



Standards
& Testing
Agency

Multiplication tables check: administration guidance

National pilot

April 2019

Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Background	3
1.2 Overview of the MTC pilot	3
1.3 Summary of actions for schools	4
1.4 Help and support	4
1.5 Expiry date	4
2. Preparing for the check	5
2.1 Preparing rooms	5
2.2 Equipment required	5
2.3 Requirements for check administrators	6
2.4 Registering pupils for the pilot	6
2.5 Pupils who should not take the check	6
2.6 Generating PINs	7
2.7 Access arrangements	7
2.8 'Try it out' area	9
3. Administering the MTC	10
3.1 Instructions to pupils	10
3.2 Problems or queries during check administration	11
3.3 Restarts	11
4. After the check	12
4.1 Pupil Register	12
4.2 Headteacher's declaration form	12
4.3 Results	12
4.4 Feedback	12

1. Introduction

This document provides guidance for schools administering the multiplication tables check (MTC) during the voluntary pilot from Monday 10 June to Friday 28 June 2019. It includes information to help administrators:

- understand the requirements of the pilot
- understand the role of the check administrator
- plan for check administration
- access the MTC system
- administer the check
- provide feedback on the MTC system and administration process

Supplementary guidance about using the MTC system, which includes step-by-step instructions and screenshots, is also available.

1.1 Background

In January 2016, the government announced its intention to introduce the MTC during key stage 2. The check is intended to help teachers identify pupils who have not yet mastered this important mathematical skill so schools can give them additional support.

The [2017 primary assessment consultation](#)¹ invited views on how and when the check should be administered. Regarding timing, the option preferred by respondents to the consultation was that pupils should take the check at the end of year 4, in line with the requirements set out in the national curriculum. They were also clear that it should not be burdensome for schools, both in terms of the time taken to administer the check and the requirements for reporting data. Following the consultation exercise, and having listened to this feedback, it was confirmed in September 2017 that the check would be administered to pupils at the end of year 4, and be designed so as to place minimal additional burdens on school staff and pupils.

The MTC will become statutory for schools to administer in the 2019/20 academic year.

1.2 Overview of the MTC pilot

Schools will administer an on-screen check to assess whether pupils are able to fluently recall their multiplication tables up to 12, through a set of timed questions. Pupils will answer 3 practice questions before the check begins.

The check consists of 25 questions. Pupils will have 6 seconds to answer each question,

¹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/primary-assessment-in-england

with a 3-second pause between questions. The [assessment framework](#)² gives more detail about the purpose, format, content and cognitive demand of the MTC.

Pupils can access a 'try it out' area from Monday 1 April to familiarise themselves with the check format, and any access arrangements, before the check period.

The purpose of the pilot is:

- to allow schools to familiarise themselves with the check before it becomes a statutory assessment in 2020
- for the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) to test the digital service with schools on a national scale
- to gather feedback from school staff and pupils about how the check administration process and guidance can be improved

1.3 Summary of actions for schools

As part of the pilot in June 2019, you should:

- register pupils to take the check
- allow pupils to access the 'try it out' area to familiarise themselves with the check format
- ensure that access arrangements are provided for any pupils who require them
- generate a school password and pupil identification numbers (PINs) on the days you are administering the check
- administer the check to pupils
- complete the headteacher's declaration form (HDF) to confirm you have administered the check according to this guidance
- view your pupils' results after submitting the HDF
- provide feedback to the MTC development team

1.4 Help and support

For queries regarding the MTC, contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or email assessments@education.gov.uk.

1.5 Expiry date

This guidance will be reviewed and updated before the national rollout of the MTC as a statutory assessment in 2020.

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/multiplication-tables-check-assessment-framework

2. Preparing for the check

2.1 Preparing rooms

Schools should administer the check in a room that is quiet and provides a comfortable, well-lit space. When planning your timetable for pupils to take the check, you should consider how many pupils you will administer the check to at the same time. You may consider administering the check to individuals, small groups or a whole class, depending on the number of digital devices³ and check administrators you have available. Unlike paper-based national curriculum assessments, pupils who have taken the check do not need to be kept separate from pupils who have not yet taken it.

To prepare rooms for the check, you should:

- remove or cover any displays or teaching materials that could provide pupils with an unfair advantage
- ensure seating arrangements will allow all pupils to work quietly and independently
- make sure pupils will not be distracted by other pupils or their digital devices
- ensure the digital devices that the pupils will use are switched on, charged and in good working order before pupils are admitted to the room

During the pilot, your pupils will access the check through a web browser, and sign in using a school password and PIN. They will need the [MTC web address](#)⁴ to access the check. It is helpful for schools to ensure the sign-in page is loaded on devices before pupils enter the room.

2.2 Equipment required

Schools can use any of the following digital devices to access the check:

- PC
- Mac
- laptop
- tablet

Annex A of the MTC system guidance contains an IT checklist and list of compatible browsers.

³ For the purpose of this document, the term 'digital devices' refers to the IT equipment that pupils will use to take the check (see section 2.2).

