



Advice for a volunteer - What is the Duke of Edinburgh's award?

"The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a life-changing experience.

Through your unique DofE programme, you can discover new talents, develop essential skills for life and have fun with friends. Any 14–24-year-old can do their DofE. Achieving an Award isn't a competition or about being first. It's about setting challenges and pushing personal boundaries. DofE has three levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold. For each level, you need to do four or five sections."

The different sections are Physical, Skill, Volunteering, Expedition, and at Gold Residential.

The Bronze award can be started at 14, Silver at 15 and Gold at 16. You can start at any level, but you must complete the award before your 25th Birthday.

What are the time scales?

For Bronze you must spend 3 months working towards your skill, physical and volunteering sections, you must then complete an additional 3 months on any of the sections. So, it will take a minimum of 6 months to complete the bronze award.

In principle this would be 1 hour a week for 3/6 months, so 13/26 meetings, which is roughly 1 or 2 full school terms.

For Silver the volunteering section is 6 months/26 weeks unless you didn't complete Bronze which means you must do 1 of the sections for 1 year/ 52 weeks

For Gold The volunteering section will take 1 year/ 52 weeks or if you didn't do Silver 18 months/ 78 weeks.

The time frames are flexible it doesn't have to be consecutive weeks, if it is a better balance for you and your unit, you could attend every other week, this works particularly well if you would like to alternate with a ranger unit or would prefer a lower time commitment.

For Bronze, the overall goal is to have 13/26 hours spread over a minimum of 3/6 months.

If your meeting is over 1 hour the additional time can also be counted, towards the 13/ 26 hours but you must still attend for a total of 3/6 months the additional hours can count towards when units aren't meeting due to holidays, any time spent planning with the unit or attending events outside of the unit may also count towards the total volunteering time.

So, to earn your award you must have attended meetings for a minimum of 13/26 consecutive weeks and have completed 13/26 hours of volunteering.

What is the purpose of the volunteering section?

"Volunteering is about making a meaningful contribution in your community, influencing change and shaping the world you want to live in. You should look for an activity that is meaningful to you. You can volunteer alone or in a team, in person or online."

The volunteering should be making an impact in Guiding, and helping you to gain leadership, teamwork and communication skills. You should think about what you would like to get out of volunteering with Guiding before you start volunteering, but a good starting point is to work through the young leader qualification. You can complete a few sections a term and by the time you have completed Gold/ Silver you should have been able to complete the entire award, this is designed to be an entry point so it will guide you with different tasks building up to leading activities with your unit, completing this will also be a great start towards completing your leadership Qualification, once you are over 18.

What to do when you start with a new unit?

Before you start volunteering you must complete safe space for 14–17-year-olds, an introduction to the safeguarding practises in Girl Guiding.

Then during your 1st term, you should try to follow the Welcome to being a young leader pack. This also wants you to set a goal which can be the same goal as your DofE goal.

There is also guidance on how they can get involved with girls, starting with joining in the activities e.g.: partnering up with a girl in an activity involving pairs. To helping the girls working in small groups, then working on leading a game, before hopefully being able to help lead a full unit activity by the end of the term.

Questions to ask yourself before you start volunteering with guiding.

Why do you want to volunteer with Girl Guiding?

What do you want to gain from volunteering with guiding?

What sections are you wanting to help with?

What do you think the purpose of Guiding is?

What do you hope to get out of volunteering, and what skills do you hope to share?

Are there any special talents, hobbies, or experiences you would love to bring to the unit?

How much time can you realistically give, and how often can you attend meetings?

What time frame are you looking at volunteering for?

Does this meeting time and location suit your weekly schedule?

Would you be interested in also joining Rangers, if you aren't already?

If you are under 18 it is worth considering joining Rangers alongside being a young leader, it gives you the chance to enjoy the program you are running with your unit and will give you the chance to have amazing new experience and make new friends.

What should you be trying to achieve by the end of your DofE?

By volunteering with Girl Guiding, you should have the opportunity to build your confidence by being able to lead a group of girls in an activity and express your opinions to the other adult volunteers. It should also help build your organisational skills and give you experience of effective time management. As well as your communication and Teamwork skills. This experience will help you when applying to university or getting a job, looking very good on your CV.

You should be able to complete the young leader Qualification by the end of your gold award and could progress on to the becoming a unit leader at 18.

How should you be documenting/ tracking your volunteering?

Making a diary or log of what happened at the unit each week is a really good way to track the volunteer hours it is also a great way of showing progression as what you achieved each week. There only needs to be a few sentences a week unless you achieved a big milestone and wants to document more, this can also be used to help with writing an assessor's report as it shows what progression you have made in the time frame.

There is a template you can follow from the DofE website:

https://www.dofe.org/resources-centre-participants/?paged=1&search_text=activity+log

Getting your volunteering hours signed off.

The volunteering section is a challenge and there should be progress, You should be getting involved with the leadership team and trying to help, if they feel you haven't put in enough effort then they do not have to sign off your section, you can also be told that they only earned half the hour. If you are unsure if you feel like you have earned the full hour, ask the leadership team if there are any ways you could assist, or if there are some tasks you might be able to take on like doing the register at the start of the meeting, setting up the snack if your unit has one or helping set up any resources needed to complete the activities in a meeting.

If you feel like you have any more DofE related questions or would like some help on a more specific issue, please email dofe@girlguidingnorthamptonshire.org.uk