

[Home](#) ▾ [Education, training and skills](#) ▾ [School curriculum](#) ▾ [Early years curriculum](#)
▾ [How to try out the 2025 reception baseline assessment services](#)



[Standards
& Testing
Agency](#)

Guidance

How to try out the 2025 reception baseline assessment services

Updated 5 November 2024

Contents

- [1. The 2025 reception baseline assessment](#)
- [2. Why schools should try it out](#)
- [3. Important dates](#)
- [4. Digital devices required](#)
- [5. Overview of the assessment](#)
- [6. The assessment services](#)
- [7. Managing pupils](#)
- [8. Preparing for the assessment](#)
- [9. Administering the 'try it out' assessment with pupils](#)
- [10. After completing the assessment](#)
- [11. Additional guidance and support](#)

1. The 2025 reception baseline assessment

Maintained schools, academies (including free schools) and Ministry of Defence schools will use our new assessment services to administer the statutory RBA from September 2025.

Schools will need a minimum of 2 devices to administer the RBA. The practitioner will need one device to administer the assessment, and the pupil will need to use a separate touchscreen device to respond to some of the questions. This change supports accessibility and aligns with developments in classroom practice.

The assessment will remain interactive and still use physical resources for some of the questions.

2. Why schools should try it out

We developed the 2025 RBA ‘try it out’ activity so that schools can have the opportunity to:

- familiarise themselves with the new assessment services
- view questions similar to future RBA assessment questions
- check they have compatible devices that can be paired and connected successfully
- provide user feedback on the services

The new assessment services do not affect the [statutory RBA in the academic year 2024 to 2025](#). Schools must continue to administer this using the [Baseline e-Portal \(BeP\)](#).

We are still developing and researching the new assessment services for the 2025 RBA. Some parts of the ‘try it out’ activity will only test the services’ functionality and may not reflect the final version of the 2025 RBA.

We will use the data collected during the ‘try it out’ activity to better understand how users engage with the assessment service, inform future user research and improve the services. You can find more information about how your data is processed in the Department for Education’s (DfE) [personal information charter](#).

3. Important dates

Date	Action
Monday 11 November to Friday 29 November	Schools can try out the new assessment services for the 2025 RBA
Friday 6 December	Deadline for schools to provide user feedback – see section ‘after completing the assessment’

4. Digital devices required

From September 2025, schools will need a minimum of 2 digital devices to administer the RBA. They must meet the criteria detailed in the [2025 RBA IT guidance](#).

This guidance refers to the 2 devices you will need to administer the 'try it out' assessment as the 'practitioner device' and the 'pupil device'.

Device	Purpose
Practitioner device	The main device that will guide the practitioner throughout the assessment - the practitioner must follow its instructions, then use the pupil device when directed
Pupil device	A touchscreen device used by the pupil to respond to questions

5. Overview of the assessment

The 'try it out' assessment contains a few example questions similar to the 2025 RBA. The assessment is designed to give you the opportunity to experience administering the RBA with a pupil using the new assessment service. However, the 'try it out' assessment questions do not reflect a real assessment.

The 'try it out' activity includes 2 assessment components:

- mathematics
- literacy, communication and language

There are 4 sample questions within each component. The 'try it out' assessment should take approximately 10 minutes to complete both components.

We will only use the data from the 'try it out' assessment to measure engagement with the new service. We will not use it to inform any performance measures.

5.1 Physical resources

For the 2025 RBA, pupils will respond to some questions by using a touchscreen device and others using physical resources from the existing RBA resource packs.

The 'try it out' assessment does not use of any physical resources.

5.2 Question routing

The 2025 RBA will use question routing, which means that some questions may not be used for some pupils if their previous answers suggest they are unlikely to respond correctly.

The ‘try it out’ assessment does not have this facility – all pupils will receive the same questions.

6. The assessment services

The new assessment service is made up of 2 services. You will need to access both services via [DfE Sign-in](#) to complete the ‘try it out’ activities.

Service	Activity
Assessment service: manage your school’s assessments	Manage pupils, complete the headteacher’s declaration form and view and download narrative statements
Assessment service: start an assessment	Complete training, familiarise yourself with assessment questions, check your network and devices, view and download supporting materials, manage accessibility settings and start the assessment

All maintained schools and academies with a reception cohort will be able to access both assessment services to take part in the ‘try it out’ activity from Monday 11 November to Friday 29 November via [DfE Sign-in](#).

6.1 New assessment service users

You will need to add both services to your DfE Sign-in account if you have not used them before. A DfE Sign-in approver within your school will need to approve your requests.

6.2 DfE Sign-in approvers

DfE Sign-in approvers can add services to their own account or to other user accounts. They can do this by selecting 'add services to my account' or, for other users, via the 'manage users' section.

To learn more about DfE Sign-in, select [DfE Sign-in 'Help'](#) after signing into your account. If you are unable to find the answer to your question, you can [contact DfE Sign-in](#) for further support.

7. Managing pupils

To register pupils or record pupils as not participating in the 'try it out' assessment, use the 'Manage pupils' section within 'Assessment service: manage your school's assessments'.

