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What to Focus on in October: A practical 5-minute guide for 11+ families

Your October plan will depend if you are starting the journey OR coming to the end of it

October is an important month in the 7+ and 11+ entrance exam journey, but what your child should be doing depends very much on where they are in their preparation.

This month, there are two very different routes. Some families, particularly those preparing for London 7+ and 11+ entrance exams, are approaching the final stages. Others, including many families preparing for the FSCE in Gloucestershire and Manchester, are nearer the beginning.

Whichever route you're on, October is about one thing: using your child's time wisely.

Route One: The Exams Are Just Around the Corner

For many London 7+ and 11+ families, October is a busy month. Entrance exams are approaching, children are getting tired – and parents are too!

The school holidays bring an abundance of 7+ and 11+ courses, intensive revision programmes, mock exams and workshops. But before signing up, stop and ask:

Does my child actually need this?

At this stage, preparation needs to become increasingly targeted. Understand exactly where your child's gaps are and concentrate on filling them.

Don't book an October half-term course simply because it sounds impressive or because a friend's child is attending.

If your child needs support with 11+ Maths, concentrate on Maths. If English comprehension, vocabulary, creative writing, Verbal Reasoning or Non-Verbal Reasoning is the weakness, target that.

There is limited time remaining and limited productive work you can expect from a tired child.

Get your exam timetable organised

By October, your 7+ or 11+ entrance exam timetable should be firmly in place.

Know:

- When is each exam?
- Have you completed every registration?
- Where is each assessment taking place?
- What format will the exam follow?
- Are there interviews or additional assessments?
- What does your child need to take?

Don't allow administration to become an unnecessary source of stress.

Balance is essential

At this stage, more preparation does not automatically mean better preparation.

A tired, stressed or overloaded child is unlikely to perform to the best of their ability.

Keep preparation focused, maintain momentum, but protect downtime too. Children still need sleep, exercise, friends and opportunities to switch off.

It is easier said than done, particularly when exams are approaching, but balance is essential.

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Route Two: Your 11+ Journey Is Just Beginning

For other families, October looks completely different.

If you're beginning 11+ preparation in Gloucestershire or Manchester, particularly if your child will be sitting the FSCE, your preparation window is shorter than families have traditionally expected because the exams are due to take place in June 2027.

That makes the October holidays valuable preparation time.

But don't panic and attempt to teach everything at once.

FSCE Preparation: Get the Foundations Right

Parents are understandably hearing a great deal about the wider curriculum covered by the FSCE.

This does not mean your child should suddenly be overloaded with every possible subject.

We are seeing tutors offering extensive Science, Art and wider-curriculum preparation when some children still don't have sufficiently strong foundations in English and Maths.

Yes, the FSCE has a broader curriculum.

But strong English and Maths remain at the root of successful preparation.

A child needs excellent reading, comprehension and vocabulary skills to understand and interpret questions across the curriculum. Strong mathematical knowledge, reasoning and problem-solving skills allow children to apply what they know to unfamiliar situations.

Build the foundations first. Broaden from a position of strength.

Find an Experienced FSCE Tutor

Because the FSCE is new to Gloucestershire and Manchester families, don't assume it is new to every 11+ tutor.

Children elsewhere in the UK have already been preparing for this style of assessment, which means there are tutors with relevant experience and knowledge.

Look carefully.

Ask potential 11+ and FSCE tutors about their experience with this type of entrance examination, how they assess children's starting points and how they intend to prepare for the broader curriculum without sacrificing essential English and Maths development.

Finding the right tutor for your child is more important than finding the tutor everyone else appears to be using.

Your October Checklist

By the end of October, families near the beginning of their journey should ideally have the right 11+ tutor or preparation plan in place, understand their child's current English and Maths level, know the areas requiring development and have a clear plan for the months ahead.

Consider an appropriate October half-term 11+ or FSCE course, even if it is only a short one, if it meets your child's needs. Holidays can make it surprisingly easy to lose momentum.

For families approaching their exams, October is instead about precision, organisation and balance.

Whether you're preparing for the London 7+ and 11+, the Gloucestershire 11+ and FSCE, the Manchester 11+ and FSCE, grammar school entrance exams or independent school entrance exams, don't measure success by how many hours, tutors or courses you can fit in.

Ask a much more useful question:

What does my child actually need right now?



Find more 7+ and 11+ entrance exam advice, FSCE preparation, 11+ tutors, courses, mock exams, school information and preparation resources at www.successindex.co.uk.

Success Index – helping families navigate the 7+, 11+ and entrance exam journey with confidence.