



Balancing Trial Tests and WEMT

Optimising Preparation for Selective Schools



Writing



English



Mathematics



Thinking Skills

Achieving the right balance between assessment and skill development to maximise your child's potential for top selective schools



"Focus on building real skills, not just testing them"

Who This Advice Is For

Target Audience

- ✓ Parents aiming for **top 10-20 selective schools**
- ✓ Parents making serious attempts for selective and OC programmes
- i Advice may not apply to those with different academic goals




The Common Pattern

Many parents believe more trial tests = better results, but this approach often leads to:

"Steve, I've enrolled my child in 3-4 trial tests at different coaching colleges, but they're not improving..."



The Core Problem

-  **Imbalance**
Too much testing, not enough skill development
-  **Timeline Issues**
Excessive trial tests too early in the preparation journey
-  **Misunderstanding**
Confusion between testing knowledge and building knowledge

"Trial tests measure progress; they don't create it."

Understanding the Limits of Trial Tests

What Trial Tests Actually Do

- ✔ They only **measure your child's ranking** at a specific point in time
- 📊 Similar to stepping on a scale—shows your current position, not how to improve
- 📄 Provide limited exam technique practice after the first few attempts

Key Insight

Doing a trial test without skill development in between is like weighing yourself repeatedly without changing your diet or exercise—the results won't change.

The Gym Analogy

- 🏋️ Testing your one-rep max every day without volume training in between won't increase your strength.
- 🏃 Running a marathon every week without proper training between races won't improve your time.

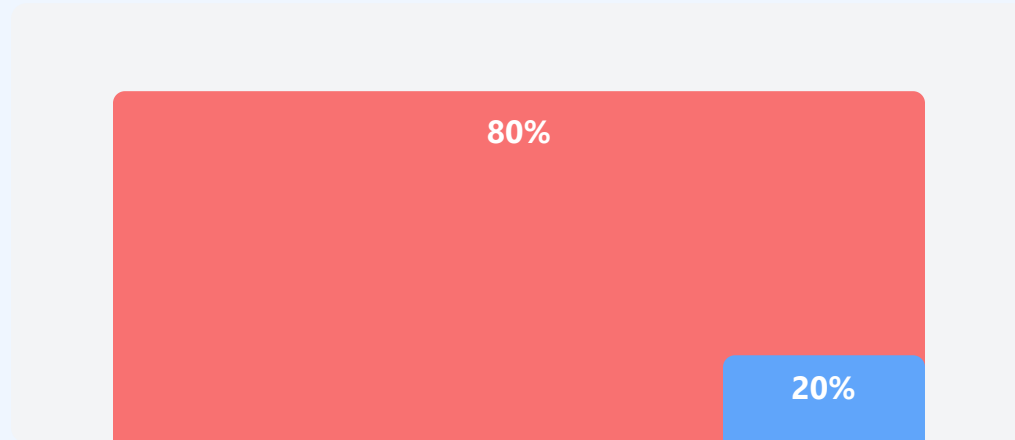
The Negative Effects

- 📉 **Discouragement**
Repeated testing without improvement leads to discouraged children
- ⌚ **Wasted Time**
Time spent on excessive testing could be used for actual skill development

"What matters is not the trial test, but what you do between the trial tests."

The 80/20 Rule for Effective Learning

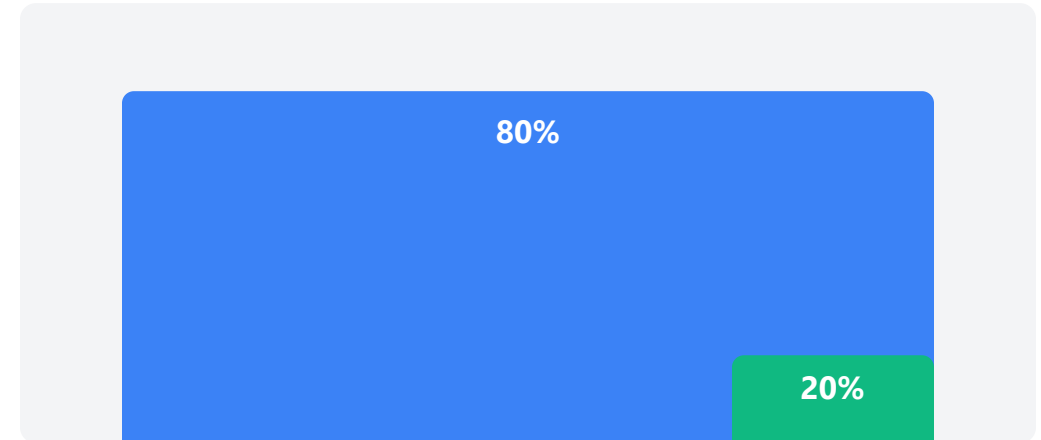
Common Mistake



Doing Questions

- ❗ Students spend most time doing practice questions
- ❗ Minimal time spent reviewing mistakes
- ❗ Many coaching centres only provide 20-30 minutes of review time