⁴ <https://multiplication-tables-check-trial.service.gov.uk>

2.3 Requirements for check administrators

The check should be administered by a member of school staff, such as a teacher or teaching assistant, who is:

- familiar with this guidance
- familiar with the digital devices being used
- known to the pupils
- able to provide feedback on the process

2.4 Registering pupils for the pilot

In this pilot, schools should administer the check to all pupils in year 4 unless the headteacher decides it would not be appropriate for a pupil to take the check (see section 2.5). After the check, schools will see how their pupils performed, but this data will not be published by the STA.

You will need to sign in to [NCA tools](#)⁵ to access your school's MTC homepage and register your pupils. The website will automatically log users out after 5 minutes of inactivity.

2.5 Pupils who should not take the check

Headteachers may decide it is not appropriate for a pupil to take the check. The headteacher's decision regarding participation is final. If the headteacher decides a pupil should not take the check, they should mark the pupil as 'not taking the check' on the MTC system.

Pupils should not take the check if any of the following apply:

- they are absent during the entire check period
- they are unable to access the check, even when using the range of access arrangements
- they are considered unable to answer the easiest questions or are working below the national curriculum expectation for [year 2 in multiplication tables](#)⁶
- they have just arrived in school during the check window, with English as an additional language (EAL), and there is not enough time to establish the standard at which they are working

⁵ <https://ncatools.education.gov.uk>

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-mathematics-programmes-of-study

2.6 Generating PINs

Pupils must sign in to the MTC system by entering the school password along with their PIN. This is to ensure each pupil only takes the check using the PIN assigned to them. School passwords and PINs have been designed to enable most year 4 pupils to sign in by themselves, but a check administrator should supervise the process.

Your school's password will change each day. Pupils will need the school password along with their own PIN to sign in and take the check. PINs will become invalid at 4pm on the day they were generated.

2.7 Access arrangements

Access arrangements may be appropriate for pupils:

- with an Education, Health and Care plan
- for whom provision is being made in school using the SEN support system, or whose learning difficulty or disability significantly affects their ability to access the check
- who have behavioural, emotional or social difficulties
- with EAL and who have limited fluency in English

Schools do not need to request permission from STA to use any access arrangements for the MTC. However, the support given must never advantage or disadvantage individual pupils, and should be based on usual classroom practice.

Pupils cannot be given additional time to complete the MTC. The purpose of the check is to determine whether pupils can recall their times tables fluently. Additional time would remove the fluent-recall element of the check.

Colour contrast

If colour contrast is enabled for a pupil, the pupil will be able to change the font and background colours if they would prefer not to work with black text on a white background. Pupils can choose from the following combinations:

- yellow on black
- black on blue
- black on peach
- blue on cream

Font size

If font size is enabled for a pupil, they will be able to increase or decrease the size of the text and number pad on the screen.

‘Next’ button between questions

The standard version of the check includes a 3-second pause between questions. If this is not long enough for a specific pupil, or the pace of the check may disadvantage the pupil, a ‘Next’ button can be enabled. Instead of a 3-second pause between questions, the pupil can press the ‘Next’ button when they are ready to start a new question. The check administrator should be aware that the next question will not appear until the pupil presses the ‘Next’ button and may consider prompting them to press it, if needed. There is a 30-minute time limit to complete the check using this access arrangement.

Remove on-screen number pad

Enabling this feature will remove the on-screen number pad. This may be useful to support pupils who are distracted by the on-screen number pad, or do not plan to use it. Only the question and answer box will show on the screen. A keyboard will be required to enter the pupil’s response.

Input assistance

An input assistant is someone who enters answers dictated by the pupil. An input assistant can be used when a pupil is:

- unable to enter their own answers
- able to input, but inputting causes physical discomfort
- able to input, but inputs very slowly
- able to input, but finds inputting very difficult

The input assistant must enter the answer dictated by the pupil accurately. They must not be another pupil or a relative, carer or guardian of the pupil.

Question reader

If the question reader is enabled, it will read aloud all text displayed on the screen, including the instructions, questions and the answer input after each key press. Pupils can also use ‘Tab’ and ‘Shift + Tab’ to navigate through the screens. Schools should administer the MTC to pupils who are using the question reader in a separate room, or provide headphones to the pupil to avoid the question reader distracting other pupils taking the check at the same time.

The MTC does not support third-party screen readers due to compatibility with the timed element of the check. We recommend using the Chrome or Safari web browsers with this feature. The question reader will not work with Internet Explorer or Edge due to technical limitations.

Audible time alert

Pupils with a visual impairment may not be able to see the on-screen question timer. If the audible time alert is enabled for a pupil, a beep will sound 2 seconds before the end of each question, then a different beep to signal the end of each question.

2.8 'Try it out' area

Schools should use the 'try it out' area of the MTC website with pupils before administering the check.

The 'try it out' area opens on Monday 1 April. It contains 3 practice questions, followed by 25 questions. Pupils will not receive a result for any questions they complete in the 'try it out' area. In most cases, pupils will only need to access the 'try it out' area once.

Pupils will access the 'try it out' area from the [MTC web address](#)⁷ and must log in using their 'try it out' PIN and school password. PINs for the 'try it out' area can be used multiple times throughout the day. PINs will expire at 4pm each day, so schools will have to generate new PINs if pupils will use the 'try it out' area over more than one day.

