Capital, Question Mark, Full Stop: Checking Your Own Sentences in Year 2

In Year 2, children learn to check their own sentences by asking three simple questions: Does it start with a capital letter? Does it end with a full stop or question mark? Does it make sense on its own? This page helps you understand what this skill is, what your child will practise, and how you can support them at home.

What it is

Self-checking sentences is a simple habit Year 2 pupils learn to spot and fix mistakes in their own writing. Instead of waiting for an adult to correct them, children learn to reread what they have written and ask three specific questions. This turns proofreading (checking for mistakes) from something that happens to them into something they do themselves. It is not about being perfect—it is about building the skill of noticing what needs to change and making those changes. Teachers introduce this as an explicit routine, using short sentences with deliberate mistakes for children to spot. The goal is to make it a repeatable habit that children use without thinking, rather than a special task they do once in a while.

What happens in the classroom

Teachers teach Year 2 pupils to use a three-question checklist when they finish writing. The questions are: Does it start with a capital letter? Does it end with a full stop or question mark? Does it make sense on its own? Teachers often model this aloud, reading an example sentence and thinking aloud about whether it passes each check. They might show sentences with missing capital letters, no punctuation, or phrases that do not make sense, and ask children to spot the error. This happens regularly—sometimes as part of literacy lessons, sometimes as a quick routine after writing activities. Children practise it in pairs and alone until it becomes automatic. The idea is that when they finish any piece of writing, they naturally look back and check.

What it means for your child

This skill is part of what Year 2 pupils are expected to do, especially during writing assessments where children write independently without an adult helping them. Teachers look for evidence that children can reread their work and make corrections—this shows they understand how to check themselves. Building this habit now means children become independent writers who do not need someone else to point out every mistake. It is not about perfect writing; it is about children understanding that they have a role in making their writing better. Children who can check their own sentences feel more confident as writers because they are not passive—they are making choices. This skill also helps children notice patterns and builds their understanding of how sentences work.

How you can help at home

Keep it short and playful. When your child writes at home—even a label, a shopping list or a short note—you can use the same three questions. Ask: "Does that start with a big letter? Does it end with a full stop? Does it make sense?" Read it back aloud together and let your child spot the answer. Celebrate when they notice a mistake and fix it themselves—that is exactly what learning to check means. If they write something that does not make sense, try rereading it together and asking what they meant to say. You do

not need to correct everything—even spotting one thing they can fix is progress. Make it a game rather than a lesson. Short, relaxed moments are much more helpful than formal practice.

Questions parents often ask

Do they need to be perfect at this? No. Year 2 pupils are still learning to write. The point is to build the habit and the awareness, not perfect writing. Many mistakes are normal at this age. **What if my child does not want to recheck their work?** Keep it light and voluntary. Praise any attempt. The more they see checking as something they do themselves, the more willing they become. **Should I correct everything they write?** No. If you correct everything, they miss the chance to notice and fix their own mistakes. Instead, ask questions that help them spot errors. **Does my child need extra practice?** Not usually. Using the questions during normal writing is enough. If your child finds writing difficult, chat with their teacher about what they suggest.

Sources

- Department for Education: National Curriculum in England: English programmes of study, Key Stage 1
- GOV.UK: Primary assessment arrangements, teacher assessment