

## What is the 11+ (Eleven-Plus)?

Once, all children had to take the [Eleven-Plus](#) to decide which secondary school they would attend. Some areas of the UK still have state grammar schools and primary school children there will have to take the Eleven-Plus for the same reason.

Long ago, every child in England, Wales and Northern Ireland had to sit their 11+ (Eleven-Plus) exam in their last year of primary school. It determined which secondary school each child would attend – either a grammar school or a secondary modern.

With the introduction of comprehensive schools, which catered for children of all abilities, the Eleven-Plus fell out of use in most places. It is still used in some counties and boroughs though. Most children will not have to face the Eleven-Plus but a sizable minority will.

### Which Children have to take the Eleven-Plus?

Some areas of the UK still have state grammar schools which cater only for the brightest pupils. In these areas, primary school children will have to take the Eleven-Plus. Here's a list of counties where the Eleven-Plus is still common:

- Buckinghamshire
- Essex
- Kent
- Lincolnshire
- North Yorkshire

In addition, some local boroughs also use the Eleven-Plus. Most of these are in the following counties:

- Berkshire
- Cumbria
- Devon
- Dorset
- Gloucestershire
- Greater London
- Greater Manchester
- Merseyside
- Shropshire
- Staffordshire
- Surrey
- Warwickshire
- West Midlands
- Wiltshire

Many schools in Northern Ireland also use the Eleven-Plus.

This list is by no means comprehensive. The only way to be certain whether your child has to take the Eleven-Plus or not is to check with their primary school.

## **When is the Eleven-Plus Taken?**

Most exams are taken at the end of the academic year, around May or June. Not so the Eleven-Plus. The exams are taken in September, at the start of the last year in primary school. Despite its name, most children are only ten when they take the Eleven-Plus.

The reason Eleven-Plus exams are taken so early in the year is to allow plenty of time for applications to secondary schools. The results are usually available in October so parents have several months in which to apply to selective schools armed with their child's Eleven-Plus results.

How choosy grammar and other selective schools are varies. Most are very popular and over-subscribed. Many of these will only accept the top 3% of applicants, while other, less popular ones, may accept the top 30%.

## **What is the Eleven-Plus Exam made up of?**

What form the Eleven-Plus exam takes varies considerably between areas. It consists of four sections - English, maths, verbal reasoning and non-verbal reasoning. In some counties children will be tested on all four sections, in others on three or possibly only on two. If you want to know which your child will have to take then the only way to be sure is to speak to their school.

English and maths are the subjects most often dropped from the Eleven-Plus exam. The reason for this is that the Eleven-Plus is meant to find the most intelligent pupils, rather than the most academically minded. That's the reason for the other two parts of the exam – verbal reasoning and non-verbal reasoning.

**The 11 plus exam determines whether a child goes to a grammar school or a comprehensive school.**

## **What is Verbal Reasoning?**

Verbal reasoning involves presenting children with text and asking them to solve problems. To do well, pupils will need a good grasp of English grammar and a large vocabulary. Most schools and local authorities who use the Eleven-Plus will include a verbal reasoning test. It is the most common of the four sections of Eleven-Plus.

## **What is Non-Verbal Reasoning?**

Non-verbal reasoning involves presenting children with pictures and diagrams and asking them to solve problems. To do well, pupils will need to be competent in maths, though English is less important. Non-verbal reasoning tests are the second most common sections of the Eleven-Plus.

Verbal and non-verbal reasoning tests both present children with logical problems to see how well they can solve them – similar to an IQ test. They are good ways to test a child's intelligence. The original aim of the Eleven-Plus was to find the very brightest pupils, and it still does that to this day.

## How are Eleven-Plus Exams Marked?

The Eleven-Plus exam is marked differently to most other tests and exams. Rather than there being a 'pass' and a 'fail', students are compared to one another.

'Raw' test results (75 right out of 80 questions, for example) are standardised. Scores are adjusted slightly for age (the youngest children get extra marks and the oldest get fewer marks). The average score is then calculated and given a mark of 100. The lowest scores are around 70 and the highest about 140.

The way that standardisation works means that only the top 15% of pupils are given marks above 115. These are considered 'above average' and are the first to be let into selective schools. Although, some schools are more discerning and will only accept the top 3%.

The chances are that your child won't have to take the Eleven-Plus. But for those who live in areas with grammar schools, good results in the Eleven-Plus exam are vital. If your child does have to take the Eleven-Plus then at least you now know what it's all about. Reasoning and intelligence tests aimed at finding the very brightest children, rather than simple tests on school subjects. With luck you will now feel better able to help your child through this important exam.

**Students who get a score of over 115 are considered 'above average' and are the first to be let into selective schools.**