11 PLUS MADE SIMPLE PRESENTS

The 11+ Summer Guide

Hands-on activities, clear expectations and the reading that quietly builds an 11+ candidate. For Years 3 to 5.

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Small-group 11+ preparation · Kent · Bexley · SE London

11+

A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Summer is an opportunity, not a syllabus

Not everything your child needs for the 11+ lives in a workbook. The exams your child may sit, whether the GL-based Kent Test, the new Bexley Selection Test or an independent school's own exam, reward children who can use what they know on real problems: money, measures, journeys, recipes and passages they have never seen before. The school holidays are the one time of year when real life can do most of the teaching.

This guide gathers the things I ask my own students' families to do over the summer. There is no pressure to complete all of it. Pick what suits your family, let your child do the thinking even when it is slow, and treat mistakes made over flour and train timetables as exactly what they are: cheap, friendly mistakes, made in July rather than in an exam hall.

You will find four sections inside: what your child should be able to do by September, maths you can do without a worksheet, the reading and comprehension habits that decide the hardest marks, and the games that build reasoning without your child noticing.



Who this comes from

I am Ronke, founder of 11 Plus Made Simple and a former Assistant Principal with more than 20 years of teaching experience. 11 Plus Made Simple is a small-group 11+ practice serving families across Kent, Bexley and South East London, with groups capped at five children. Across my 2023 to 2026 offers, 87% of families were placed at their first-choice school, with confirmed places at Colfe's, Eltham College, Dartford Grammar, The Judd and Tonbridge Grammar.

If you would like a clear picture of where your child stands right now, my **£47 Diagnostic** is the place to start. More on that at the end of this guide.

For daily 11+ tips between newsletters, find me on Instagram: **@11plusmadesimple**.

A small note on links: some book and game links in this guide are affiliate links, which means I may earn a small commission if you buy through them. Every recommendation is something I use or recommend to my own students regardless. The price you pay is unchanged.

SECTION ONE

Ready for September

Parents often ask me what "on track" looks like. Here is a clear, no-panic picture for each year group. If your child is not there yet, that is information, not a verdict: it simply tells you where the summer's gentle attention should go.

Going into Year 4 in September, your child should be able to:

- Recite every times table up to 12 in order, secure by the end of the summer
- Add and subtract three-digit numbers using a written column method
- Tell the time on an analogue clock, including to the nearest five minutes
- Find simple fractions of amounts, such as a half, a third and a quarter
- Read a short passage and retell what happened in their own words

Going into Year 5 in September, your child should be able to:

- Answer any times table fact up to 12 in any order, in under three seconds
- Add and subtract four-digit numbers, and multiply with a short written method
- Read the time in both 12-hour and 24-hour forms and work out durations
- Recognise equivalent fractions and count in simple decimals
- Answer "why do you think...?" questions about their reading, not just "what happened?"

Year 5 is really Year 6 preparation in disguise. Aim to close the year at the standard below, because that is where exam-year practice begins from, not builds towards.

Going into Year 6 in September (exam season), your child should be able to:

- Sit a full timed paper without the clock, rather than the questions, being the enemy
- Spot their own recurring gaps and work on those, rather than practising at random
- Review every missed question and understand why it was wrong before the next paper
- Move fluently between fractions, decimals and percentages of amounts
- Read an unseen passage and answer with evidence drawn from the text

By Year 6 the work is less about learning new content and more about a tight loop: sit a paper, mark it carefully, understand each miss, then sit the next. That cycle, not sheer volume, is what moves a score.

One caution from years of doing this: lists like these are a compass, not a checklist to drill. A child who is secure on most of it, and curious about the rest, is in a good place.

SECTION TWO

Maths without a worksheet

Very few 11+ maths questions are bare sums. Almost all of them are dressed up as real problems, and children who have handled those things in real life answer them faster and with far more confidence. These five activities convert things your family already does into quiet preparation. Pick one a week.

1. The Recipe Half and Double

Choose a simple recipe, flapjacks and pancakes work beautifully, and set a problem: it serves eight, but there are four of you, or you are baking for twelve. Your child rewrites every quantity before anything is weighed, does the measuring themselves, and handles the unit conversions out loud.

WHAT THIS BUILDS Fractions of amounts, ratio, scaling, converting units, reading scales.

2. The Supermarket Sweep

The weekly shop is a maths paper with a trolley. Give your child one real job per trip: which pack is better value and by how much, what does 25% off this price come to, predict the change before the till shows it, or own a £10 budget for the week's pudding.

