2026 national curriculum tests

Key stage 2

English grammar, punctuation and spelling test mark schemes

Paper 1: questions
Paper 2: spelling

Standards & Testing Agency

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1. Introduction

The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) is responsible for the development and delivery of key stage 1 and 2 statutory and optional tests. STA is an executive agency of the Department for Education.

The 2026 tests assess the national curriculum. This test has been developed to meet the specification set out in the test framework[1] for English grammar, punctuation and spelling at key stage 2.

A new test and new mark schemes will be produced each year.

Key stage 2 tests are marked by external markers, who receive training to ensure the mark schemes are applied consistently and fairly. The mark schemes are provided to show teachers how the tests are marked. The pupil examples are based on responses gathered from the test trialling process.

Scaled score conversion tables are not included in this document. Conversion tables will be produced as part of the standards maintenance process. Scaled score conversion tables[2] for the 2026 tests will be published in July 2026. The standards confirmation meeting will take place in July 2026.

2. Structure of the test

The key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test comprises:

- Paper 1: questions (50 marks)
- Paper 2: spelling (20 marks)

3. Content domain coverage

The 2026 test meets the specification in the test framework. Tables 1 and 3 set out the areas of the content domain that are assessed in Paper 1 and Paper 2.

1 www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-english-grammar-punctuation-and-spelling-test-framework
2 www.gov.uk/guidance/scaled-scores-at-key-stage-2

4. Paper 1: questions

4.1 Content domain coverage for Paper 1: questions

Table 1 sets out the content domain coverage for questions in Paper 1. Information relating to the codes in Table 1 can be found in the key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test framework.

Table 1: Content domain coverage for questions in Paper 1

Qu.	G1 Grammatical terms or word classes	G2 Functions of sentences	G3 Combining words, phrases and clauses	G4 Verb forms, tense and consistency	G5 Punctuation	G6 Vocabulary	G7 Standard English and formality
1					1		
2							1
3						1	
4					1		
5					1		
6							1
7					1		
8						1	
9					1		
10						1	
11							1
12					1		
13				1			
14					1		
15				1			
16			1				
17		1					
18	1						
19				1			
20						1	
21				1			
22	1						

Qu.	G1 Grammatical terms or word classes	G2 Functions of sentences	G3 Combining words, phrases and clauses	G4 Verb forms, tense and consistency	G5 Punctuation	G6 Vocabulary	G7 Standard English and formality
23	1						
24					1		
25				1			
26			1				
27					1		
28					1		
29	1						
30					1		
31						1	
32	1						
33					1		
34			1				
35					1		
36		1					
37	1						
38					1		
39	1						
40					1		
41				1			
42	1						
43			1				
44				1			
45				1			
46	1						
47		1					
48			1				
49	1						
50	1						

4.2 General marking guidance for Paper 1: questions

To ensure consistency of marking, the most frequent procedural queries are listed in Table 2, along with the action the marker will take.

Recording marks awarded

Marking takes place on screen, with markers viewing scanned images of pupils' responses. Marks are entered into the marking system in accordance with the guidance for the on-screen marking software.

For each question, markers record the award of 1 or 0 marks as appropriate, according to the mark scheme criteria. There is provision in the software to record questions not attempted. The software aggregates marks automatically.

The following guidance applies to all questions in Paper 1.

Table 2: General marking principles for Paper 1

Question type	Accept	Do not accept

Tick boxes and tables	• any unambiguous indication of the correct answer, for example:
	  • the box is crossed rather than ticked
	  • the correct answer is circled rather than ticked
		• answers in which more than the required number of boxes have been ticked

Circling or underlining of the answer	• any unambiguous indication of the correct answer, such as the answer being enclosed within a box	• answers in which more than the required number of words have been circled or underlined • answers in which the correct answer is circled or underlined, together with any surrounding words
Drawing lines to 'match' boxes	• lines that do not touch the boxes, provided the intention is clear	• multiple lines drawn to or from the same box (unless this is a question requirement)
Labelling	• clear labels, whether they use the full vocabulary required by the question or an unambiguous abbreviation, for example, 'V' for 'verb'	• ambiguity in labelling, for example, the use of 'AD' or 'A' where a distinction is required between 'adjective' and 'adverb'

