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Guidance

2026 optional key stage 1 modified test administration guidance: administering braille versions

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This guidance will help you prepare to administer braille versions of the optional key stage 1 (KS1) tests. We recommend you follow it to ensure pupils using braille versions of the tests can access them properly and are not at a disadvantage.

The information expands on the 'Test administration' section of the [2026 optional KS1 tests guidance](#).

You should use this guidance together with the:

- [optional KS1 test administration guidance \(TAG\)](#)
- test administration instructions, available to download from the 'Activities' tab on the [National Curriculum Assessments Portal \(NCA Portal\)](#)
- braille test administration instructions, delivered with your school's order of braille test materials

The test administration instructions include information about what you need to do before, during and after each test.

Schools may also want to use [past test materials](#) to help pupils prepare for the tests.

1. Planning for the tests

1.1 Access arrangements

If administering under test conditions, you should follow the [optional KS1 tests: access arrangements guidance](#) and the specific guidance below when administering braille versions of the tests.

Making further adaptations to the tests

The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) has already made changes to the wording and layout of the standard test questions, where appropriate, to produce versions of the tests in Unified English Braille (UEB). The optional KS1 tests are available in uncontracted braille and include the capital letter sign. You may re-braille the tests in a mixture of uncontracted (grade 1) and contracted (grade 2) braille, and without the capital letter sign, if this is the pupil's normal way of working.

If you make further adaptations to a braille version of the tests, you should ensure that the page layout and accuracy of the materials are not affected. If you adapt the corresponding text, questions or page references incorrectly, pupils may be disadvantaged.

Scribes

If a scribe supports a brailist, the scribe should record the pupil's answers on plain paper in a numbered list.

For questions using diagrams, it should be clear where the pupil has indicated the answer – for example, pin marks.

Transcribing and making corrections on pupils' work

Pupils who wish to correct their work should do this as clearly as possible to assist marking. For brailists, we recommend you use a series of 'for' signs (full 6-dot cells) to obscure the incorrect work. You should then record the correct answer under the first answer. If this is difficult, you should write on the pupil's braille answers, indicating which response the pupil does not want to be marked. You should do this accurately, according to the pupil's instructions and before the pupil leaves the test room.

You should not transcribe or overwrite any part of a pupil's test script unless it is a correction of braille requested by the pupil. If a pupil produces unclear braille that needs to be clarified, you should transcribe this in print on the pupil's braille answers. You should clearly indicate which section of braille the annotation refers to.

It is important that evidence of the pupil's own response is available to the marker.

1.2 Equipment for the tests

Braille versions of the tests are designed so that standard classroom equipment can be used. The braille test administration instructions provided with the braille test materials will list specific equipment needed for each test.

In all tests, pupils will need a suitable way of recording their answers which reflects how they usually write in the classroom. If a pupil is brailleing their responses, they will need braille paper to record their answers.

You may wish to provide real objects that resemble those illustrated in the tests. Take care to use shapes identical to those drawn and to keep relative sizes the same. Pupils should not experiment with these objects. You are advised to indicate on the test paper where models are available for pupils to handle or look at.

Braille test materials may include diagrams on film, brailon or swell paper, but pupils may still require assistance in drawing and labelling.

1.3 Use of rooms for modified tests

You should consider administering braille versions of the tests to pupils in a separate room from other pupils taking the tests. The instructions and content of the braille tests are slightly different from the standard versions, and pupils using the braille versions are automatically entitled to up to 100% additional time in the tests.

Administering the tests in a separate room from the rest of the cohort will avoid distracting pupils using different versions of the tests. Pupils using braille versions of the tests may also need more space to lay out their test papers and equipment.

2. Administering the tests under test conditions

2.1 Test materials

The braille test pack will contain a copy of the test in UEB. You will also receive a printed transcript to help you administer the test. You should check the printed transcript carefully before starting the test, as the wording of text and questions may be different to the standard versions.

A small amount of additional text may be added to clarify visual references and explain information that appears as images in the standard version. Some tables, diagrams or charts may have been simplified. At a pupil's request, you may point to parts of the test paper such as charts, diagrams, statements and equations, but you should not explain the information or help the pupil by interpreting it.

