



5 Most Common Areas of Difficulty in Year 4

How to support your child

We asked our Atom Education Experts about the 5 most common areas of difficulty in Year 4 and how you can support your child with these.

Here are their top tips:

Inferences

Inference means reading between the lines and forming your own conclusions based on contextual evidence from the text. It tends to be the area within comprehension that students struggle with the most. Lots of inference questions start with 'why' or contain words like 'suggest' or 'infer'. They either ask about a character's motivations or the author's intent.

A great way to boost your child's inference skills is by reading actively together at home. You can set your child short activities whilst reading, such as writing a summary paragraph of what they have read or writing an alternative ending to the story. You can ask your child questions to develop their imagination and inference skills such as asking what might happen next, or what a character may be thinking or feeling at a particular moment.

Evidence

+

Wider knowledge

=

Inference

Poetry

Children can often feel reluctant to read poetry, which can be due to the language and style used or the feeling that poems are something to be 'decoded'. If your child is reluctant to read poetry, start with poetry they already enjoy and find relatable. This can even be song lyrics! You can talk about what you both liked or didn't like about the poem and why. This also strengthens your child's inference skills!

When reading poetry with your child, encourage them to express their views on what they have read. Discuss the vocabulary the poet has used, especially if the vocabulary is new or peculiar. This will develop your child's interest in the meaning and origin of words.

Encourage your child to read and perform poems out loud, acting them out with emphasis and gestures to get the meaning across. This can be a fun activity you can do together and one that will develop your child's speaking skills.

If your child is really enjoying a poem, challenge them to continue it by writing another verse matching the same style of the original poem. This is a fantastic opportunity to discuss any rhyming schemes or syllable structures used and for your child to practice writing in different poetic styles.

You can download our [Years 3 and 4 Poetry Reading List](#) [here](#).



Homographs

Vocabulary is a common area of difficulty throughout Key Stage 2 as children see a wealth of new words and definitions. As well as new vocabulary, children are also exposed to homographs. Homographs refer to two or more words that are spelt the same but pronounced differently. They also have different meanings, which can be a confusing concept initially. For example, the word 'tear', as a verb, can mean to rip something, or, as a noun, it refers to drops produced by crying.

The best way to support your child with homographs is by helping them to build a rich and varied vocabulary. We recommend that your child keep a vocabulary log so that if they come across a new word that they're unfamiliar with, they can stop, write it down, and look up the meaning. Alongside the definition, our Education Experts also recommend writing down a synonym and an antonym to further develop their understanding. As an extension, challenge your child to use these new words in conversation and in writing.

Reading is so valuable for your child to develop their vocabulary. Through reading, your child will learn many new words in different contexts. If your child comes across an unfamiliar word in a text, they can also try to deduce its meaning by using context clues to support them.



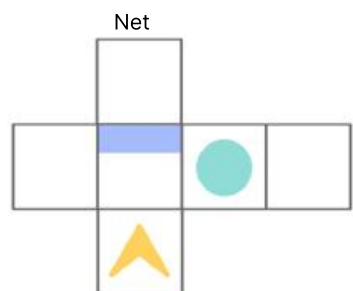
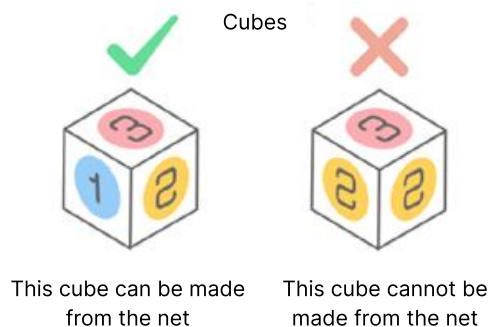
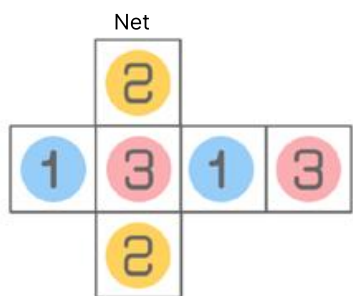
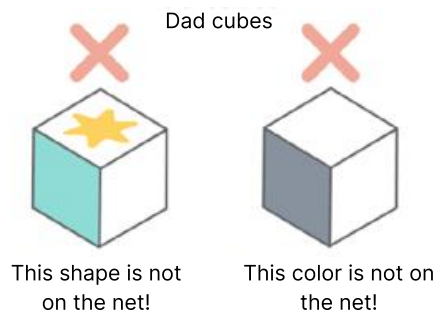
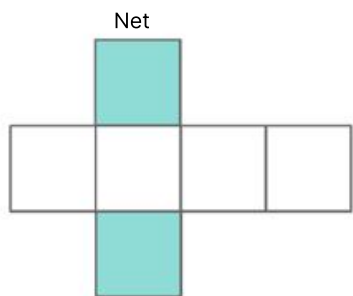
Nets and Cubes

Whilst some children are naturally very good at Non-Verbal Reasoning, for many it can be very challenging. Nets and Cubes questions require children to visualise and keep track of multiple shapes in their head at once which can be confusing.

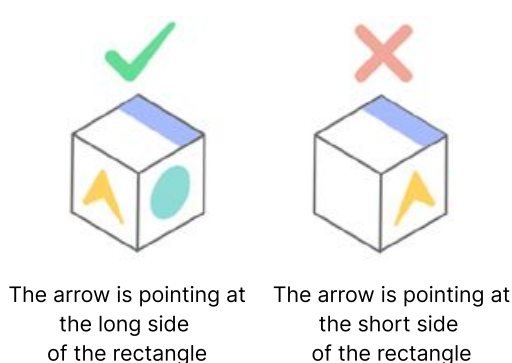
To support your child, there are three rules to remember:

- **Duds:** A feature that is not shown
- **Opposites:** We do not see two opposite faces when folded
- **Orientation:** Shapes within a net turn upon folding

When approaching these questions, it can really help some children to visualise the folding process. You can support your child by getting an A4 page and pair of scissors and following the instructions in the question to make the shape that is is being described. This will help your child to create a mental representation of how nets work and interact. Our Education Experts also recommend looking out for identifying features on a shape, such as points or arrowheads, to figure out which faces it's pointing towards.



The arrow is pointing at the long side of the rectangle



Decimals

Decimals are one of the most common areas of difficulty in maths, especially in Year 4 when this topic is introduced. The first thing your child needs to understand is that decimals represent a part of a whole.



At home, our Education Experts recommend using a blank hundred chart with your child to show decimals visually. By colouring in one square, you can explain to your child that you have coloured in one hundredth ($1/100$) of the whole. You can practice writing this as 0.01, explaining this is because the second digit after the decimal point represents the hundredths.

After this, repeat the process for one-tenth (0.1) and once your child feels confident with this concept you can give them a list of decimals (0.7, 0.11, 0.56, etc) to colour in on other blank hundred squares. This is also a great way of helping them understand that 0.7 is bigger than 0.11, which children can often find confusing.

You can also strengthen your child's understanding of decimals using real-life examples, such as money where the decimal point shows a fraction of a pound. Writing down different monetary amounts that use pounds and pence is a great way for your child to become more familiar with money.

