

Teacher Resource · Free resource

## Pretest and retest pairs – Years 3/4

Year group: 3/4

Source: DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling* (2013)

Purpose: Pairs of pretests (Monday) and retests (Friday) for the Y3/4 statutory word list.

### How to use pretest/retest

**The evidence:** A pretest-teach-retest cycle is one of the most effective learning routines in spelling research. Pupils who take a pretest before instruction show significantly better retention than those who only study and test.

*(Source: Kornell, N. et al. (2009). Unsuccessful retrieval attempts enhance subsequent learning. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General.)*

**The routine:**

**Monday pretest** — pupils attempt all words without having studied them. Mark together immediately. Each pupil identifies their own errors.

**Tuesday–Thursday teaching** — focus instruction on the specific patterns relevant to the week's words. Use the rule explainers and dictation sentences in this library.

**Friday retest** — same words (or near-variants). Pupils compare with Monday results.

**The gap** — words from this week reappear in a future test (3–4 weeks later) to test long-term retention.

**A pupil who scores 7/20 on Monday and 18/20 on Friday is experiencing exactly the right kind of learning.** The pretest failure is productive — it creates retrieval pathways that make the subsequent learning stick.

## Set 1: Y3/4 Statutory Words – Batch A (25 words)

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**Monday pretest:** accident · address · answer · appear · arrive · believe · bicycle · breathe · build · calendar · caught · centre · certain · circle · complete · consider · continue · decide · describe · different · difficult · disappear · early · earth · eight

**Friday retest (same words, different order):** early · different · disappear · circle · consider · bicycle · calendar · caught · address · breathe · certain · eight · earth · describe · appear · believe · centre · accident · continue · arrive · complete · decide · answer · build · eight

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## Set 2: Y3/4 Statutory Words – Batch B (25 words)

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**Monday pretest:** enough · exercise · experience · experiment · extreme · famous · favourite · February · forward · fruit · grammar · group · guard · guide · heard · heart · height · history · imagine · important · increase · interest · island · knowledge · learn

**Friday retest:** fruit · knowledge · heart · February · imagine · exercise · famous · forward · increase · grammar · heard · favourite · experiment · learn · guard · interest · height · group · island · history · extreme · enough · guide · important · experience

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### Set 3: Y3/4 Statutory Words – Batch C (25 words)

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**Monday pretest:** length · library · material · medicine · mention · minute · natural · naughty · notice · occasion · often · opposite · ordinary · particular · peculiar · perhaps · popular · position · possess · possible · potatoes · pressure · probably · promise · purpose

**Friday retest:** peculiar · promise · ordinary · minute · possible · occasion · natural · medicine · popular · potatoes · particular · position · naughty · mention · pressure · notice · purpose · probably · often · length · perhaps · library · possess · material · opposite

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## Set 4: Y3/4 Statutory Words – Batch D (25 words)

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**Monday pretest:** question · recent · regular · reign · remember · sentence · separate · special · straight · strange · strength · suppose · surprise · therefore · though · thought · through · various · weight · woman

**Friday retest:** strange · thought · sentence · various · therefore · through · separate · straight · recent · remember · weight · reign · strength · though · woman · question · suppose · special · surprise · regular

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## Set 5: Full Y3/4 Statutory List – End-of-year test (100 words)

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*Use at end of Year 4 to assess full statutory list retention.*

**Test words (in randomised order):** accident · address · though · answer · appear · remember · arrive · believe · often · bicycle · breathe · build · calendar · caught · interest · centre · century · certain · island · circle · complete · consider · continue · decide · describe · different · difficult · disappear · natural · early · earth · suppose · eight · enough · exercise · experience · weight · experiment · extreme · famous · favourite · February · forward · fruit · grammar · strange · group · guard · guide · heard · heart · height · history · imagine · important · increase · mention · knowledge · learn · length · library · various · material · medicine · minute · naughty · notice · occasion · particular · peculiar · perhaps · popular · position · possess · possible · potatoes · pressure · probably · promise · purpose · question · recent · regular · reign · sentence · separate · special · straight · strength · through · therefore · surprise · woman

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## Long-gap retest (4 weeks after initial teaching)

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*Pick 10 words from any set taught 4 weeks ago. Test without warning.*

**Why:** The spacing effect shows that retrieval practice after a delay produces stronger long-term retention than immediate retesting. A test 4 weeks later, even if some words are forgotten, produces better retention outcomes than additional practice in the same week.

*(Source: Cepeda, N.J. et al. (2006). Distributed Practice in Verbal Recall Tasks. Psychological Bulletin.)*

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## Error analysis record (class level)

After each retest, record which words 3 or more pupils misspelled. These words need reteaching.

Word	Error pattern	Rule to reteach	Date

This table feeds directly into the Trouble Spots analysis: words that cluster into a common error pattern (e.g. five pupils writing *seperate* instead of *separate*) should be retaught as a rule, not a word.

Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). Pretest-retest methodology: Kornell et al. (2009); Cepeda et al. (2006). All word lists verified against statutory Appendix 1 document.