The capital sign, italic sign, letter sign and bracket sign may be used in all the tests. You may tell the pupil what the letters or signs represent if they are unfamiliar with them. Other punctuation signs will be used in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test. You should not explain any punctuation marks in this test.

2.2 When to open test materials

The front of each test pack includes instructions detailing when the test materials can be opened, to prepare for their administration.

2.3 Pupils' responses

Braille users will use separate sheets of braille paper and are not expected to record their answers on the test papers. Braille versions of the mathematics tests may include separate inserts for particular questions. These are tagged at the back of the test papers. We suggest pupils draw or braille on these inserts. At the end of the test, we recommend you attach any separate sheets where a pupil has recorded their answers to the pupil's test script.

2.4 Instructions for mathematics

Models

You should not explain subject-specific terminology, as an understanding of this is part of the assessment. If any context or words related to a question are unfamiliar to a pupil, you may explain them or, if appropriate, provide the pupil with related objects to handle. Where appropriate, for some specific questions, models will be supplied in the braille administration packs. Take care to use shapes identical to those drawn and to keep relative sizes the same. We suggest you indicate on the test paper where models are available for pupils to handle. The braille test administration instructions will include guidance on using these models.

2.5 Assistance

If administering under test conditions, to ensure the most valid results, you should not say or do anything during the tests which could be interpreted as giving pupils an advantage – for example, indicating that an answer is correct or incorrect, or suggesting the pupil review an answer again.

If a pupil has used a word processor to type their answer and asks to hear their response read back to them, or played back via a screen reader, this would be

allowed – but only if a pupil requests it.

Braille test materials may include diagrams on film, brailon or swell paper, but pupils may still require assistance in drawing and labelling.

3. Administering the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test under test conditions

3.1 Paper 1: spelling

There is no braille version of 'Paper 1: spelling'. Instructions for administering this paper to pupils with a visual impairment are the same as the standard test administration instructions, available to download from the 'Activities' tab on the [NCA Portal](#). You should use the test transcript from the standard version and pupils should spell the target words in list form in braille.

The standard version of the test should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. If pupils are using braille versions of the tests, you may consider allowing those pupils additional time to complete the test. It is at your discretion to choose how much, if any, additional time is given to the pupil.

It is at your discretion to choose when, or if, pupils require a break during the test or whether, if appropriate, to stop the test early.

Pupils should use uncontracted braille to spell the target words. If any pupil is unable to record their answers using uncontracted braille, you should ask them to spell the word orally and their answers should be recorded by a scribe.

If any pupil inadvertently uses a braille contraction in their spellings, test administrators may check the pupil's spelling of the word orally and annotate the paper accordingly. If the test administrator suspects that a brailist has used a braille reversal in their answer, they may ask the pupil to spell the word orally and annotate the paper accordingly.

If a pupil is using an electronic braille machine, such as a BrailleNote, the grammar

and spell check should be disabled prior to the test.

3.2 Paper 2: questions

Format

'Paper 2: questions' consists of a single question booklet.

The standard version of the test should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. If pupils are using braille versions of the tests, you may consider allowing those pupils additional time to complete the test. It is at your discretion to choose how much, if any, additional time is given to the pupil.

It is at your discretion to choose when, or if, pupils require a break during the test or whether, if appropriate, to stop the test early.

There is a printed transcript of the braille booklet to help test administrators. You should refer to the printed transcript rather than the standard test questions when administering this test.

Pupils should work through the question booklet provided, recording their responses on separate sheets of braille paper. For some questions, pupils will be able to record just the letter of the correct answer. For other questions a word, sentence or phrase may be required.

Equipment

Each pupil will need:

- a suitable way of recording their answers that reflects the usual way the pupil writes in class, such as a braille, electronic braille display or word processor
- braille paper, if the pupil is brailleing their responses

If a pupil is using an electronic braille machine, such as a BrailleNote, the grammar and spell check should be disabled prior to the test.

Pupils are not allowed:

- a dictionary or thesaurus
- electronic spell checkers
- bilingual word lists or electronic translators

Assistance

If a pupil requests it, you may read the question to them on a one-to-one basis.

You should not explain subject-specific terminology, as an understanding of this is part of the assessment. If any other word in a question is unfamiliar to pupils, you may explain it, or show them objects, to help them understand.

