Multiplication tables check: administration guidance

April 2021

Contents

1 Introduction

In 2021, schools can choose to administer the multiplication tables check (MTC) to year 4 pupils, between Monday 7 June and Friday 25 June, but there is no requirement to do so.

This is an opportunity for schools to familiarise themselves with the nature of the check before its planned introduction as a statutory assessment in the 2021/22 academic year.

This guidance is for schools choosing to administer the check, and includes information to ensure schools can:

- prepare for check administration
- access the MTC service
- prepare check administrators
- administer the check
- provide feedback on the MTC service and administration process

1.1 Background

The MTC is an on-screen assessment designed to determine whether pupils are able to fluently recall their multiplication tables up to 12, through a set of timed questions. The [assessment framework](#)[1] gives more detail about the purpose, format, content and cognitive demand of the MTC.

1.2 Overview

Participating schools can choose to administer the check to some or all of their year 4 pupils between Monday 7 June and Friday 25 June. Schools can access the MTC service via [DfE Sign-in](#)[2] from Monday 19 April.

The [official check](#)[3] consists of 25 questions. Pupils will have 6 seconds to answer each question, with 3-seconds pause between questions. Pupils will answer 3 practice questions before the check begins.

Pupils can use the [try it out check](#)[4] from Monday 19 April to familiarise themselves with the format, including any access arrangements, before taking the official check. The try it out check is consistent with the official check.

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[1] www.gov.uk/government/publications/multiplication-tables-check-assessment-framework

[2] https://services.signin.education.gov.uk

[3] https://pupil.multiplication-tables-check.service.gov.uk/sign-in

[4] https://pupil.multiplication-tables-check.service.gov.uk/sign-in

1.3 Important dates

Date	Action
Monday 19 April	Schools can access the MTC service via [DfE Sign-in.](#)[5]
Monday 7 June to Friday 25 June	MTC administration period for schools choosing to participate.
Friday 25 June (no later than 4pm)	Deadline for schools to submit their headteachers declaration (HDF) form.
Monday 28 June	Provisional results (a total score for each pupil) available in the 'View pupil results' section of the MTC service

1.4 Help and support

These videos demonstrate how schools use the MTC [service](#)[6] and enable [access arrangements](#)[7].

There is separate [MTC IT guidance](#)[8] for the support staff who manage the school's ICT network.

For queries about administering the check, contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or email assessments@education.gov.uk.

For information on the DfE Sign-in service, including how to create an account and managing users, follow the [DfE Sign-in Help](#)[9] where you can submit a [support request form](#)[10], if required.

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[5] https://services.signin.education.gov.uk/

[6] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGODmZe3kbA

[7] www.youtube.com/watch?v=1O9NgAhyFFU&list= PL6gGtLyXoeq9eWA31dGs2RmsAM8jDhDXs&index=17

[8] www.gov.uk/guidance/multiplication-tables-check-it-guidance

[9] https://help.signin.education.gov.uk/contact

[10] https://help.signin.education.gov.uk/contact/submit?type=service-access&service=Multiplication%20tables%20check

2 Preparing for the check

From Monday 19 April, schools should access the MTC service via [DfE Sign-in](https://services.signin.education.gov.uk)[11] to:

- check their pupil register and ensure all participating pupils are included
- generate a school password and pupil identification numbers (PINs) on the days you are administering the try it out check
- allow pupils to use the try it out check to familiarise themselves with the format
- enable access arrangements for any pupils who need them
- allow pupils to use the try it out check to see if access arrangements meet their needs
- record any pupils who will not take the check

Schools should also prepare:

- devices for pupils to take the check
- check administrators
- rooms

2.1 View, add or edit pupils on your register

You can register pupils from Monday 19 April until the end of the check period on Friday 25 June.

From the MTC homepage, select 'View, edit and add pupils on your school's register.' The register will be pre-populated with the spring year 4 census data for your school. If needed, you can add pupils by selecting 'Add pupil' or 'Add multiple pupils.'

Add a pupil's alternative name

When pupils log in to the try it out check and the official check, they will see their name onscreen. If a pupil is known by a name other than their legal name reported on the census, you can add their alternative name so they will see it when they take the check. To do this, select the pupil and add their alternative name into the 'Known as' field.

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[11] https://services.signin.education.gov.uk

Organise pupils into groups

You can organise pupils into classes or smaller groups. This will make administering the check easier as you will be able to select a group when generating PINs, marking pupils as not taking the check, or arranging restarts.

From the homepage, select 'Organise pupils into groups' and then 'Create new group.' Name the group and select the pupils you want to add to it, then select 'Confirm.' You can edit groups until the check period ends on Friday 25 June.

2.2 Pupils not taking the check

If the headteacher decides a pupil should not take the check, they should record this on the MTC service. The headteacher's decision regarding participation is final.

