FREE PARENT GUIDE

Home-Educating? How to Sit GCSE or IGCSE Maths as a Private Candidate

PARENT GUIDE

By Ibrahim, maths tutor since 2018 · Updated October 2026

If your child is home-educated, you can still enter them for GCSE or IGCSE Maths. They sit the exams as a **private candidate** at an approved exam centre. Maths is one of the easiest subjects to do this way, because there is no coursework. Here is how it works, step by step.

Who Is a Private Candidate?

A private candidate is anyone who enters for an exam without being taught at the centre where they sit it. That includes home-educated children, students taught by a tutor or online course, and some students resitting after leaving school.

Step by Step

1. **Choose GCSE or International GCSE**
   Both are accepted by most colleges, sixth forms and universities as a maths qualification at this level, but check with any college you have in mind. Many home-educating families choose International GCSE (Edexcel or Cambridge), partly because it can also be sat at approved centres outside the UK.

2. **Find an Exam Centre Before You Choose the Exam Board**
   This is the step families most often get wrong. Not every centre offers every board or tier (Foundation or Higher), so confirm what the centre can offer before your child starts the course. Use the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) online search for centres that accept private candidates, ask local schools and colleges, or contact specialist exam centres.

3. **Book Early**
   Centres set their own deadlines, often in the autumn or early in the new year for summer exams. For summer 2027, the exam boards' own deadline is 21 February 2027, so centres need your entry well before that.

4. **Check the Costs**
   Each centre sets its own fees. For one GCSE or IGCSE Maths entry, fees are often around £150 to £250, and some centres charge more. Ask what is included, and about late entry fees.

5. **Ask About Access Arrangements Early**
   If your child needs extra time, a reader or rest breaks, the centre must arrange this when you enter, and will usually need evidence. Raise it at the very start.

6. **Check the Statement of Entry**
   The centre will send a statement of entry listing the board, tier and exam dates. Check every detail carefully, including the spelling of your child's name.

GCSE or International GCSE?

	GCSE Maths	International GCSE Maths
Boards	AQA, Edexcel, OCR, Eduqas	Pearson Edexcel (4MA1), Cambridge (0580)
Where it can be sat	At an approved centre in the UK	At approved centres in the UK and many other countries
Papers	Three papers (two for Eduqas)	Two papers
Formula sheet	Same formulas for every board	Different for each board
When exams are held	May to June, with November resits for students aged 16 or over	Summer, plus extra exam sessions on some boards

A Suggested Timeline for a Summer Exam

When	What to Do
A year or more before the exams	Choose the qualification. Find a centre that offers it, then choose the board.
September to December	Contact the centre and make the entry before its deadline. Ask for any access arrangements (such as extra time).
January to March	Finish the course content. Start timed practice.
April to May	Full past papers under exam conditions, at a desk, with a timer.
May to June	The exams. Arrive early with photo ID if the centre asks for it.
August	Results, collected from the centre or sent by them.

Practise Being in an Exam Room

Home-educated students may never have sat in an exam hall. The silence, the rows of desks and the strict rules can be unsettling. Before the real thing, do several full papers at a table, in silence, with a timer and only exam equipment on the desk. If possible, visit the centre beforehand so the building feels familiar.

What to Take on Exam Day

- Photo ID, if the centre asks for it
- An approved scientific calculator for the calculator papers
- The statement of entry, with the candidate number
- Black pens, pencils, a ruler, a rubber, a protractor and compasses
- A clear pencil case and a clear water bottle with no labels

From My Own Teaching

I have taught home-educated students as part of a home-education group, and the students who did best were the ones who practised under exam conditions well before the real thing. The maths was not the hardest part. Getting used to a timed, silent exam was.

What You Can Do This Week

- Search for exam centres near you that accept private candidates.
- Ask two centres which maths boards and tiers they offer, their deadline and their fee.
- Only then choose the board and start using its specification (the official list of topics, free on the board's website) and formula sheet.

Want Help With Maths at Home?

Book a free 90-minute online lesson. I'll find exactly where your child is and what to do next.

mathswithibrahim.co.uk · WhatsApp +44 7759 386176