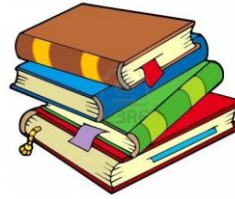


Year Four Preparation Guide - English



This preparation guide is divided into two sections – the basics and enhanced help.

- The basics elements should be done for every child regardless of whether you also plan to do some enhanced help.
- The basics are the foundations for future success, real progress will not be made without doing them as part of the process.
- For enhanced help we have suggested both how to work and which resources to use but please ensure that work on the basics is done alongside this.
- If you don't have much time to help your child then focussing on the basics will deliver the greatest benefit longer term.



The Basics - This activity is essential for every child

Reading every day:

- Children who read every day in year three (many children naturally evolve into reading every day, which is also fine) benefit hugely from their improved reading fluency.
- They do better in comprehension tests; they will have a wider vocabulary and will be better at both spelling and punctuation. They understand Maths problems others don't; they do better in other subjects like geography or history or science.
- Reading is a core skill. The more children do of it the better they will become in all sorts of areas.



The old saying, 'those who read - succeed' is very true.

Paired reading:

- This works magically to improve reading skills. Because children follow the page as you read their eyes start to move at a speed closer to that of an adult. Rather than looking at each word individually they begin to look ahead of the word they are saying. As their reading

speed improves so they develop their vocabulary more quickly and enjoy reading and therefore read more.

- Not only that, the emphasis you place on punctuation and words helps to bring stories to life for them and helps them understand the use of punctuation. When they read by themselves they copy these things and so enjoy independent reading more.

[Free Resource – Paired Read Guide](#)

Personal words list:



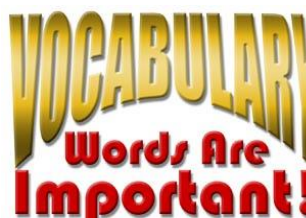
- Developing a wider working vocabulary is very valuable educationally. It helps children express themselves better; it helps them write better, it helps with comprehension work.
- Later in life a wide vocabulary is a building block which will help children get better grades in their GCSE's, better grades in their A levels and go to a better university.
- The problem with vocabulary is that is very personal- what one child knows; another child won't. This is why it needs to be built up on a personal words list.
- To build a vocabulary children need to do two things, firstly they need to discover new words and secondly they need a mechanism for learning those they don't know.



- The personal words list is a tried and tested formula. Children will find new words through their conversations with adults and in their reading. They will see or hear the word in context for the first time. Children need to note the word down on their personal words list making sure they know how to spell it, then they must either write down a word they already know which has a similar meaning or write down a word they know which has an opposite meaning (which won't always be possible) failing that they should write the word in a sentence and discuss the meaning of it generally.
- These words need to be revised at least every month (all of them). At the end of a year the child will have been through this process with over 1,000 words and while they may not know them all intimately they will be familiar with them all.

[Free Resource – Personal Words List](#)

Once started this is an easy process to stick to and is the only method we know of that really helps children to develop a wide vocabulary - vocabulary books have their uses from time to time- but the personal words list should be at the core of everything that is done.

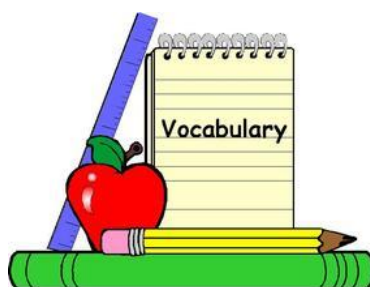


Final Points to Remember on the basics

This all sounds technical and like hard work but it isn't and it shouldn't be.

- The reading should be happening anyway and is often a good closing activity that both children and parents enjoy at the end of the day. Having the personal words list there to note down a word or two during each session doesn't add to the time involved and if done in the right way won't take away from the enjoyment.
- Paired reading could be done on two afternoons a week- 10-20 minutes with personal words list to hand using a different book than the one they are reading for enjoyment.
- When you look at it that way, parents need to be a little bit more organised and motivated but from a child's perspective there's really very little impact.

If you do nothing else then our advice is to do the work we have described - the cost is minimal.



Enhanced help beyond The Basics

There's always a risk that parents with children in year 4 who are planning for an 11 Plus exam in two or three years' time want to move ahead far too quickly. We offer the following advice for those parents who are tempted to do this (this advice is the same regardless of whether you are looking at improving literacy or numeracy or both):

- At this age 'core skills' are far more important than jumping ahead.
- Improving 'core skills' will mean children will get onto top tables which has some valuable knock on effects.
- Getting into verbal reasoning and non-verbal reasoning at this age is far too early and does absolutely no good at all. Focussing on 'core skills' delivers real benefits.
- Consolidation is much more important than moving ahead at this age because it gives children more robust foundations. This means when they get to an 11+ exam they have: a much wider vocabulary, their technical English is much better, they can read more quickly and accurately, they can work more accurately in both literacy and numeracy and their core maths skills are so rock solid that they don't make silly mistakes.
- We know lots of parents can't help themselves and dive into papers far too early, they start verbal reasoning and non-verbal reasoning from an early age but all we can do is to encourage you to **AVOID** doing this because it is actually counter-productive and may well damage your child's chances.