Optimal Approach



- ✓ **Reviewing**
Focus majority of time on reviewing mistakes and building skills
- ✓ Use testing sparingly (once per week) to measure progress
- ✓ Deliberately work on weakest areas, even though it's challenging

Why This Happens

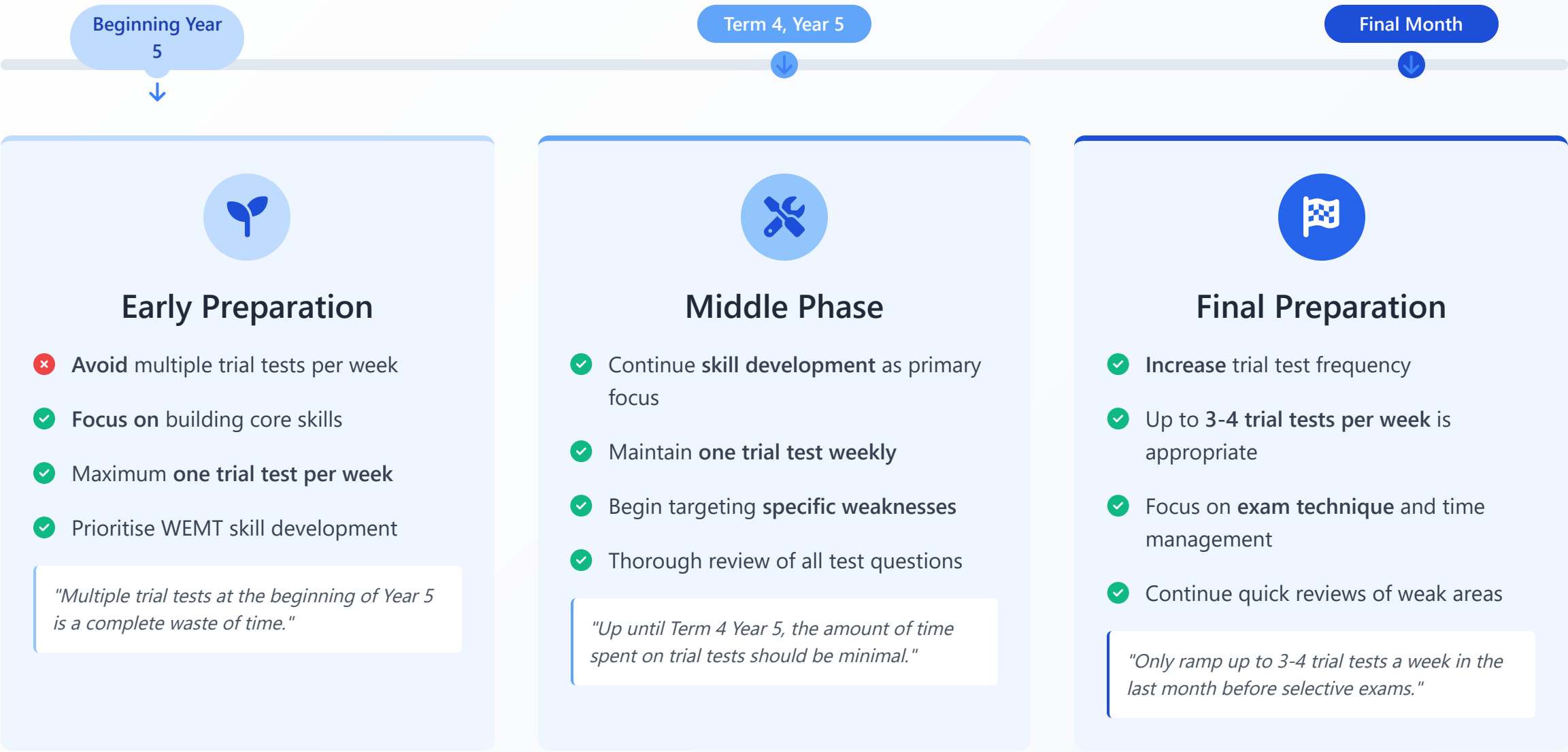
- 🔒 Many coaching centres don't reveal test questions for review
- 😞 Reviewing mistakes is uncomfortable and challenging
- ♥️ Students prefer working on subjects they already excel in


Memory & Learning Facts

- 🧠 Memory retention drops by **50%** after one day without review
- 🔄 Concepts need to be reviewed **6-8 times** before they're properly memorised

"Reviewing your mistakes is harder than mindlessly doing questions, but it's what creates real improvement."

Timeline & Frequency of Trial Tests





 The ideal preparation balances **skill development** with **strategic testing**, with more emphasis on the former until the final preparation phase.


Understanding WEMT: Comprehensive Skill Development


What is WEMT?

WEMT represents the four core disciplines essential for selective school success:

**Writing**
Creative and analytical writing skills, including narratives and persuasive texts

**English**
Comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and language conventions

**Mathematics**
Numerical reasoning, problem-solving, and mathematical concepts

**Thinking Skills**
Logical reasoning, pattern recognition, and abstract thinking

*"You can only really build real skills through focused WEMT development."*

Why WEMT Over Trial Tests?