WHAT THIS BUILDS Money, percentages, unit pricing, multi-step problem solving.

See it in action: **watch on Instagram**

3. The Journey Planner

Timetable questions are among the most commonly missed on 11+ papers, because many children have simply never read one. Put your child in charge of a real day out: they choose the trains from a printed timetable, cost the tickets and lunch, and keep the clock on the day.

WHAT THIS BUILDS Reading tables, 24-hour time, durations, budgeting, multi-step reasoning.

4. Measure the House

Play estimate-then-measure: how long is the sofa, how heavy is the food bowl, how much does the kettle hold? Guess first, measure second. Then have your child draw a scale plan of their bedroom and answer perimeter and area questions from it.

WHAT THIS BUILDS Estimation, number sense, units, scale, perimeter and area.

See it in action: **watch on Instagram**

5. The Score Keeper

Appoint your child the family's official score keeper for the holidays. Any game with points counts. They keep running totals, work out each player's average at the end of the week, and answer difference questions: how far behind is Dad, and what does he need next game to take the lead?

WHAT THIS BUILDS Averages, running totals, data handling, negative numbers the memorable way.

The full version of these activities, with exam-style questions and answers for each one, is in our free guide **11+ Maths in Your Kitchen**.

If you want something on paper

Little and often beats long sessions: around ten minutes on most weekdays is plenty. Where possible, mark the work together and talk through mistakes, because how your child got there matters more than the answer.

Magnetic Tiles and Circles Fraction Set
Fractions in your child's hands rather than on a page. Perfect alongside the recipe activity, as a first meeting with fractions in Year 3 and 4, and for making equivalence obvious in Year 5. **View on Amazon**

Mental Arithmetic Book 2 (KS2, Year 4, ages 8 to 9)
The daily-practice staple for children going into Year 4. Short, structured and ideal for a ten-minute weekday habit. **View on Amazon**

Mental Arithmetic Book 3 (KS2, Years 4 to 5, ages 8 to 10)
The next step up, for children going into Year 5 or consolidating before Year 6. Same little-and-often format. **View on Amazon**

Pin this to the fridge

A handful of facts come up again and again on 11+ papers. Children who simply know them save time and working memory for the questions that deserve it.

Unit	Equals
1 hour	60 minutes
1 day	24 hours
1 fortnight	14 days
1 year	365 days (366 in a leap year)
1 decade	10 years
1 century	100 years

Measure	Equals
1 cm	10 mm
1 m	100 cm
1 km	1,000 m
1 kg	1,000 g
1 litre	1,000 ml
0.5 litres	500 ml

Know these cold	The list
Fraction equivalents	1/2 = 0.5 = 50% · 1/4 = 0.25 = 25% · 1/5 = 0.2 = 20% · 1/10 = 0.1 = 10%
Prime numbers	2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23, 29, 31
Square numbers	1, 4, 9, 16, 25, 36, 49, 64, 81, 100, 121, 144
Cube numbers	1, 8, 27, 64, 125
Days in the months	30 days: April, June, September, November. February: 28, or 29 in a leap year. The rest: 31.

SECTION THREE

Reading, comprehension and words

Here is the truth about the 11+: by exam day, almost everyone has drilled the maths. Comprehension and vocabulary are where the strongest candidates pull away, and they are the one part of the exam a child cannot cram. That skill builds slowly, over a year or more of the right reading and deliberate word work, which is exactly why summer matters so much.

Most advice says "read more and do more papers". Yet plenty of children who read fluently still lose marks, because reading well and answering well are not the same skill. In my groups, marks are lost in three specific places.

1. The vocabulary gap

Your child reads smoothly but misses the meaning, because a handful of unfamiliar words quietly break the thread. When they read aloud, pause on a word you suspect is new and ask gently: "what do you think that word means here?"

2. The inference gap

Ask what happened in a story and they can tell you perfectly. Ask why a character did something and they stall. After any reading, ask one question that cannot be answered by pointing at a single line, then the golden follow-up: "what makes you say so?" No book to hand? Inference can be built from pictures too, and I share exactly how in **this Instagram post**.

3. The evidence gap

Your child knows the answer but cannot earn the mark: a one-word reply where two marks were on offer. Ask them to find the words in the passage that prove their answer. "Show me where it tells you that."

The one habit that helps all three

After any reading, ask one "why do you think...?" question. It takes five minutes, needs no worksheets, and works for every year group, because your child has to understand the words, read between the lines, and justify their thinking to answer it. Do it a few times a week and you will hear the difference before the term is out.