Question type	Accept	Do not accept
Punctuation	• correctly formed punctuation that is clear, unambiguous and recognisable as the required punctuation mark	• punctuation that is ambiguous, for example, if it is unclear whether the mark is a comma or full stop
Sentences and capital letters	• a sentence that has an initial capital letter and an appropriate punctuation mark indicating the end of the sentence • capital letters that are clear and unambiguous Where letters do not have unique capital letter forms, the height of the capital letter will be equal to, or greater than, that of letters with ascenders.	• answers in which capital letters are omitted or placed inappropriately in a sentence, or where an entire word is capitalised
Spelling	• incorrect spellings of the correct response if no specific mark scheme guidance is given	• incorrect spellings of answers for which the mark scheme requires correct spelling Correct spelling is required for the award of the mark for the majority of questions in Paper 1, especially for questions assessing contracted forms, verb forms, plurals, prefixes and suffixes.

Question type	Accept	Do not accept
Answers outside the expected space	• a correct answer given somewhere other than the answer space, provided it is not contradicted by another answer written elsewhere • correct answers that are written in the 'blank' within a question, rather than in the expected space below it • correct answers in which the pupil has written out a word or sentence that is already provided	• answers that are given outside the expected space and contradicted by another answer written elsewhere
More than one answer given	• multiple answers that are all correct according to the mark scheme	• responses where both correct and incorrect answers are given
Handwriting	• answers that are clear, unambiguous and recognisable, including letters that have been reversed, but which are still clearly identifiable to the marker	• answers that are unclear or ambiguous
Crossed-out answers	• correct answers that replace a crossed-out attempt	• crossed-out answers

4.3 Explanation of the mark schemes for Paper 1: questions

The mark schemes contain the following information for each question:

- the question number
- what is required to answer each question - either a correct answer or examples of different types of creditworthy response
- how many marks are available for the question
- any additional guidance that may be relevant
- the content domain reference

5. Mark schemes for Paper 1: questions

Qu.	Requirement	Mark
1 G5.3 G2.2	Will Orla buy tickets for all of us ☐ ☑ ☐ ☐	**1m**
2 G7.3	☐ ☐ ☐ Please be seated. ☑	**1m**
3 G6.3	**Award 1 mark** for all **four** matched correctly. **Word** / **Suffix** develop — ness outrage — less weak — ment power — ous	**1m**
4 G5.9	Flo – my youngest sister – is in year three. ☐ ☑ ☐ ☐	**1m**
5 G5.10	☐ ☐ ☐ Plants cannot live without these three things: light, water and nutrients. ☑	**1m**

Qu.	Requirement	Mark
6 G7.1	I am not as good at them tricks as Jay is. ☐ ☐ ☑ ☐	**1m**
7 G5.4	Look at that horse! ☐ ☑ ☐ ☐	**1m**
8 G6.1	☐ ☐ ☐ obvious ☑	**1m**
9 G5.6b	According to the weather forecast, it will be sunny this afternoon. ☑ ☐ ☐ ☐	**1m**
10 G6.1	**Award 1 mark** for all **four** matched correctly. **Word** / **Synonym** vast → enormous unpleasant → nasty agreeable → pleasant tiny → small	**1m**
11 G7.2	**Award 1 mark** for all **four** correctly circled. We are writing to ask / (request) that you (consider) / think about using some of the (proceeds) / money from the school fair to buy / (purchase) a wooden bench for the playground.	**1m**

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<table>
<tr><th>Qu.</th><th>Requirement</th><th>Mark</th></tr>
<tr><td>12
G5.9</td><td>Award 1 mark for a pair of brackets correctly inserted.