Pupils should not take the check if:

- they are absent during the entire 3-week check window
- they are unable to participate, even when using suitable access arrangements
- they are considered unable to answer the easiest questions or are working below the national curriculum expectation for year 2 in multiplication tables[12]
- they have just arrived in school during the check period and there is not enough time to establish the pupil's abilities—for example, pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)
- they are working remotely due to disruption caused by coronavirus

Schools can also record a pupil as not taking the check if:

- they have left the school
- they appear on the register in error

These lists are not exhaustive. As the June 2021 check is optional, headteachers may decide a pupil will not take the check for another reason.

To record a pupil as not taking the check, select 'Confirm pupils not taking the check' on the homepage, then 'Select pupils.' Select 'Pupil not taking the check' and the pupils who will not take the check, then select 'Confirm'.

These pupils will then appear on the 'Pupils not taking the check' page. If a pupil has been withdrawn in error, select 'Remove.'

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[12] www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-mathematics-programmes-of-study

2.3 Access arrangements

Access arrangements may be appropriate for pupils:

- with an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- for whom provision is being made in school using the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) support system, or whose learning difficulty or disability significantly affects their ability to access the check
- who have behavioural, emotional or social difficulties
- with EAL and who have limited fluency in English

Schools do not need to request permission to use access arrangements. However, the support given should be based primarily on normal classroom practice and must never advantage or disadvantage individual pupils.

Enable access arrangements for pupils who need them

Check administrators can enable access arrangements for pupils with specific needs. Select 'Enable access arrangements for pupils who need them' from the homepage, then 'View pupils and assign arrangements.' Type the pupil's name into the search bar and select the access arrangements required, then 'Save.' You can assign more than one access arrangement to a pupil, if required.

When enabling the access arrangements 'Audio Version', Input assistant, and 'Pause – 'Next' button between questions' you should also provide a reason, then 'Save.'

Pupils should familiarise themselves with access arrangements using the try it out check to ensure the arrangements meet their needs before taking the official check.

If access arrangements have been enabled for a pupil, the arrangements will automatically be available to the pupil in the try it out check and the official check. When the pupil signs in, they will see a list of the access arrangements enabled.

Colour contrast

The standard version of the check includes black text on a white background. If colour contrast is enabled for a pupil, they will be able to change the text and background colours to one of the following combinations:

- yellow on black
- black on blue
- black on peach
- blue on cream

Font size

If font size is enabled for a pupil, they will be able to increase or decrease the size of the text and number pad on the screen.

Pause—'next' button between questions

The standard version of the check includes a 3-second pause between questions. If this is not long enough for a specific pupil, or the pace of the check may disadvantage the pupil, a 'Next' button can be enabled. Instead of a 3-second pause between questions, the pupil can select 'Next' when they are ready to start a new question. The check administrator should be aware the next question will not appear until the pupil selects the 'Next' button and may consider prompting them to select it, if needed. There is a 30-minute time limit to complete the check using this access arrangement.

Remove on-screen number pad

Enabling this feature will remove the on-screen number pad. This may be useful to support pupils who are distracted by the on-screen number pad, or do not plan to use it. Only the question and answer box will show on the screen. The pupil will need a keyboard to enter their response.

Input assistance

An input assistant is someone who enters answers dictated by the pupil. An input assistant can be used when a pupil is:

- unable to enter their own answers
- able to input, but inputting causes physical discomfort
- able to input, but inputs very slowly
- able to input, but finds inputting very difficult

The input assistant must enter their name at the start of the official check and then input the answers dictated by the pupil accurately. They must not be another pupil or a relative, carer or guardian of the pupil.

Audio version

If the audio version is enabled, it will read aloud all text displayed on the screen, including the instructions, questions and the answer inputted after each key press. Pupils can also use 'Tab' and 'Shift + Tab' to navigate through the elements displayed onscreen.

Schools should administer the check to pupils who are using the audio version in a separate room or provide headphones to avoid the audio version distracting other pupils taking the check at the same time.

The MTC service does not support third-party screen readers due to incompatibility with the timed element of the check. We recommend using Chrome or Safari web browsers

with the audio version. The audio version will not work with Internet Explorer or Edge due to technical limitations.

Audible time alert

Pupils with a visual impairment may not be able to see the on-screen question timer. If the audible time alert is enabled for a pupil, a beep will sound 2 seconds before the end of each question, then a different beep will sound to signal the end of each question.

Additional time to answer questions (not available)

Pupils cannot have additional time to complete the MTC questions. The purpose of the check is to determine whether pupils can recall their times tables fluently. Additional time would remove the fluent recall element of the check.

2.4 Generate passwords and PINs

Pupils will access the try it out and official check using a PIN and school password, generated by the school on the day they are administering it. Pupils must only sign in to the MTC using the PIN assigned to them. Your school's password will change each day.