You should not give alternative explanations – for example, you should not explain ‘commands’ as ‘instructions’ or name punctuation.

[Notes for readers in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests](#) will help you understand how to communicate particular types of questions.

The following examples illustrate how to deal with some common situations:

Question: “I do not understand the question.”

Answer: “Read the question again and pay attention to words that tell you what to do.”

Question: “What does ‘adverb’ mean?”

Answer: “I cannot tell you, but think hard and try to remember. We can talk about it after the test.”

4. Administering the English reading test under test conditions

4.1 Paper 1: combined reading prompt and question booklet

Format

Paper 1 consists of a single reading prompt and question booklet in braille. There is a printed transcript of the braille booklet to help test administrators.

The standard version of the test should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. If pupils are using braille versions of the tests, you may consider allowing those pupils additional time to complete the test. It is at your discretion to choose how much, if any, additional time is given to the pupil.

It is at your discretion to choose when, or if, pupils require a break during the test or whether, if appropriate, to stop the test early.

In Paper 1, the text and corresponding questions have been presented as facing pages wherever possible.

The braille question booklet will include an example of the multiple-choice question format. We suggest you help pupils to identify the correct answer to this example, so they are familiar with the method of answering this type of question.

Where question responses are labelled with letters, or letters and numbers, pupils may either:

- record the letter or number as their chosen answer – for example: b, d, 1c, 2a
- record the answer in full

Tactile diagrams may be provided where appropriate and may be included in the reading booklet. If administering under test conditions, you may stop the clock while braille users examine the diagrams, as they will need additional time to interpret them.

We recommend you refer to the printed transcript rather than the standard test questions when administering the braille version of the test.

Equipment

Each pupil will need:

- a suitable way of recording their answers that reflects the usual way the pupil writes in class, such as a braille, electronic braille display or word processor
- braille paper if the pupil is brailleing their responses

If it is normal classroom practice, pupils may use monolingual English electronic spell checkers, provided they do not give definitions of words.

Pupils should not use a dictionary or thesaurus.

Assistance

As the English reading tests are assessing reading skills, they should not be read to individuals or to a group, except for the general instructions, the practice text and

practice questions.

You may help pupils to locate pages or paragraphs in the text, as well as the questions in the booklet. You may also help pupils to identify and interpret any tactile diagrams within the test, but you should not help with the reading of any text.

Braille users may choose to record themselves reading out loud the questions they have decoded, which they can play back to themselves instead of having to re-read the braille text.

If a pupil asks a question about test content, you should not explain any words or expressions.

The example below illustrates how to deal with a common situation:

Question: “I do not understand the question.”

Answer: “Read the question again and pay attention to words that tell you what to do.”

4.2 Paper 2: reading booklet and question booklet

Format

Paper 2 consists of a reading booklet and a separate question booklet.

The standard version of the test should take approximately 40 minutes to complete. If pupils are using braille versions of the tests, you may consider allowing those pupils additional time to complete the test. It is at your discretion to choose how much, if any, additional time is given to the pupil.

It is at your discretion to choose when, or if, a pupil requires a break during the test or whether, if appropriate, to stop the test early.

This paper does not include practice questions or lists of useful words.

In Paper 2, each question has a page number above it in brackets. This is the page in the reading prompt where the pupil can find the information that they need to answer the question.

There are printed transcripts of the braille booklets to help test administrators. We recommend you refer to the printed transcript rather than the standard test questions when administering this test.

Equipment

Each pupil will need:

- a suitable way of recording their answers that reflects the usual way the pupil writes in class, such as a braille, electronic braille display or word processor
- braille paper, if the pupil is brailleing their responses

If it is normal classroom practice, pupils may use monolingual English electronic spell checkers, provided they do not give definitions of words.

Pupils are not allowed to use a dictionary or thesaurus.

Assistance

As the English reading tests are assessing reading skills, they should not be read to individuals or to a group, except for the general instructions.

You may help pupils to locate pages or paragraphs in the text, as well as questions in the reading question booklet. You may also help pupils to identify and interpret any tactile diagrams within the test, but you should not help with the reading of any text.

Braillists may choose to record themselves reading out loud the questions they have decoded, which they can play back to themselves instead of having to re-read the braille text.