Pepper (a black cat from York) hid in the back of his owner's
car for a whole night.</td><td>1m</td></tr>
<tr><td>13
G4.2</td><td>When you use watercolour paints, it is important that you begin with
☐ ☐ ☐
lighter shades and built up colour gradually.
☑</td><td>1m</td></tr>
<tr><td>14
G5.9
G3.4</td><td>Award 1 mark for a pair of commas correctly inserted.

She decided, although she was feeling tired, that she would still
go to Rita's party.</td><td>1m</td></tr>
<tr><td>15
G4.1c</td><td>Award 1 mark for a response explaining how the modal verb changes the degree of possibility, for example:
• It shows that it is not certain that they will walk home from the station.
• It's showing that they may or may not walk home from the station.
• It's not guaranteed that they will walk.
• In number one they definitely will walk home from the station but in number 2 they might not.
• It changes it from a certainty to a possibility.

There are no spelling or punctuation requirements for this question.</td><td>1m</td></tr>
<tr><td>16
G3.4
G3.1</td><td>☐
a subordinate clause ☑
☐
☐</td><td>1m</td></tr>
<tr><td>17
G2.3
G2.1
G2.4</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>Sentence</th><th>Statement</th><th>Command</th><th>Exclamation</th></tr>
<tr><td>How I hate tidying my bedroom</td><td></td><td></td><td>✓</td></tr>
<tr><td>Your bedroom is always neat and tidy</td><td>✓</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Before we go out on our bikes, help me tidy my bedroom</td><td></td><td>✓</td><td></td></tr>
</table>
</td><td>1m</td></tr>
</table>

Qu.	Requirement	Mark
18 G1.4	**Award 1 mark** for the correct word circled. Salma decided to cook dinner (while) her mum enjoyed a rest after a tiring day at work.	**1m**
19 G4.1d	☐ ☐ What were you doing? ☑ ☐	**1m**
20 G6.2 G6.1	**Award 1 mark** for all **four** matched correctly. **Prefix** / **Word** im → perfect in → loyal dis → construct de → direct	**1m**
21 G4.1b	☐ ☐ I had eaten breakfast ☑ ☐	**1m**
22 G1.2	**Award 1 mark** for all **three** correctly circled. Jackson (waited) for everyone else to (choose) their food before he (served) himself.	**1m**
23 G1.5b	**Award 1 mark** for *who*. **Do not accept** misspellings or errors in punctuation or capitalisation.	**1m**
24 G5.7	**Award 1 mark** for inverted commas correctly inserted, i.e. Imran looked up from the microscope. **"**I can see the bacteria really clearly!**"** he exclaimed. Imran looked up from the microscope. **'**I can see the bacteria really clearly!**'** he exclaimed.	**1m**

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Qu.	Requirement	Mark
25 G4.1a	**Award 1 mark** for all **three** correct. The plane flies high above the clouds, while the passengers sit *flew* *sat* in their seats and relax. *relaxed* **Do not accept** misspellings. **There are no capitalisation requirements for this question.**	**1m**
26 G3.1a G1.5b	**Award 1 mark** for One of the greatest inventions was the wheel, which first appeared over 5000 years ago.	**1m**
27 G5.11 G3.1	**Award 1 mark** for a semi-colon correctly inserted. The lovely county of Cornwall has a long, rugged coastline**;** its secluded coves provide safe, sheltered harbours.	**1m**
28 G5.8	**Award 1 mark** for all **three** correct. I never send my aunt emails because she does not own a *doesn't* computer. I send her letters instead, but they do not reach her *don't* for several days. I hope she will come and visit us soon. *she'll* **Do not accept** misspellings or errors in punctuation. **There are no capitalisation requirements for this question.**	**1m**
29 G1.7	The bridge over the stream was broken so we had to paddle across. ✓	**1m**