There are separate PINs for the try it out check and the official check. It is important school staff do not confuse the different versions during the 3-week check window when both services are available. Schools can print their pupils' PINs on slips, which clearly state if they are for the try it out check or the official check.

PINs for the try it out check

Schools can generate try it out PINs from Monday 19 April until the end of the check period on Friday 25 June.

Pupils can use their PINs for the try it out check multiple times throughout the day. Schools can generate PINs from 6am but pupils cannot use them until 8am. They will expire at 4pm each day, so schools will have to generate new PINs if pupils use the try it out check on more than one day.

To generate a school password and PINs, select 'Generate password and PINs for the try it out check from the MTC homepage, then 'Generate PINs'. Select the pupils, or group of pupils, then select 'Confirm' on the green bar to generate PINs for those pupils.

You can print the PINs by selecting the pupils, or groups, then selecting 'Print selected.' You will notice the printed slips have a 'Try it out' watermark.

PINs for the official check

PINs for the official check can only be used once on the day they are generated and will expire at 4pm. This part of the service will only be available when the check period begins on Monday 7 June. Schools can generate PINs from 6am, but pupils cannot use them until 8am.

On the days you administer the official check, select 'Generate password and PINs for the official check' from the homepage. Select the pupil, or group of pupils, and then select 'Generate PINs.'

You can print the PINs by selecting the pupils, or groups, then selecting 'Print selected.' You will notice the printed slips have 'Official' on them.

2.5 Preview the check

Pupils can use the [try it out check](#)[13] from Monday 19 April.

Pupils must log in using their try it out PIN and school password.

It contains 3 practice questions, followed by 25 questions.

The try it out check is designed to help pupils familiarise themselves with the process and format, including the use of access arrangements. There is only one set of questions, but pupils can take the try it out check as many times as they need to.

Pupils will not receive a result for any questions they complete in the try it out check.

Access arrangements used in the try it out check will automatically be enabled for the pupil when they log in to the official check.

2.6 Equipment required

Schools can use any of the following devices to access the check:

- PC
- Mac
- laptop
- tablet

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[13] https://pupil.multiplication-tables-check.service.gov.uk

The [MTC IT guidance](#)[14] sets out the essential technical requirements.

2.7 Check administrators

The check should be administered by a member of school staff, such as a teacher or teaching assistant, who is:

- familiar with this guidance
- familiar with the devices being used
- known to the pupils

2.8 Preparing rooms

Schools should administer the check in a room that is quiet and provides a comfortable, well-lit space.

To prepare rooms for the check, you should:

- remove or cover any displays or teaching materials that could provide pupils with an unfair advantage, such as times tables posters on walls
- ensure pupils do not have a pen or pencil, paper, calculator, mobile phone, smart watch or other items that may provide them with an advantage during the check
- ensure seating arrangements will allow all pupils to work quietly and independently
- make sure pupils will not be distracted by other pupils or their devices
- ensure the devices are switched on, charged and in good working order before pupils enter the room

Schools may find it helpful to have the sign-in page for the [official check](#)[15] loaded on devices before pupils enter the room.

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[14]www.gov.uk/guidance/multiplication-tables-check-it-guidance

[15] https://pupil.multiplication-tables-check.service.gov.uk

3 Administering the check

3.1 Check administration period

Schools must administer the official check between Monday 7 June and Friday 25 June.

> Schools are strongly encouraged to administer the check within the first 2 weeks. This leaves the final week for pupils who were absent during the first 2 weeks or in case of any delays to administration due to technical difficulties.

When planning your timetable to administer the check, you should consider how many pupils will take the check at the same time. You can administer the check to individuals, small groups or a whole class.

Unlike paper-based national curriculum assessments, pupils who have taken the check do not need to be kept separate from pupils who have not yet taken it.

3.2 Overview of the pupils' experience

The first screen pupils will see requires the school password and their PIN. School passwords and PINs have been designed to enable most year 4 pupils to sign in by themselves, but a check administrator should supervise the process. Check that pupils have PIN slips with 'Official' on them and do not contain the 'Try it out' watermark.

The pupil will then see a screen with their name, date of birth, and the school's name. If the details are correct, they can press 'Next' to continue.

If they are incorrect, they should press 'Sign out' to return to the sign in screen and tell the check administrator. The check administrator should confirm the pupil has entered their details and PIN correctly.

The welcome screen provides instructions.

Pupils should select 'Start now' to begin the practice questions. When they have answered the 3 practice questions, they will see a screen confirming the practice is complete.

When they are ready, the pupil should select 'Next' to move to the start page. They can then select 'Start now' to begin the check.

When pupils have completed the check, they will see a screen confirming they have finished, and they should wait for the check to upload.

