

## Y6 parent guidance on KS2 SPaG Y6

Since summer 2013, Year 6 children take a new English test as part of the SATs. So what will your child need to know, and how can you help them brush up their skills?

### **What is the SPAG test?**

The new English grammar, punctuation and spelling test (informally known as the SPAG test) was introduced in May 2013 as part of the KS2 SATs programme for Year 6 pupils, replacing the previous English writing test.

‘The Government wants all children to leave primary school with a sound grasp of essential English skills,’ says a Department for Education (DfE) spokesperson. ‘The test will put an additional focus on writing skills and encourage good teaching.’ The DfE has yet to confirm whether children will receive a standalone mark for the SPAG test, or whether it will form part of their overall English level.

### **What does the SPAG test examine?**

The SPAG test includes questions that assess the following elements of the English curriculum:

- **Sentence grammar** through both identifying and writing sentences that are grammatically correct
- **Punctuation** through identifying and writing sentences that are correctly punctuated
- **Vocabulary** through identifying and writing sentences in which a word is used correctly
- **Spelling**

### **What sort of questions will your child need to answer?**

The SPAG test consists of two papers.

**Paper 1** requires multiple choice or short sentence answers, covering areas such as using [connectives](#) (because, despite, however, etc), using [pronouns](#) (I/me) correctly, capitalising the correct words in a sentence and explaining why, putting the correct punctuation into a given sentence, writing sentences that illustrate two different meanings of the same word (such as ‘present’), identifying the [verb/noun/adjective/clauses in a sentence](#), and using plurals correctly. For example:

**Q: Which ending would make the word lazy an adverb?**

A: laziness/lazily/lazier/laziest

Correct answer: lazily

**Paper 2** is a spelling test, where children will have to spell words dictated by the examiner (presented within sentences). For example:

Pria turned on the **television** to watch her favourite cartoon.

## **What skills and knowledge do children need to succeed?**

‘The ability to write with purpose, accuracy and clarity, drawing on a wide range of vocabulary, is integral to success,’ says a DfE spokesperson.

But for your child to do well in the SPAG test, they don’t just have to be good at writing; they also need a **technical understanding of how the English language works**.

As well as being able to spell words correctly, use a wide range of vocabulary and punctuate well, they need to grasp the meaning of grammatical terms such as noun, verb, adjective, prefix, pronoun and adverb, know what phrases and clauses are and how to use them, understand what connectives are and how they work, know how to turn a question into a command, and so on. This terminology can be a stumbling block even for children who are otherwise good at reading and writing, and make the questions hard to understand; for a parent-friendly guide to the vocabulary and how English and grammar concepts are taught in primary school see our [\*\*primary literacy glossary for parents\*\*](#).

## **How can you help your child practise at home?**

There are plenty of other ways to help your child revise for the test:

- Copy some sentences from a book and get him to underline either the main or subordinate clause.
- Write down some unpunctuated sentences for your child to punctuate correctly.
- Call out a word and ask your child to tell you a synonym (a word that means the same) or an antonym (a word that means the opposite).
- When writing letters or emails, encourage your child to add an adjective or adverb to a sentence (e.g. ‘Thank you for my wonderful birthday present’)
- If your child asks you a question, ask how he would rephrase it as a command (e.g. ‘Can you make me a drink?’ becomes, ‘Make me a drink!’)

- Make spelling part of everyday life! Try a few [unusual strategies to improve your child's spelling](#), put a few [teachers' spelling tricks](#) to the test or [play some great spelling games](#).
- Encourage your child to read a variety of texts – fiction, information books, comics, newspapers, magazines, etc. – to broaden their vocabulary.

There are several websites that have copies of past SPaG papers. HOWEVER WE USE PAST PAPERS AS PART OF OUR SATS PREPARATION IN SCHOOL, SO WE WOULD PREFER THAT YOU DID NOT ACCESS THESE.

**For further reading and access to the above links visit:**

**<http://www.theschoolrun.com/y6-spelling-punctuation-and-grammar-testpelling>, Punctuation**