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Qu.	Requirement	Mark
30 G5.12 G3.1	**Award 1 mark** for a dash correctly inserted. My fruit salad will include strawberries, blueberries and grapes **–** they're so delicious.	**1m**
31 G6.4 G6.3	**Award 1 mark** for *motivation*. **Also accept** *motive* or *motivator*. **Do not accept** misspellings or errors in punctuation or capitalisation.	**1m**
32 G1.3	Rani wanted to make the right decision. ☑ ☐ ☐ ☐	**1m**
33 G5.8	**Award 1 mark** for both apostrophes correctly inserted. Tom's one of those boys who's always happy to help.	**1m**
34 G3.4	**Award 1 mark** for the correct word circled. Unfortunately, the youth club will be closed (until) we have completed the repairs and replaced the sports equipment.	**1m**
35 G5.13	**Award 1 mark** for a hyphen correctly inserted. After the long shopping trip, we did not have a lot of time to cook dinner, so we bought a ready-made pasta sauce and garlic bread.	**1m**
36 G2.2 G5.3	**Award 1 mark** for a grammatically correct and accurately punctuated question, for example: • *What time does the game start?* • *How long until the game begins?* • *What time does the match start?* • *Excuse me, what time does the game start?* • *What time is it?* **Also accept** a grammatically correct and accurately punctuated question that is enclosed in inverted commas, for example: • *"Do you know when the game kicks off?"* **Do not accept** the addition of a reporting clause resulting in a question contained within a statement, for example: • *"What time does it start?" asked Sam.*	**1m**

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Qu.	Requirement	Mark
37 G1.9	**Award 1 mark** for all **four** correct. When Seema reached the playground, she greeted her friends. S O S O	**1m**
38 G5.6a G5.5	**Award 1 mark** for a response explaining that the comma changes the number of places and/or the location of the pond, for example: • *In the first one there are 2 places they eat lunch but in the second one there are 3.* • *The comma adds an extra place they often eat lunch at.* • *The first one shows the pond is in the park and the second one says the pond is somewhere else.* • *This shows the pond isn't in the park.* **There are no spelling or punctuation requirements for this question.**	**1m**
39 G1.1	**Award 1 mark** for all **three** correctly circled. They were so excited about going to (Cardiff) that they wouldn't let the bad (weather) dampen their (enthusiasm).	**1m**
40 G5.1 G5.2	**Award 1 mark** for **C**amels live in the desert**.** **T**hey can survive extremes of temperature and manage without food for a long time**.** **A**lthough some camels have one hump, others have two**.**	**1m**
41 G4.4	**Award 1 mark** for a correctly punctuated sentence using the active, for example: • *Pollution is harming the trees.* **Also accept:** • *Pollution harms the trees.* **Do not accept** misspellings of verb forms or errors in punctuation or capitalisation.	**1m**
42 G1.5a	**Award 1 mark** for the correct word circled. Sandip introduced me to the new girl in year 6, whose name was Rashida. She had forgotten to bring a pen so I gave her one of (mine).	**1m**
43 G3.2	**Award 1 mark** for The beautiful grey elephants walked slowly through the forest.	**1m**

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Qu.	Requirement	Mark
44 G4.3	If I were to look inside the box, what would I find? ☐ ☐ ☑ ☐	**1m**
45 G4.4	**Award 1 mark** for a correctly punctuated sentence using the passive, for example: • *The mug was broken by Rabia.* • *The mug was broken.* **Also accept** a correctly punctuated sentence using a *get*-passive, for example: • *The mug got broken by Rabia.* **Do not accept** misspellings of verb forms or errors in punctuation or capitalisation.	**1m**
46 G1.6a	**Award 1 mark** for I'm going to visit my uncle at the weekend.	**1m**
47 G2.4	☐ ☐ What a brilliant song this is ☑ ☐	**1m**
48 G3.3	**Award 1 mark** for both correctly circled. Because my brother couldn't decide whether to wear trainers (or) boots, we left late (and) almost missed the bus.	**1m**
49 G1.6	**Award 1 mark** for both correctly circled. I'll (always) remember the day that we won the cup. Dad and I sang (jubilantly) as we walked through the park.	**1m**
50 G1.8	**Award 1 mark** for all **three** correctly circled. I go to (the) swimming pool (every) week with (my) best friend Peter.	**1m**

