



DAME ALICE OWEN'S SCHOOL

Levels and timescales explained

There are three levels of programme you can do which, when you've successfully completed them, lead to a Bronze, Silver or Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The main differences between them are the minimum length of time it takes to complete them, how challenging it is and the minimum age you can start.

Depending on your age, you are free to start at any level but most people prefer to try for Bronze and work upwards. There are age restrictions for each one so it makes sense to build yourself up rather than dive in at the deep end.

Don't forget, you have until your 25th birthday to complete whichever level you're working on and achieve an Award - but remember, all activities must be completed before then.

The tables below show you minimum timescales for each level and section. We've put the length of time in months - **you need to show regular activity and commitment during this time of averaging at least an hour a week.** You can't achieve an Award in a short burst of enthusiasm over one weekend!

Bronze

- You can do a Bronze DofE programme once you're 14 (or nearly 14, which sometimes happens when you and your friends decide to start your adventure together. However, your Leader must get permission from their Licensed Organisation first - see p27 of *The Handbook for DofE Leaders*.)
- A Bronze DofE programme has 4 sections, Volunteering, Physical, Skills and Expedition. You must do a minimum of 3 months activity for each of the Volunteering, Physical and Skills sections, and plan, train for and do a 2 day (1 night) Expedition.
- You also have to spend an extra three months on one of the Volunteering, Physical or Skills sections. It's your choice which one and, though you can change your mind later, you should decide which section you want to do for longer at the beginning. Knowing how long you're going to do it for will help you to choose your activity and set your goals for each section.
- It will usually take you at least 6 months to complete your Bronze programme.

Silver

- The next step up from Bronze... you need to be at least 15 to start doing your Silver DofE programme. If you've achieved your Bronze Award, your Licensed Organisation may allow you to start your Silver a month or two before your 15th birthday.
- A Silver DofE programme has 4 sections, Volunteering, Physical, Skills and Expedition. You need to do at least 6 months Volunteering and a minimum of 6 months on either Physical or Skills and 3 months on the other. It's up to you which one you do for longer.
- If you did Bronze, you can choose the same activity for Silver, but you need to show development in it. It's best to try something new!
- The Expedition section involves planning, training for and doing a 3 day (2 night) expedition.
- If you start your Silver without doing Bronze first you'll have to do an extra 6 months volunteering or doing whichever of the Physical or Skills sections you have spent more time on. Though you can change your mind later, you should decide which section you want to do for longer at the beginning. Knowing how long you're going to do it for will help you to choose your activity and set your goals for each section.
- It will take you at least 6 months for Silver if you've already achieved your Bronze, or 12 months if you've jumped straight into Silver.

Gold

- Once you are 16 you can do your Gold DofE programme. No activities can be counted for this before your 16th birthday.
- If you did a previous level, you can choose the same activity for Gold, but you need to show development in it. It's best to try something new!
- You'll spend 12 months on your Volunteering section. For Physical and Skills you must spend 12 months on one and six months on the other - you decide which way round you do it.
- Your expedition will be for four days and three nights (plus an acclimatisation day) and should take place in 'wild country'.
- The big difference at Gold is you'll also do a Residential section - staying away from home for five days and four nights doing a shared activity with people you don't know. It's great fun and a real chance to do something different!
- If you've jumped straight into your Gold DofE programme you'll need to do a further six months either volunteering or whichever one of your physical or skills activities you spent the most time on.
- For Gold, you'll need to do your programme for at least 12 months if you've achieved your Silver Award, or 18 months if you've started at Gold level without doing your Silver - even if you've done Bronze.

Timescales

Bronze (14+ years old)

Volunteering	Physical	Skills	Expedition
3 months	3 months	3 months	Plan, train for and undertake a 2 day, 1 night expedition.
All participants must undertake a further 3 months in the Volunteering, Physical or Skills sections.			

Silver (15+ years old)

Volunteering	Physical	Skills	Expedition
6 months	One section for 6 months and the other section for 3 months		Plan, train for and undertake a 3 day, 2 night expedition.
Direct entrants must undertake a further 6 months in either the Volunteering or the longer of the Physical or Skills sections.			

Gold (16+ years old)

Volunteering	Physical	Skills	Expedition	Residential*
12 months	One section for 12 months and the other section for 6 months		Plan, train for and undertake a 4 day, 3 night expedition.	Undertake a shared activity in a residential setting away from home for 5 days and 4 nights.
Direct entrants must undertake a further 6 months in either the Volunteering or the longer of the Physical or Skills sections.				

*Participants need to complete a Residential Approval Request form to confirm their trip qualifies

Length of time of DofE expeditions

Level	Duration	Minimum hours of planned activity each day
BRONZE	2 days and 1 night	At least 6 hours during the daytime (at least 3 of which must be spent journeying)
SILVER	3 days and 2 nights	At least 7 hours during the daytime (at least 3½ of which must be spent journeying)
GOLD	4 days and 3 nights	At least 8 hours during the daytime (at least 4 of which must be spent journeying)

Notes: Time associated with overnight accommodation and catering is additional to the minimum daytime hours of planned activity. You have to undertake at least one practice expedition as part of your training. This may be more closely supervised than your final assessed expedition, which is remotely supervised to develop independence and a sense of personal responsibility.