7.1 Register pupils

You should upload your full reception cohort including each pupil's full name, unique pupil number, date of birth and gender.

We recommend you register your pupils by downloading a common transfer file (CTF) of pupil data from your school's management information system (MIS) and uploading it to the assessment service.

Alternatively, you can choose to:

- register pupils individually
- register multiple pupils at once using a spreadsheet

You can use your own discretion to select pupils to participate in the 'try it out' assessment. We recommend a minimum of 3 pupils take the assessment so that you can experience administering it to multiple pupils.

Only administer the 'try it out' assessment to pupils who have completed the statutory 2024 RBA on the BeP.

7.2 Change status of pupils not taking part

Record all pupils not taking part in the 'try it out' assessment with the reason 'pupil

is not taking part in the 'try it out' activity' in the 'Change pupil taking status' section.

8. Preparing for the assessment

A member of school staff, such as a teacher or teaching assistant, should administer the 'try it out' assessment. They should also be:

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

As a practitioner, you will administer the 'try it out' assessment using 2 devices.

You will read an instruction aloud to the pupil from your practitioner device. Depending on the question, the pupil will respond by either:

- interacting with their pupil device
- telling the practitioner their answer

Before administering the 'try it out' assessment with pupils, we recommend that you prepare by completing the following activities within the 'Assessment service: start an assessment' section:

- training topics
- familiarisation with assessment questions
- check your network and devices

8.1 Training topics

The training on the assessment service will support you to:

- administer the assessment questions with pupils
- prepare pupils for the assessment
- navigate the assessment

8.2 Familiarising yourself with the assessment questions

You can use the 'Preview the assessment' section to view the questions that will appear in the 'try it out' assessment before administering it to pupils.

8.3 Check your network and devices

The devices you will use to administer the assessment must be able to connect to each other.

The [2025 RBA IT guidance](#) sets out the technical requirements and recommended actions for IT staff and practitioners to ensure both devices are able to access the assessment.

You should use the 'Check that your network and devices can start the assessment' section to ensure:

- your practitioner device can connect to the service
- your pupil device can connect to the service
- the devices can connect to each other

You should carry out these checks under the same conditions you plan to administer the assessment - for example, in the same location and using the same devices and Wi-Fi connection.

8.4 Accessibility settings

In 'Assessment service: start an assessment', you can view and change accessibility settings to adapt the assessment for pupils.

These settings include:

- changing the background colour to blue, pink or green
- adding borders around question content
- changing the colour contrast to black on peach, yellow on black, black on white or black on blue
- changing the images so they are in a simplified style or greyscale

8.5 Modifying assessment questions for pupils with specific needs

In 'Assessment service: start an assessment', you can 'View and download supporting assessment materials'. This includes modified administration guidance

to support practitioners in administering the assessment to pupils with hearing and visual impairments.

9. Administering the ‘try it out’ assessment with pupils

When you are ready to administer the ‘try it out’ assessment to pupils, you will need your DfE Sign-in username and password to sign in to both devices:

1. Sign in to your practitioner device first.
2. To support the pairing of devices, you will be prompted when signing in to select if the device is being used by a practitioner or a pupil.
3. If you have registered at least one pupil, you will then be able to select ‘Start assessment’ and follow the instructions on the practitioner and pupil devices.

10. After completing the assessment

Once you have successfully completed both assessment components with your selected pupils, you should:

- access an example narrative statement for the ‘try it out’ assessment
- ask your headteacher to complete a headteacher’s declaration form (HDF) for the ‘try it out’ activity
- provide feedback so that we can learn from your experience

10.1 Narrative statements

Narrative statements provide a snapshot of a pupil’s attainment at the time the assessment was completed.

Individual pupil narrative statements will not be available for the ‘try it out’ assessment, but you can view and download a generic narrative statement in ‘Assessment service: manage my school’s assessments’.

10.2 Headteacher’s declaration form

Headteachers or someone with delegated authority can submit the HDF within the

‘Assessment service: manage your school’s assessments’.

The HDF for the ‘try it out’ activity will only confirm that your school has:

- administered the ‘try it out’ assessment to selected pupils
- completed the feedback questionnaire

10.3 Feedback questionnaire

We value your feedback and are keen to learn from your, and your colleagues’, experiences. Please take note of anything you find works well and anything that could be improved while completing the ‘try it out’ activity. Your feedback will help us improve our services.

Please complete the online questionnaire after you have completed all your chosen assessments. The link will be available at the top of ‘Assessment service: start an assessment’.

School staff involved in the ‘try it out’ activity can also choose to provide feedback by completing our [feedback questionnaire](#).

11. Additional guidance and support

For additional support with the RBA ‘try it out’ activity, you can:

- access our new [RBA help centre](#), where our virtual assistant may be able to help answer your questions or help you send us a message
- call the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 and select the option for the reception baseline assessment ‘try it out’ activity
- watch our RBA ‘try it out’ activity video:

[Try out the 2025 reception baseline assessment](#)

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