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6. Paper 2: spelling

6.1 Content domain coverage for Paper 2: spelling

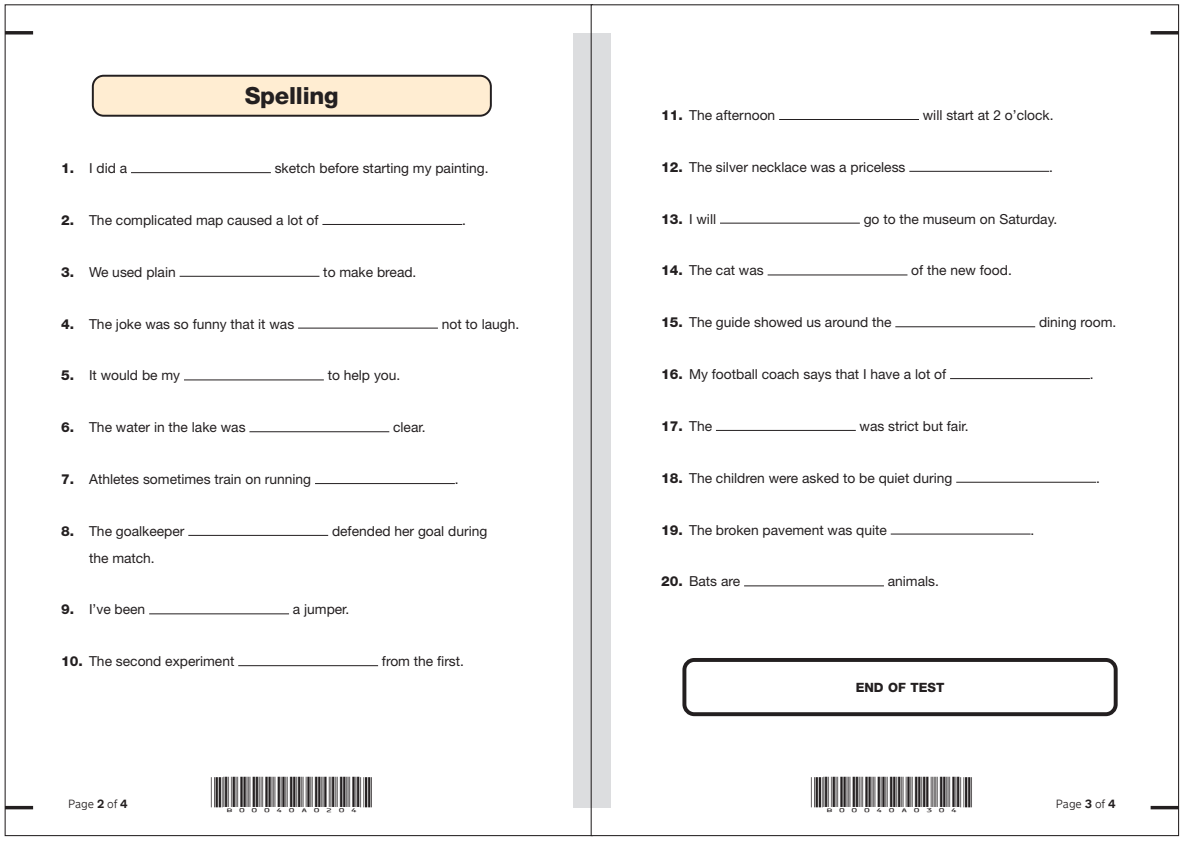
This information is provided in Table 3.

6.2 General marking guidance for Paper 2: spelling

The following guidance applies to all questions in Paper 2. Please read this carefully before applying the individual mark schemes.