If a pupil asks a question about test content, you should not explain any words or expressions.

The example below illustrates how to deal with a common query:

Question: "I do not understand the question."

Answer: "Read the question again and pay attention to words that tell you what to do."

5. Administering the mathematics test under test conditions

5.1 Paper 1: arithmetic

Format

'Paper 1: arithmetic' consists of a single braille question booklet. There is a printed transcript of the braille booklet to help test administrators.

The standard version of the test should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. If pupils are using braille versions of the test, you may consider allowing those pupils additional time to complete the test. It is at your discretion to choose how much, if any, additional time is given to the pupil.

It is at your discretion to choose when, or if, pupils require a break during the test or whether, if appropriate, to stop the test early.

The test materials consist of a braille test paper that contains an uncontracted braille version of the questions.

Some braille test papers may have loose sheets of plain paper inserted between facing page diagrams and the text, to protect the braille dots. We recommend you remove these before giving the test paper to the pupil.

The tests contain established UEB code to indicate missing words, letters or expressions. The braille code for missing numbers is given in the instructions section of the mathematics papers.

You should provide each pupil with blank sheets of braille paper for their answers.

We recommend you refer to the printed transcript, rather than the standard test questions, when administering this test.

Equipment

Each pupil will need:

- a suitable way of recording their answers that reflects the usual way the pupil

writes in class, such as a braille, electronic braille display or word processor

- braille paper, if the pupil is brailleing their responses
- a suitable tactile ruler

Pupils are not allowed:

- calculators
- number apparatus – for example, base ten materials or number squares

Assistance

If a pupil requests it, you can read a question to the pupil on a one-to-one basis.

If reading to a pupil, you may only read words and numbers, but not mathematical symbols. This ensures pupils are not given an advantage by having the function inadvertently explained by reading its name.

The examples below illustrate how to deal with some common queries:

Question: “What does this sign here mean?”

Answer: “I cannot tell you, but think hard and try to remember. We can talk about it after the test.”

Question: “Does this mean ‘take away’?”

Answer: “I cannot tell you, but think hard and try to remember. We can talk about it after the test.”

Question: “What does ‘of’ mean?” (If the question asks about an everyday word that has a mathematical meaning within the question – for example ‘What is half of 8?’)

Answer: “I cannot tell you, but think hard and try to remember. We can talk about it after the test.”

5.2 Paper 2: reasoning

Format

'Paper 2: reasoning' has 2 sections:

- an aural section, starting with a practice question followed by 5 aural questions
- a written section, where pupils are presented with written questions

The standard version of the test should take approximately 35 minutes to complete, including 5 minutes for the aural questions. If pupils are using braille versions of the tests, you may consider allowing those pupils additional time to complete the test. It is at your discretion to choose how much, if any, additional time is given to the pupil.

It is at your discretion to choose when, or if, pupils require a break during the test or whether, if appropriate, to stop the test early.

There is a printed transcript of the braille booklet to help test administrators.

The test materials consist of:

- a braille test paper, which contains an uncontracted braille version of the questions
- any additional stimulus material necessary for pupils to access the questions

Models may be provided in the braille administration pack for use in specific questions. Guidance will be provided in the braille test administration instructions where this is the case.

Some questions may be accompanied by stimulus material presented on separate braille sheets or separate inserts. These are tagged at the back of the test papers. Pupils may need to draw or braille on these inserts.

Some braille test papers may have loose sheets of plain paper inserted between facing page diagrams and the text to protect the braille dots. We recommend you remove these before giving the test paper to the pupil.

The tests use established UEB code to indicate missing words, letters or expressions. The braille code for missing numbers is given in the instructions section of the mathematics papers.

You should provide each pupil with blank sheets of braille paper for their answers.

Drawings, diagrams and tables

'Paper 2: reasoning' contains diagrams, graphs and pictures. Where necessary, we have simplified or adapted these for the braille test papers, but pupils might still need help locating diagrams or clarifying their layout. Compared with standard

versions of the tests, some non-essential diagrams and pictures may have been omitted from the braille test papers.

Drawings

Pupils may need to draw in response to some questions. Where this is the case, pupils should use the method they think is most appropriate – for example, the area covered by the shape may be shaded, marked or indicated by pins, if used, so it can be easily marked.

