this objective/topic. Based on the time you have available before the test, you can then decide to either teach this before the tests, or choose to work on this topic after the tests in the summer term, to support your pupil's move to secondary school.

### Tip 4: Use incorrect answers

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The children at Farmfield School are collecting money for charity.

Their target is to collect £360

So far they have collected £57.73

How much **more** money do they need to reach their target?

£ 303.73

1 mark

$$\begin{array}{r} 360 \\ - 57.73 \\ \hline 303.73 \end{array}$$

*Sarah Farrell - Badly completed Test Papers*

Figuring out where another pupil has gone wrong with their working out and answer, and then completing the question to get to the correct answer. Often the process of thinking why the given answer is wrong, helps to deepen the understanding of the question and often then allows many pupils to then go on and be able to complete the question.

This teaching approach helps to address misconceptions which may exist and crucially engages pupils with test questions, rather than refuse when they are unsure of how to start the question or answer correctly. This is a great approach for pupils to do in pairs as it can promote mathematical discussion but can also be completed individually.

You may already have lots of examples from previous year group practice tests, which you can anonymise to use. I would however not recommend using incorrect answers, from your current year 6 group, even if they are anonymised, pupils are likely to recognise their own work.

These links will take you to resources with examples of incorrect answers, which you can use in lessons and intervention sessions.

- [Ryan Holmes - Misconception SATs papers \(2017\) with intentional errors to correct](#)
- [Sarah Farrell - Badly completed Test Papers](#)
- [Elliot Morgan - Year 6 Arithmetic Test with mistakes](#)

## Tip 5: Test etiquette and language

In a multiple choice question, often the correct answer should be circled. Encourage pupils to cross out any wrong answers, this removes any doubt over which answer they have given and also a good technique to help them focus their thinking when answering the question.

In test questions there are often words which help to indicate the mathematical operation or method required to solve it. Pupils should be supported to recognise and comprehend these words through repetitive exposure in a range of contexts.

Common words and phrases:

“How many do they have **altogether**”, these questions are likely to be about addition

“How many..... **in a minute/per week/over 15 days**” these questions are likely to be about multiplication

“Dan **gave** Jane £432” these questions are likely to be about subtraction

“.....**share** between the 3 sisters” these questions are likely to be about division

Encourage pupils to identify the words, that may help them to answer the question and explain what the question is likely to be asking them to do.

These links will take you to resources with worded questions, which you can use as part of your teaching.

- [Greg Tang Math - Word Problem Generator](#)
- [Sarah Farrell - Vocabulary](#)
- [Elliot Morgan - Maths SATs Language](#)

## **I've got some questions... No problem, we're here to help.**

We have a team of Assessment, English and Mathematics Advisers, who are here to support you with statutory assessment and to help you provide the best education possible.

We will be happy to answer your questions and/or discuss your bespoke needs.

Please contact us at: [\*\*assessment@norfolk.gov.uk\*\*](mailto:assessment@norfolk.gov.uk)



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