- If the pupil makes more than one attempt, it must be clear which answer the pupil wishes to be marked.
- If the pupil makes two or more attempts and it is not clear which is to be considered, the mark is not awarded.
- The pupil can answer in upper or lower case, or a mixture of the two. The exception to this is for days of the week, which must be written in lower-case letters with an initial capital letter for the award of the mark.
- If the pupil has answered with the correct sequence of letters but has incorrectly inserted an apostrophe or a hyphen, the mark is not awarded.
- If the pupil has answered with the correct sequence of letters but these have been separated into clearly divided components, with or without a hyphen, the mark is not awarded.

6.3 Pupil version of Paper 2: spelling



Spelling

1. I did a _____ sketch before starting my painting.
2. The complicated map caused a lot of _____.
3. We used plain _____ to make bread.
4. The joke was so funny that it was _____ not to laugh.
5. It would be my _____ to help you.
6. The water in the lake was _____ clear.
7. Athletes sometimes train on running _____.
8. The goalkeeper _____ defended her goal during the match.
9. I've been _____ a jumper.
10. The second experiment _____ from the first.

Page **2** of **4**

11. The afternoon _____ will start at 2 o'clock.
12. The silver necklace was a priceless _____.
13. I will _____ go to the museum on Saturday.
14. The cat was _____ of the new food.
15. The guide showed us around the _____ dining room.
16. My football coach says that I have a lot of _____.
17. The _____ was strict but fair.
18. The children were asked to be quiet during _____.
19. The broken pavement was quite _____.
20. Bats are _____ animals.

END OF TEST

Page **3** of **4**

7. Mark schemes for Paper 2: spelling

Information relating to the content domain reference codes in Table 3 can be found in the key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test framework.

Table 3: Mark schemes and content domain references for Paper 2

Qu.	Spelling	Mark	Content domain reference
1	rough	1	S59 – words containing the letter string *ough* S40 – the /ʌ/ sound spelt *ou*
2	confusion	1	S45 – endings that sound like /ʒən/
3	flour	1	S61 – homophones and near homophones (Years 3 and 4) homophones and other words that are often confused (Years 5 and 6)
4	impossible	1	S41 – prefixes S56 – words ending in *–able* and *–ible* words ending in *–ably* and *–ibly*
5	pleasure	1	S44 – words with endings sounding like /ʒə/ or /tʃə/
6	crystal	1	S39 – the /i/ sound spelt *y* other than at the end of words
7	machines	1	S49 – words with the /ʃ/ sound spelt *ch*
8	confidently	1	S43 – the suffix *–ly* S55 – words ending in *–ant*, *–ance*, *–ancy*, *–ent*, *–ence*, *–ency*
9	knitting	1	S60 – words with 'silent' letters (i.e. letters whose presence cannot be predicted from the pronunciation of the word)
10	differed	1	S57 – adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words ending in *–fer* S38 – adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words of more than one syllable
11	session	1	S47 – endings that sound like /ʃən/, spelt *–tion*, *–sion*, *–ssion*, *–cian*
12	antique	1	S50 – words ending with the /g/ sound spelt *–gue* and the /k/ sound spelt *–que*
13	probably	1	S56 – words ending in *–able* and *–ible* words ending in *–ably* and *–ibly*
14	suspicious	1	S53 – endings which sound like /ʃəs/ spelt *–cious* or *–tious*
15	elegant	1	S55 – words ending in *–ant*, *–ance*, *–ancy*, *–ent*, *–ence*, *–ency*
16	potential	1	S54 – endings which sound like /ʃəl/
17	examiner	1	S38 – adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words of more than one syllable
18	registration	1	S42 – the suffix *–ation*
19	hazardous	1	S46 – the suffix *–ous*
20	fascinating	1	S51 – words with the /s/ sound spelt *sc* S38 – adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words of more than one syllable
Total		**20**	

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