

Year Four Preparation Guide - Maths



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.

Times tables:

- Sticking with this work will ensure you child has the foundations necessary to do well in Maths. The mistake children and parents often make is that they believe their child knows their times tables because they can recite them.
- Pick one at random (say 7×6) out of the blue, see if they are as fluent if you ask the question the other way round (42 divided by 7) and do they instantly know the answer if you put it in a sum $? \times 6 = 42$.
- The truth is that this work is often stopped too early and, as a result as children get older they find they make 'silly' mistakes in calculations or with fractions work.
- Nine times out of ten these are not 'silly' mistakes, they are mistakes which reveal that under pressure their times tables work is not good enough. Sadly when it dawns on them that this is the reason behind the dropped marks or behind the slightly slow working it's often too late to fix.
- Going back to times tables in year six feels remedial, it's hard work, it knocks a child's confidence. Better to get things right first time in our view and ensure times tables learning happens properly in years three, four and five.

Use the resources we have suggested if you like for times tables – [Year 4 Books](#)

We urge everyone to stick with times tables learning. If it gets boring then find a new way to do it.

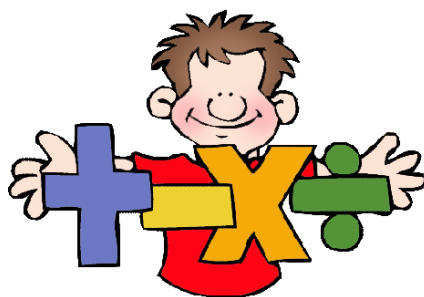
Children with better times tables skills will be better at Maths throughout their lives.

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.



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.

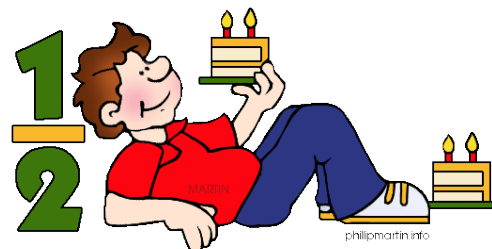
- **Focus on core skills - consolidate learning - build confidence** – These should be your focus and where you can best help your child- This advice applies even to the brightest of children.

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 maths 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 maths 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 doing all the times tables books in the list

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.



Developing core KS2 Skills ([see year four Maths papers and books](#))

- Do only 2 tests a week of this.
- Use the study book to boost knowledge of those skills which the weekly workouts show to be weaker, don't work through the study book from front to back as it's too turgid and this is difficult to do at home. Instead just use to boost knowledge in weaker (or new) areas.
- Starting later in year four? Then start on the second book in the series you choose.

Mental Maths ([see year four Maths papers and books](#)).

- Do two pages per week.
- Whatever skill level your child is at start with book two, if you finish it then move onto book three.
- Resist the temptation to move on to more difficult work with mental maths. You should be using these to exercise your child's skills and consolidate knowledge. Bright children should be getting 100% in every test without fail. Use these books to target accurate working which is far more important than moving ahead.

Worded Maths Problems ([see year four Maths papers and books](#))

- Please don't start book 5 until you have finished book 4 unless you are starting later in year four and have an advanced child.
- This is exactly the sort of consolidation work which is invaluable at this age and we have given books at the right level to deliver consolidation.



- Do one or two sets of questions each week depending on the time you have available.
- Again use this book to focus on accuracy and then also go back to the study skills book (see above) if questions throw up knowledge gaps.

Problem Solving ([see year four maths papers and books](#))

- You'll see the last book in the selection is a problem solving book.
- Do this gently tackling perhaps one page per week.
- It helps develop the skills needed in the exam.

Weekly Schedule

- You can see from the detail above that you'll be doing roughly five/six items of work a week.
- 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.
- Use the time you have wisely, there are no prizes for getting to the papers stage early and lots to lose if consolidation and core skills are not delivered properly (this takes time but it makes the difference between success and failure)
- 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.