- **Focus on core skills- consolidate learning- build confidence** – These should be your focus and where you can best help your child- This advice applies even to the brightest of children.

Use Books or a Structured Course

- You'll notice we give you an option to use either structured courses or books on our [year four English exam papers and books page](#).
- The benefit of using structured courses is it takes all the hassle away from deciding which book to buy and what to do when.
- If you are using a structured course please make sure you use their '[course finder](#)' before you buy one as this helps you match the right course to where your child is at school and their ability level.

How to deliver enhanced help beyond 'The Basics'

- Go to our [year four English recommended books page](#) because the advice below is based on using those resources.
- We suggest you review the books we recommend next to our advice on how to use them (below).
- We hope that by offering this advice and the recommended resources that we can show more parents how easy it is to help their children at home.
- In our experience working on core skills, in the way we suggest, delivers a huge benefit to children.
- Once you get into the system of doing a little work every day then it all becomes much easier.



How to use the books we suggest

In year four our recommendation is to buy all the books together and for variety make a little progress with each book every week. Remember you will already be doing 'the basics' which includes paired reading and vocabulary development activities so we do not want to suggest you work too hard as that would be counter-productive.

If you are in the latter part of year four then we suggest cutting out earlier books from a series and just doing the later ones.



General English Skills ([see year four English papers and books](#))

- Do only 1 or 2 pages a week of this. Choose to use either the Schofield and Sims or the Bond series.
- Starting later in year four? Then start on the second book in the series you choose.

Fun English Workbook ([see year four English papers and books](#))

Children tend to love doing these books so we'd suggest doing lots of this work.

- Do two to three pages per week if they enjoy it.

Grammar and Punctuation ([see year four English papers and books](#))

This book will really help their core technical English skills and help to reinforce what they have learnt at School. You'll find that often children really secure their knowledge doing this work as they may not have quite fully grasped a particular topic in class. Do one page per week.

Spelling ([see year four English papers and books](#))

This book is pretty dry but provides well segmented lists. We'd suggest one spelling list per week starting at the right level for your child (the book provides levelled lists from year 1 to year 6).

NB if your school already gives lots of spelling work, as many do, then you may want to skip this element of the work.



Weekly Schedule

- You can see from the detail above that you'll be doing roughly five/six items of work a week from the books together with reading and paired reading and personal words development.
- This should be a workload everyone can manage when they get into the way of doing things.
- There isn't 52 weeks of work there so there's plenty of time for holidays and time off.



Work over the summer

- Remember children tend to go backwards if they stop work during the summer so it is a very good idea to keep working during that time.
- Many parents find that doing a little less during term time and a little more in the holidays provides a very good balance.
- If you are between years or starting late then adjust the work you do to your child's developmental level. Some children will benefit from revising year four work over the summer, others will benefit from looking ahead to year five. Always err on the side of caution and remember that consolidation is always better than moving ahead at this age.
- Even over the summer of year four we'd still recommend not touching verbal reasoning or non-verbal reasoning. It is really far too early. Certainly please do not get tempted to do 11 plus papers, in our opinion doing these this early damages chances of success.



Rewarding your child

This is a good idea if handled correctly. Rewards should always be for effort because effort leads to better results. [See our rewards section](#) for some advice on running a rewards programme if you'd like to.

Summary

- Focussing exclusively on developing core skills is the route to success.
- Consolidation is more important than moving ahead.
- If you only have time to do very little work then focus on 'the basics' as there's no point in doing more before this is covered off.
- Remember you have the option of choosing either structured courses or books and for some parents structured courses take a lot of the organisational hassle away.
- Try to think of developing a 'homework half-hour' setting time aside like this helps you to get into a hassle free routine.
- Most parents who use this system quickly realise that there's no point in spending £70-£100 per month on tuition centres (many of which only send pupils home with work anyway). Equally time spent getting to and from a tuition centre often means work can be done more efficiently at home.
- The cost of the books we recommend for English and Maths is about £70 and the Structured courses we suggest are about £40 in total for both Maths and English. Both of these offer great value compared to tuition centres which easily run to £700-£1000 a year.
- Very few parents will stick religiously to our suggestions but remember even by doing some of what we suggest you can have a really positive impact on your child's education.