-  **Targeted Development**
Focuses on building specific skills rather than just testing existing knowledge
-  **Foundational Learning**
Establishes the core competencies needed for exam success
-  **Detailed Feedback**
Provides opportunities for meaningful improvement through specific guidance
-  **Progressive Improvement**
Allows for systematic skill growth rather than sporadic testing

WEMT vs Trial Tests: The Balance

The ideal approach combines both elements:

- 80%** Focus on WEMT skill development
- 20%** Strategic trial tests to gauge progress



Key Takeaway: For Years 3-4 and most of Year 5, prioritise WEMT for comprehensive skill building. Only in the final months before exams should trial tests become more frequent.

Writing Practice: Beyond Trial Tests

Why Daily Writing Matters



One writing piece every two weeks is insufficient for top selective school preparation

- ✔ Writing should be a **daily practice**, not just a test activity
- ✔ Top 10% performance requires **consistent practice**
- ✔ More frequent shorter writing with feedback is better than occasional long pieces

“If you want to be in the top 10% of anything, you need to do it daily.”

The Tennis Analogy



You wouldn't expect to reach state-level tennis with just one practice session per week.

Similarly, reaching the top 7-10% in writing requires consistent, deliberate practice that builds foundational skills.

Writing Development Timeline

2

Year 2

Begin with simple diary entries

💡 Write about daily activities and experiences at school

3

Year 3

Progress to narratives and persuasive writing

💡 Find topics online and practice both creative and argumentative styles

5

Year 5

Focus on selective-specific formats

💡 Practice diary entries, feature articles, and other exam-specific formats

Practical Implementation



Give your child a daily writing topic, even if they only write a little



Provide immediate, specific feedback on each piece



Use resources like Pobble 365 for daily writing prompts

⚠ For top 10-20 selective schools, aim for at least **2 hours of work daily**, with consistent writing *"Bring writing home and make it part of your daily routine."*

Parental Involvement & Home Learning

The Critical Role of Parents

“Most of the kids who get into top 10 schools get a lot of parental help at home.”



Accountability

Parents provide oversight and consistency that coaching centres cannot



Thorough Review

Parents can ensure mistakes are properly analysed and understood



Personalised Care

No tutor will care about your child's progress more than you do

Balancing Coaching & Home Learning



Common Pitfall

Enrolling in multiple coaching centres while neglecting home practice

Recommended Approach

- ✓ Limit to 1-2 coaching centres maximum
- ✓ Prioritise quality over quantity in external instruction
- ✓ Dedicate 2+ hours daily at home for top 10-20 schools



For specialised areas like scholarship writing and high-end thinking skills, targeted coaching is valuable

Benefits of Home-Based Learning



Time Efficiency

Eliminates travel time and allows for more flexible scheduling



Content Control

Parents know exactly what's being taught and how it's being retained



Memory Reinforcement

Allows for multiple reviews of material to support long-term retention



For selective school preparation, [the quality of home learning](#) is often more important than the number of coaching classes attended.

Common Mistakes to Avoid & Best Practices

⚠ Common Mistakes



Excessive Coaching Centres

Enrolling in 3-4 different coaching centres creates fragmented learning and wastes time on travel



Early Over-Testing

Multiple weekly trial tests at the beginning of Year 5 when skill building should be the priority



Minimal Review Time

Spending hours on tests but only minutes reviewing mistakes, missing valuable learning opportunities



Avoiding Weaknesses

Focusing on subjects they already excel in while neglecting areas that need improvement

✓ Best Practices



Strategic Balance

1-2 quality coaching centres maximum, with focused home learning to complement instruction



Phased Approach

Focus on skill building year-round; increase trial tests only in the final 1-2 months before exams



Daily Writing

Implement daily writing practice at home with prompt feedback, rather than relying on infrequent test writing



Targeted Weakness Focus

Dedicate 80% of study time to reviewing and improving weakest areas, even when it's challenging



Key Insight

For top selective school success, it's not about doing more practice—it's about doing the right practice with thorough review and targeted improvement.

Conclusion: Achieving the Right Balance

Key Takeaways



The 80/20 Rule

Spend 80% of time on reviewing mistakes and building skills, only 20% on testing



Strategic Timeline

Limit to one trial test weekly until the final 1-2 months before exams



Daily Writing Practice

Make writing a daily practice with immediate feedback, not just a test activity



Parental Involvement

Successful students receive significant parental help at home



Final Thought

Quality of learning is more important than quantity. Focus on targeted WEMT skill development rather than accumulating hours of testing.

"What matters is not the trial test, but what you do between the trial tests."

For top 10-20 selective schools, aim for at least 2 hours of focused work daily



Success in selective school examinations comes from **consistent, focused practice** in all WEMT areas with an emphasis on **deliberate improvement**, not just repeated testing.