When their responses have uploaded, pupils can select 'Sign out' to exit the check, or 'Feedback' to give feedback about their experience.

3.3 Instructions to pupils

Schools should introduce the check as consistently as possible, bearing in mind some pupils may require more explanation to understand the instructions.

The following text provides an example of how you could introduce the check:

> "In this activity, you are going to be asked 25 times tables questions.
>
> First, there are 3 practice questions. You can use these to practise putting in your answers."
>
> (For pupils using a PC or laptop with a touchscreen) "You can use the number pad on your keyboard, the numbers on screen using the mouse, or the numbers on screen using a touchscreen."
>
> (For pupils using a tablet) "Put in your answer using the numbers on the touchscreen."
>
> "When the questions start, you will have 6 seconds to answer each question. The system will automatically accept your answer after 6 seconds.
>
> You do not need to press the 'Enter' button if you do not want to, but you can bring up the next question sooner by pressing or selecting 'Enter.'
>
> There will be 3-seconds pause between each question.
>
> You cannot pause or stop the check once you have started.
>
> When you have finished the check, you can leave comments to say how you found it by selecting the 'Feedback' button.
>
> Does anybody have any questions before we begin?
>
> You can now enter your details to sign in."

3.4 Problems or queries during check administration

Answering pupils' questions

There is no option for a pupil to pause or stop the check once it has started unless the 'Next question' access arrangement has been enabled for that pupil in advance.

Check administrators should be careful not to say or do anything that might give a pupil an advantage. If a pupil asks you how to answer a particular question, explain you will discuss it with them after the check has finished and tell them to continue.

Internet connection issues

If there is no internet connection at the end of the check, pupils will see a screen confirming the upload was not successful. If this error occurs, select 'Try upload again' when there is a stable internet connection. Where possible, do not switch off the device. If this does not solve the issue, contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013.

IT issues

The [MTC IT guidance](#)[16] contains essential technical requirements and other recommended actions. If you experience technical issues during the check, speak to your local IT support in the first instance. If you need further advice, contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013.

3.5 Select pupils to restart the check

If a pupil was interrupted during the check, you can allow them to restart it. The pupil will see a different set of questions from their previous attempt. Only the outcome of their final completed attempt will be reported, regardless of which score was higher.

Schools must not allow a pupil to restart the check simply to 'have another go', unless they suffered a significant disruption described below. Pupils can only restart the check twice (allowing them a maximum of 3 attempts.)

Restarts are allowed for the following reasons:

- classroom disruption—the pupil was significantly distracted (for example, a fire alarm or building evacuation, illness during the check, or behavioural disruption in the check room)
- did not complete—the pupil did not complete the check (for example, they accidentally closed the check window)
- IT issues—there was a problem with the digital device the pupil was using (for example, device hard drive failure or power loss)
- prolonged loss of internet connection during the check and the data could not be recovered at the end

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[16] www.gov.uk/guidance/multiplication-tables-check-it-guidance

To notify the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) of a pupil restarting the check, select 'Restarts' from the MTC homepage, then 'Select pupils to restart.' State the reason and which pupils were affected, then 'Confirm.'

If a pupil has been selected for a restart in error, select 'Remove restart.'

You will need to generate a new PIN for pupils who are restarting the check, even if they restart the check on the same day as their original attempt.

4 After the check

4.1 See how many pupils have completed the official check

Once a pupil completes the check, their status will automatically update to 'Check completed.' The 'See how many pupils have completed the official check' page will also display any pupils recorded as not taking the check (see section 2.2.)

If there are technical issues with a pupil's check, such as the data not being returned due to prolonged loss of internet, the 'See how many pupils have completed the official check' page will advise on the next steps to take, which may involve the pupil restarting the check.

It is the headteacher's responsibility to ensure participating pupils have completed the check and non-participating pupils have been recorded as not taking the check by Friday 25 June.

4.2 Complete the headteacher's declaration form

Headteachers should submit the HDF once all pupils have completed the check or been recorded as not taking the check, and by no later than 4pm on Friday 25 June.

4.3 View pupil results

Pupils will not see their individual results when they complete the check. Schools will see their results (a total score for each pupil) in the 'View pupil results' section of the MTC service from Monday 28 June, providing:

- all pupils have completed the check or are recorded as not taking the check
- the HDF has been submitted

Schools can download a common transfer file (CTF) containing their MTC results, which they can upload into their management information system.

Data from the 2021 optional MTC will not be used in Analyse School Performance.

4.4 Feedback

There is a questionnaire on the MTC homepage where teachers can provide feedback. You will be asked how satisfied you were with the administration process, how you found the service and how we might improve it.

Pupils will also be asked for their feedback after they have completed the official check.

Feedback is optional and we will use responses to help improve the service for future years.

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