

This document is intended for parents, but will also be of use to those who did not attend the Year 10 presentation.

What is the Duke of Edinburgh's Award?

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is an award granted to young people who have demonstrated achievement and personal development in a number of areas.

It is granted at three levels, Bronze (14 years and over), Silver (15+), and Gold (16+). Year 10 pupils are eligible to undertake the Bronze Award.

Each award requires the completion of four sections:

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| Volunteering | - helping others |
| Skills | - developing personal interests |
| Physical Recreation | - encouraging physical fitness and an active lifestyle |
| Expeditions | - undertaking an adventurous journey in a group |

(For the Gold Award there is also a residential project)

Each of the Service, Skills and Recreation sections must be completed for a period of either three or six months (at Bronze level) and the participant must show an ongoing commitment to their task. They must also demonstrate development during the period of activity.

This is monitored by an assessor who reports on their progress at the end of the period. The participant has to find a suitable assessor and agree targets that they will achieve before they start that section of the Award, and the assessor's report should indicate whether they have achieved the set goals.

The assessor is usually someone like a teacher (out of school, such as a music teacher teaching an instrument), club coach or captain, Scout or Brownie leader, charity group manager, etc.

Gaining the Award is not easy. It is widely recognised and valued by prospective employers and universities.

The grant of an award should be seen as a significant personal achievement.

At STAGS DoE

- There is an enthusiastic group of girls involved in the scheme
- About 20 achieve Bronze Awards each year
- advice, information and guidance is available
- there is a huge website at www.theaward.org or www.dofe.org which gives a vast amount of information
- messages can be left via the school office or via school e-mail.

Before enrolling you should consider:

Taking part in the Award involves a big commitment in time and energy during a busy period at school with GCSE courses just beginning, and continuing into year 11, and even beyond. Many GCSE exams are taken early, at the end of year 10.

Each of the three sections, Skill, Service and Physical Recreation involve a regular commitment over 3 or 6 months averaging an hour a week. The participant needs to choose and find their own activities for each section, plan sufficient time to complete them, and be able to complete school work and keep up with other commitments. This is not an easy task.

The Expedition section

The Expedition section comprises a training section and practice expeditions before a two day assessed expedition. Training involves a course of sessions for about 1 ½ hours per week for eight weeks after school on a Thursday afternoon at STAGS in the spring term, and all day sessions on, hopefully, two Saturdays in April. There is a minimum attendance requirement. There is also preparation work and homework required for the sessions.

The expeditions practice and assessed, each involve 2 days at a weekend, walking about 20 miles 'off road' and camping overnight. They are assessed on their ability to plan organise and execute a self reliant journey in the countryside. The participants will organise and arrange most of this for themselves, involving many hours planning and preparation.

STAGS DoE usually organises 3 Bronze Expeditions each year.

You need to think seriously about whether you are prepared to find the time and make the effort to make DoE a high priority at certain times (e.g. Expeditions) through the year.

Costs

The enrolment fee for Bronze is £11.50. For this you will get a Record Pack with information about each section of the Award. If you continue to Silver and Gold you need to pay another £11.50 for Silver and £16.50 for Gold.

Many of the activities counted towards DoE will be social or recreational activities that participants would undertake anyway, but you should consider the costs of any activities, particularly new activities, both in terms of fees and travel costs. You should consider how you will get to and from particular activities, week after week. You should also consider the cost of any new equipment that may be required. The cost of activities can vary enormously, and depends on what you choose to do, as well as where and how you choose to do it.

The expedition section is also likely to involve the use of new equipment. Some equipment may be borrowed, either from within the family or from friends. There is also a stock of certain equipment available for hire from STAGS DoE, which covers most needs. The type of equipment required, and possible sources of it, will be covered fully in the training element. You are urged not to go on a shopping spree just yet!

The expedition training and expeditions are likely to cost around £35 to 40 next year. Hire fees for loaned equipment average about £10 - 15.

Vetting

There will be about 40 girls enrolling for the Bronze Award this year. It is simply not practical for STAGS DoE to arrange assessors for each participant, or to vet them. Many of the activities that Bronze participants will count are activities that they already take part in, and the leaders, teachers or supervisors will already be known to parents. -they are not generally organised by STAGS, although occasionally there are suitable activities at school that can be used.

If a participant wishes to start a new activity it may be desirable to check whether leaders, teachers etc are vetted. If there are any queries about this please contact STAGS DoE.

The staff and volunteers who run STAGS DoE are all vetted in accordance with school and Hertfordshire County Council policy.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How do I know what activities are suitable?

Speak to a leader or one of the sixth form, or check on the website www.theaward.org

You must make absolutely sure that what you intend to do can be counted for what you want before you start. Check with the leaders BEFORE starting any activity, and refer to the document 'PLANNING YOUR FIRST ACTIVITY'.

2. Can I use existing activities?

Yes, as long as you have checked that they qualify. Many girls are able to use activities such as: playing a musical instrument, ballet classes, swimming lessons etc., but one of the attractions of the Award is the opportunity to try something new.

3. Can I use activities done in school time?

No, generally. All activities must take place in personal or non-directed time, so voluntary activities outside the standard curriculum such as drama club, netball or hockey teams, gym, or helping with maths or English may be able to be counted. Activities done in lessons are not acceptable. You should check before starting.

4. Can I backdate any activities?

Sometimes. There are complex rules for this and it must be discussed on an individual basis, but generally, if you are still doing the activity, you may be able to count some of the time spent before enrolling. As you need to set personal targets, you must be continuing with the activity.

5. Must I do all 3 sections simultaneously?

No. You can, if you really wish, do two (not all three) all at once, but this will involve an extremely heavy commitment. Whilst such enthusiasm should not be discouraged, it is unlikely that you will be able to complete the expedition, and therefore the award, before next Summer, so there may be little point anyway. Think about how you will plan out the next 6/9/12 months.

Some people choose to do one section at a time and take several years over their Award. Whilst it is possible to complete the Bronze Award in 6 months, this is very rare, and most people take about 12 -18 months.

6. When must I enrol?

There is no formal deadline for enrolling. New participants may enrol at any time. However the sooner you enrol, the sooner you can begin. Although there is no deadline for enrolment, if there are an excessive number of participants seeking to do the expedition training next year priority will be given to those who have progressed furthest with, and who are nearest to completing, the award.

7. How do I enrol?

Refer to the document 'HOW TO JOIN STAGS DofE AWARD' which was circulated at the Year 10 presentation. This will be available on the school website, or e-mail chris.dunn (by internal e-mail) for a copy.