⁷ <https://multiplication-tables-check-trial.service.gov.uk>

3. Administering the MTC

This voluntary pilot will take place between Monday 10 June and Friday 28 June. Headteachers should decide their own schedule for administering the MTC. The check may be administered to individuals, small groups or a whole class. Schools can administer the check to their pupils on the same day, or over multiple days within the check window. A school password and PINs will need to be generated each day that pupils take the check. Pupils will need the [MTC web address](#)⁸ to access the check.

3.1 Instructions to pupils

You should introduce the MTC as consistently as possible, bearing in mind some pupils may require more explanation to understand the instructions.

The following text provides an example of how you could introduce the check:

“In this activity, you are going to be asked 25 times tables questions.

First, there are 3 practice questions. Have a go at these to get used to the system.

You can use these to practise putting in your answers.”

(For pupils using a PC or laptop with a touchscreen) “You can use the number pad on your keyboard, the numbers on screen using the mouse, or the numbers on screen using a touchscreen.”

(For pupils using a tablet) “Put in your answer using the numbers on the touchscreen.”

“When the questions start, you will have 6 seconds to answer each question. The system will automatically accept your answer after 6 seconds.

You do not need to press the ‘Enter’ button if you do not want to, but you can bring up the next question sooner by pressing or selecting ‘Enter’ to save your answer.

There will be a 3-second pause between each question.

You cannot pause or stop the check once you have started.

When you have finished the check, you can give feedback about the system if you want to.

Does anybody have any questions before we begin?

You can now enter your details to sign in.”

⁸ <https://multiplication-tables-check-trial.service.gov.uk>

3.2 Problems or queries during check administration

Answering pupils' questions

There is no option for a pupil to pause or stop the check once it has started unless the 'Next question' access arrangement has been enabled in advance.

Check administrators should be careful not to say, or do, anything that might give a pupil an advantage. If a pupil asks you how to answer a particular question, explain that you will discuss it with them after the check has finished and tell them to continue.

IT issues

If you have IT issues during the check, speak to your local IT support in the first instance. If you need additional advice, contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or assessments@education.gov.uk.

3.3 Restarts

If a pupil was interrupted during the check, you can allow them to restart it. The pupil will see a different set of questions from their previous attempt. Only the outcome of their final completed attempt will be reported, regardless of which score was higher.

Schools must not allow a pupil to restart the check simply to 'have another go', unless they suffered a significant disruption described below. Pupils can only restart the check twice (allowing them a maximum of 3 attempts).

Restarts are allowed for the following reasons:

- classroom disruption: a pupil was unable to complete the check due to disruption (for example, a fire alarm or building evacuation, illness during the check, or high-level behavioural disruption in the check room)
- did not complete: a pupil did not complete the check (for example, if they accidentally closed the check window)
- IT issues: there was an issue with the digital device the pupil was using (for example, device hard drive failure or power loss)
- prolonged loss of internet connection during the check and the data could not be recovered at the end

Pupils will require a new PIN to sign into the check again, even if they restart the check on the same day as their original attempt. PINs expire at 4pm on the day they were generated.

4. After the check

4.1 Pupil Register

Once a pupil completes the MTC, the pupil register will automatically update their status to 'Check completed'. The register will also display the reasons for any pupils marked as 'Not taking the check' (see section 2.5).

4.2 Headteacher's declaration form

Headteachers should submit the HDF once all pupils have completed the check and by no later than 4pm on Friday 28 June. The HDF confirms that either the check was administered according to the guidance, or that any issues were reported to STA. You will not be able to complete the HDF until all pupils have completed the check or have a reason for not taking the check.

Schools may contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 for help completing the HDF. Once submitted, you can't amend the HDF so any mistakes should be reported to the national curriculum assessments helpline on the number above.

4.3 Results

Pupils will not see their individual results when they complete the check. Results will be available in the 'Results' section from Monday 1 July providing:

- all pupils have completed the check or have been marked as 'not taking the check'
- the HDF has been submitted

We are considering what other data will be returned to schools and this will be confirmed prior to return of results. Results from the pilot will not be published in [Analyse School Performance \(ASP\)](#)⁹, and there will be no statistical publication. When the check becomes statutory in the 2019/20 academic year all results will be provisional until the statistical release in ASP.

4.4 Feedback

There will be a questionnaire on the homepage where teachers can provide feedback after the check. They will be asked how satisfied they were with their experience of administering the MTC, how easy the system was to use and how we might improve it. Pupils will also be asked for their feedback after they have completed the check.

⁹ <https://services.signin.education.gov.uk>



Standards
& Testing
Agency

© Crown copyright 2019

This publication (not including logos) is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

To view this licence:

visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

email psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

write to Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London, TW9 4DU

About this publication:

enquiries www.education.gov.uk/contactus

download www.gov.uk/government/publications

Reference: STA/19/8327/e

ISBN: 978-1-78957-237-7



Follow us on Twitter:
[@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)



Like us on Facebook:
facebook.com/educationgovuk