

# KS2 SATs: Beating Exam Stress

## A Guide for Parents

Every May, towards the end of their time in primary school, year 6 children throughout the country complete the key stage 2 SATs tests. These are standardised tests to evaluate your child's progress throughout key stage 2 (years 3 to 6) and to compare your child's attainment against the expectations for their age group (see our [KS2 SATs Results: Guide for Parents](#) for further information). Opinion is divided on whether this is the best way to assess children's ability in school, but it is nevertheless vital that children are helped through the SATs process without undue stress or anxiety.

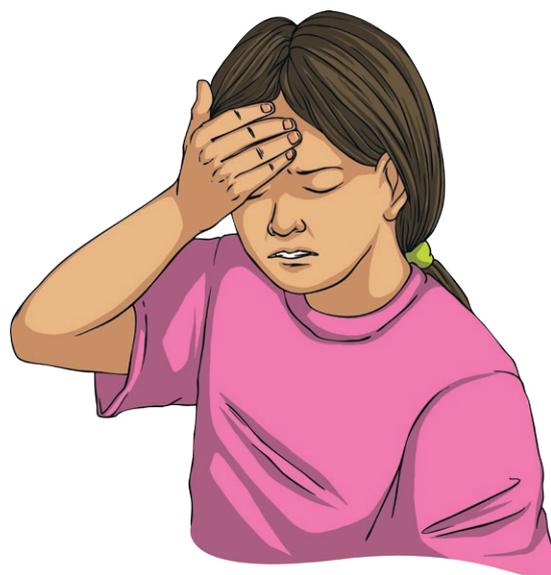
The impact of SATs varies depending on the school environment children are in, but it is important for them to remember to keep calm, to try their best and not to panic! Below, you will find a list of suggestions you can do to help your child stay calm and relaxed throughout the SATs period.

### Identifying Stress

There are many different signs that may indicate your child is feeling the pressure during the exam period, such as:

- worrying a lot
- feeling tense
- getting lots of headaches and stomach pains
- being irritable and short-tempered
- a change in behaviour
- losing interest in food or eating more than normal
- not enjoying activities that they previously enjoyed
- seeming distracted and struggling to concentrate
- seeming negative and low in their mood
- seeming hopeless about the future (including what they will achieve in their tests)

If you think your child is displaying symptoms of stress during the SATs period, it is important that you help them understand their feelings by discussing them. Your support can help your child share their worries and keep things in perspective. Also, encourage your child to speak to a member of school staff whom they feel is supportive. It may also be helpful if you talk to your child's teacher about how they are feeling.



## Do Exercise

Exercise is a great way to reduce stress and it even releases happy hormones. Find something fun that your child likes to do and try to get regular exercise such as attending a regular sports club or activity, going for a walk, bike riding or even a computer game that involves movement and dancing. Try to encourage your child to stay active throughout the entire year and not just during the SATs period. This could include something that you enjoy doing together such as cycling or skating.

## Get Outdoors

Getting outdoors helps to relieve stress, naturally lowering levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Even five minutes in nature can help reduce stress and boost mood. This could be going to the park after school for a short break or getting out at weekends.

## Eat Well

Getting the right foods is vital for your child's health and can help them during the exam period. Some parents find that high-fat, high-sugar and highly processed foods (such as fizzy drinks, sweets, burgers and chips) can make their children hyperactive, irritable and moody. Let your child choose healthy food options and be involved in the meal planning where possible.

## Plan a Reward

Have a reward planned for your child for when they finish this busy SATs period. This could be time in their favourite place, going to the cinema or a special meal that they like - something special to celebrate all the hard work they have put in during this period. This will also give your child something to look forward to after they have completed their tests.

## Get Plenty of Rest

This is a simple yet effective way to help deal with stress and anxiety. Ensure that your child has a good bedtime routine and gets enough sleep for their age. The recommended amount of sleep for an average ten or eleven-year-old is between 9 and 11 hours' sleep per night.

## Take Plenty of Breaks

During the SATs period (and in year 6 in general), children can receive lots of additional demands on their time in the form of extra homework and revision: reading, comprehension, spelling, grammar, punctuation and maths - there is lots to revise throughout this year! However, limit homework to a set amount of time each day or week and ensure your child gets lots of 'downtime'. Remember, they will have had a busy day of learning at school, so they will be tired when they arrive home. Also, encourage a mixture of breaktime activities - sometimes they may like to relax and watch television or play computer games; at other times it might be good to get active and go outdoors (weather permitting).



For most children, the KS2 SATs exams take place within a set week. Your child will sit a reading paper, a spelling paper, a grammar and punctuation paper and three maths papers (one arithmetic and two reasoning papers). Print and use the checklist below to help support your child in their preparations for SATs week.

## SATs Week Stress-Busting Checklist

- Have a revision-free weekend before SATs week - rest and have fun!
- Get a good night's sleep and go to bed early.
- Eat a healthy diet during the week and get a good breakfast each day.
- Make sure you're up nice and early each exam day so that you have plenty of time in the morning and don't have to rush.
- Get outdoors and do some exercise - go to the park, play football, roller skate... whatever physical activity you find fun!
- Make sure you have downtime (watch TV, bake, colour, do crafts - these are all great activities to unwind with).
- If you're feeling really nervous, breathe slowly and deeply before each exam.
- Plan a special treat to look forward to at the end of the week, e.g. a special meal, a trip, a fun activity - something that you can look forward to.