Where braillists need to draw on plastic film, spare copies of the diagrams are provided so they can make a second attempt, if necessary. Where appropriate, you should encourage pupils to use a ruler when drawing a straight line on film. You may need to assist the pupil when labelling these diagrams. You should ensure the diagrams are attached to the pupil's test script at the end of the test.

Pupils may draw using one, or a combination, of the following techniques:

- with a stylus on plastic film – a jelly mat to place the plastic film on is essential
- with pins and bands made by the pupil on either the thermoform or a plastic film sheet, or points shown with adhesive putty; you should mount the diagram on a corkboard if pins will be used and you will remove the pins and bands, or adhesive putty, then indicate their positions by marking or drawing on the sheet, preferably with a permanent marker – labels should be transcribed as positioned by the pupil
- by placing cardboard shapes in a particular position; when a diagram is created with several shapes, you should show the outline of the individual components as well as the outline of the whole shape created – for example, a shape made up of 4 triangles should show the 4 triangles and not just the outline of the completed shape

Diagrams

Some diagrams may be tagged separately at the back of the test booklet. These are for use on a graph board or jelly mat, or for pupils to braille on directly. We recommend you detach these diagrams before administering the test so you can prepare them appropriately. Keep spare copies of the diagrams separate in case they are needed during the test.

You may stop the clock if pupils with severe visual impairments need time to interpret diagrams. You can help the pupil identify key features of the diagram, but you should not explain the information or help the pupil by interpreting it.

Tables

If a pupil has to fill out a table, we will either provide:

- labels for pupils to put into the cells of the table
- a separate copy of the table, which pupils should complete using their braille

You may help the pupil align their responses within the table.

Equipment

Each pupil will need:

- a suitable way of recording their answers that reflects the usual way the pupil writes in class, such as a braille, electronic braille display or word processor
- braille paper if the pupil is brailleing their responses
- a suitable tactile ruler

If it is normal classroom practice, pupils may use:

- pins and bands to help record responses on diagrams
- monolingual English electronic spell checkers
- bilingual word lists
- bilingual dictionaries or electronic translators, provided they only give word for word translations

Pupils are not allowed:

- calculators
- number apparatus – for example, base ten materials or number squares

Assistance

If a pupil requests it, you may read a question to them on a one-to-one basis.

You can also read from question 6 onwards in the written section if a pupil has difficulty reading the questions for themselves.

If reading to a pupil, you can read words and numbers but not mathematical symbols. This ensures that pupils are not given an advantage by having the function inadvertently explained by reading its name.

At a pupil's request, you may point to parts of the test paper such as charts, diagrams, statements and equations, but you should not explain the information or help the pupil by interpreting it.

You should not explain subject-specific terminology, as an understanding of this is

part of the assessment. If any other word in a question is unfamiliar to a pupil, you may explain it, or show them related objects, to help them understand.

The following examples illustrate how to deal with some common queries:

Question: “What does ‘fraction’ mean?”

Answer: “I cannot tell you, but think hard and try to remember. We can talk about it after the test.”

Question: “What does ‘>’ or ‘<’ mean?”

Answer: “I cannot tell you, but think hard and try to remember. We can talk about it after the test.”

6. Marking

Mark schemes, and amendments to mark schemes, will be available to download from the ‘Download KS1 test materials’ from within the ‘Activities’ section on the [NCA Portal](#) from Friday 1 May.

For general information about marking the tests, please refer to the [optional KS1 TAG](#).

You will need to use the amendments to mark schemes to help you mark questions that have been amended or replaced in the braille versions of the tests.

7. Help and support

General enquiries

For general enquiries about test administration at KS1, you can contact the national curriculum assessments helpline:

National curriculum assessments helpline

Call: 0300 303 3013

Email: assessments@education.gov.uk

Online: [NCA Portal](#) 'Support'

For queries relating to access arrangements to meet a pupil's specific needs, schools can use the 'Message us - access arrangements' form within the 'Test administration' tab on the [NCA Portal](#).

Modified tests

Schools can discuss the suitability of braille versions of the optional KS1 tests and order requirements, by contacting the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or emailing MTH@iwanttoconnect.co.uk.

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