



KEYSTONE TUTORS TUTORING & EDUCATION ADVISORY

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A Guide to Computerised Pre-tests

An increasing number of independent schools have recently put pre-tests in place, which has caused a flurry of panic among parents and children alike. These tests are usually online and taken when a student is in Year 6 and/or 7. Students who perform well are then offered a conditional place, subject to passing their Common Entrance in Year 8.

The test provides a standardised measure of attainment, potential and capability. It takes approximately 2.5 hours to complete and comprises of the following:

- **English skills** (grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, listening and creative writing)
- **Mathematics** (working with numbers, value, and sequences)
- **Non-Verbal Reasoning** (solving problems using pictures, diagrams and patterns)
- **Verbal Reasoning** (the ability to work with words and language)

Pre-tests are purposefully designed with as little transparency as possible and as such no past papers are issued. Therefore no tutor or school can claim to have in depth knowledge or experience of the tests themselves, in their current form. However, we do know the numeracy and literacy content of these tests is rooted in Key Stage Two of the national curriculum. As such, a comprehensive understanding of the 11+ Maths and English syllabus will stand any student in good stead for the tests. Beyond numeracy and literacy, student feedback suggests that the tests often contain a number of sections on cognitive ability including logic. While these are hard to practice for, spending time on the various apps available for 'brain training' will be useful.

There are three main types of pre-test at the moment, CEM, ISEB and [UKiset](#), although others are being developed. [The ISEB pre-tests](#) are used by a number of schools, including Harrow, St Paul's Boys, Eton and Westminster, and are often sat by candidates as an initial assessment before they take a more school-specific pre-test e.g. [The Eton List Test](#). CEM make the computerised parts of a number of these more school-specific tests, e.g. [The Harrow Test](#). The UKiset is mostly used by independent schools to assess overseas students. All these pre-tests are adaptive, meaning that correctly answered questions will lead to harder questions and vice versa. Therefore no two students will receive the same test.

The three different types share the following common factors: time pressure, adaptive questioning and a computerised medium.

In addition to this, it is worth focusing on exam technique, speed and familiarisation of computerised testing.

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- Exam technique is very important. If students know what they are being asked to do, the questions become much easier for them. Often questions may be testing something quite simple but be presented in a complex or unusual way.
- Speed is another essential factor and students should be given an ever restricted amount of time for practice exercises that they do. In the months running up to the tests, students should get used to working under time pressure and learning not to panic when thrown unexpected questions.
- We have developed a website called [KeystoneTests](#) which provides practice in English, Maths and Reasoning to help students get to grips with the format of computer based testing. In the lead up to computerised exams, your child could look to spend half an hour or so every day undertaking online practice. We believe that 'little and often' is the best approach as the more comfortable students can get with sitting tests on a computer the better. We recommend that your child undertakes as wide a variety of computer based practice as possible from the web-based tests and apps that are available.
 - [Education Quizzes](#)
 - [A Testing Time](#)
 - [Question Mix](#)
 - [Lumosity](#)
 - [BOFA 11 Plus](#)
 - [Atom Learning](#)

The following websites also offer workbooks and revision guides pitched at the 11+ and Key Stage Two curriculum:

- [Galore Park](#)
- [Bond](#)
- [Schofield and Sims](#)
- [CGP](#)

Advice to students in Singapore and Hong Kong sitting pre-tests

Keystone has worked with many students educated at international or local schools in Singapore and Hong Kong before sitting pre-tests. A good deal of the KS2 curriculum will already have been covered but it is important to ensure that there are no gaps before your child sits the test. Working online, our tutors use time-pressured, multiple-choice resources which help students to be supple and adaptable test-takers as well as ensuring they have covered any aspects of the KS2 syllabus with which your child is not already familiar.

We have a number of excellent tutors who have a great deal of experience with preparation for pre-tests. For more details, please call the office for a chat with one of our client managers.

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