What to read this summer

The 11+ borrows its passages and its vocabulary from a particular shelf: classic and classic-style fiction, with longer sentences and older words than most modern series. A child does not need a steady diet of it, but regular visits to that shelf pay off directly on exam day. Our Gateway Classics list collects the titles that build the kind of vocabulary the 11+ actually tests. Audiobooks count: they let children hear stories beyond their reading level, and a chapter in the car is still vocabulary in the bank.

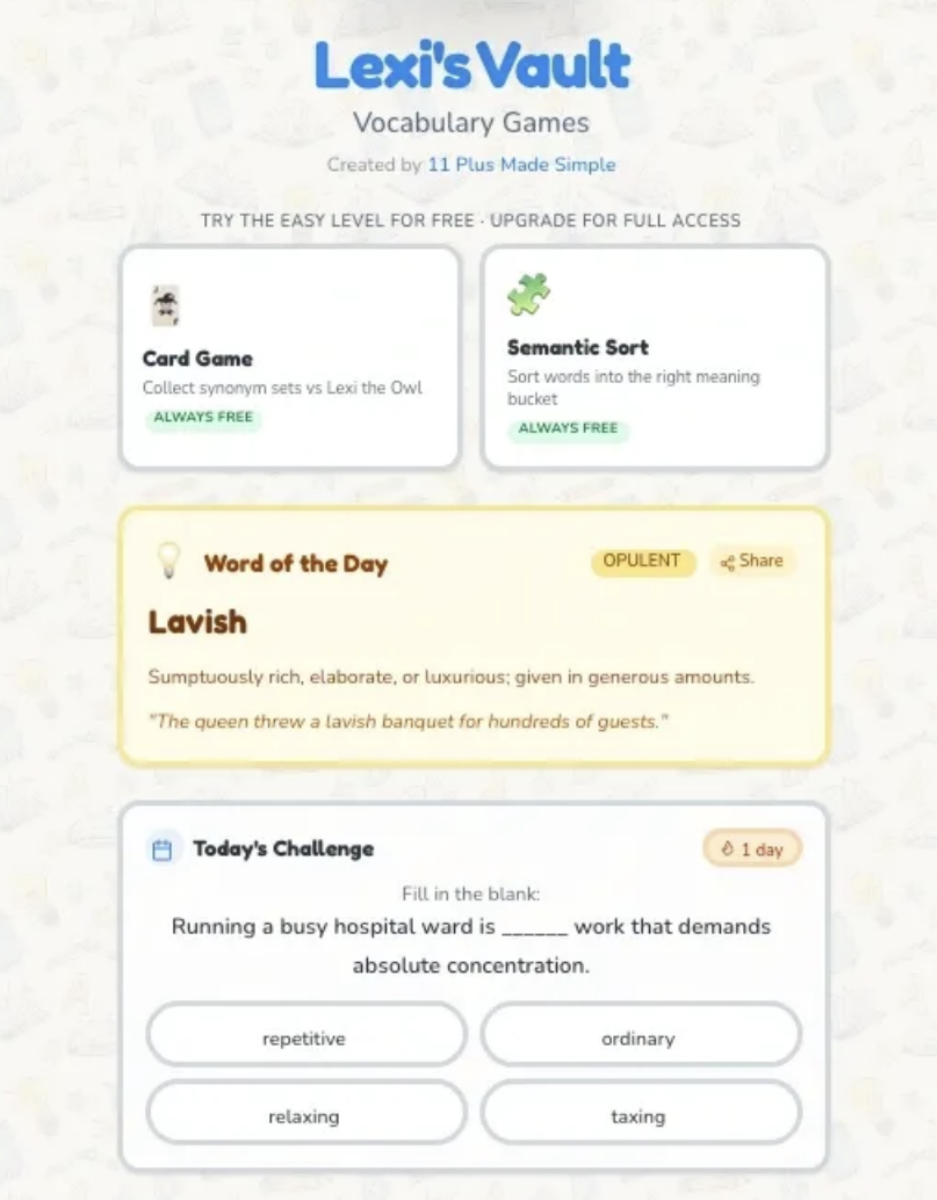
And alongside the classics, let your child read what they love. A child who chooses their own books reads more, and a child who reads more wins, whatever the cover looks like. I wrote about striking that balance in **this Instagram post**.

The Gateway Classics reading list · free
11plusmadesimple.co.uk/gateway-classics-11-plus

Make new words stick, without it feeling like revision

Vocabulary is one of the most important skills for the 11+. It is also the one that takes the longest to build, which means it is the one families most often leave too late. The good news is that building it does not have to feel like revision. It can feel like a game.

That is the entire idea behind Lexi's Vault, our 11+ vocabulary game. Your child beats Lexi the Owl by collecting synonym sets in the card game, fills the blanks with the right word in context in the Cloze Challenge, and races the clock through opposites in Antonym Attack, with more games on the way. The words are not random: they are exactly the words that appear in GL and Quest comprehension papers, verbal reasoning and writing tasks. Ten minutes a day over a summer adds up to a word bank most children never build.



Lexi's Vault · play free today
lexisvault.co.uk

On paper, one book earns its place

The Illustrated First Aid in English
A treasure trove of the general knowledge and word patterns that comprehension quietly assumes, from the names of baby animals to the terms for professions. A few pages a week goes a long way. View on Amazon

Answers to the Illustrated First Aid in English
The companion answer booklet, so your child can mark their own work and you can talk through the misses together. View on Amazon

Five word pairs that cost real marks

The pair	The trick
its / it's	Replace it with "it is". If the sentence still makes sense, use the apostrophe.
their / there / they're	They're = they are. There contains HERE, a place. Their contains HEIR, belonging.
your / you're	Replace it with "you are". If it sounds right, use the apostrophe.
affect / effect	Affect is the Action. Effect is the End result.
accept / except	Except means EXclude. Both start with EX.

The full set of eight pairs, with examples, is in our free English Reference Guide at **11plusmadesimple.co.uk**.

SECTION FOUR

Reasoning, built through play

Verbal and non-verbal reasoning are usually the least familiar parts of the 11+, because schools rarely teach them. The good news is that the underlying skills, spotting patterns, holding rules in mind, rotating shapes mentally, respond beautifully to games. Played regularly over a summer, the right games do more than a stack of practice papers a child is not ready for.

A rule of thumb for all of them: play alongside your child rather than setting the game as a task. Talk through how you spotted a pattern or ruled an option out. Hearing an adult reason aloud is the fastest way for a child to learn to do it themselves.

Non-verbal reasoning: shapes in their hands first

Children who have rotated and rebuilt real shapes find rotating them in their heads far easier. That is the whole trick of non-verbal reasoning.

Wooden T-Shape Brain Teaser Puzzle
Deceptively simple geometric building blocks that train visualisation and the patience to try, rotate and try again. View on Amazon

11+ Magnetic Cube Net (3D Non-Verbal Reasoning Aid)
Cubes and nets are a perennial 11+ challenge. Folding a real magnetic net into a cube, again and again, makes the paper version click. View on Amazon

Wooden Tangram and 3D Logic Blocks
Classic tangram puzzles with a 3D twist. Detail-spotting, spatial reasoning and a screen-free half hour, all in one box. View on Amazon

Verbal reasoning and vocabulary at the dinner table

Catchphrase Family Board Game
Say what you see. Idioms and wordplay under gentle time pressure, and every idiom you discuss as you play is one your child may meet in a passage. View on Amazon

Jigsaw puzzles and spot-the-difference books quietly train the same visualisation and detail-spotting, and word games of any kind feed verbal reasoning with the added gift of vocabulary. If it has a pattern, a rule or a word in it, it counts.

BEFORE YOU GO

Where does your child actually stand?

Everything in this guide works better when you know which area deserves the attention. Most children lean one way: strong on the maths but thin on vocabulary, or a fluent reader who has never met a timetable question. Knowing which, and in what order to work on it, is what turns summer effort into September results. That is the part I help with.

For children sitting the Kent Test this September

Kent-format mock exam sittings run across the summer, capped at 12 children per sitting so every child gets a proper report. A calm dress rehearsal now, in real exam conditions, is one of the most useful things the last weeks of summer can hold: it settles nerves, and it shows exactly which questions to work on before the day itself. Current dates, prices and booking are here: **Book a Kent Test mock**.

For every year group: the £47 Diagnostic

Your child sits real papers matched to their target school's board, I mark them myself, and you receive a written report showing exactly which gaps are holding them back and what to work on first. We talk it through on a call together. No pressure, and no obligation to go further.

Book the 11+ Diagnostic

11 Plus Made Simple

Small-group 11+ tuition for grammar and independent schools across Kent, Bexley and South East London. Groups capped at five children. Across my 2023 to 2026 offers, 87% of families were placed at their first-choice school.

Ronke. Founder. Former Assistant Principal.

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