

# Section notes

## Skills







This leaflet provides a basic outline of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, with particular emphasis on the Skills section and what is involved in acting as an Assessor. More information can be obtained from the participant's Award Centre.

## What is the Award?

The Award enables 14-24 year olds to learn practical skills that are valuable to their personal and professional development.

It is comprised of three levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold. Participants set themselves challenging personal goals in four sections: Voluntary Service, Skills, Physical Recreation and Adventurous Journey at each level in order to achieve their Award. At Gold level, participants also complete a Gold Residential Project.

Throughout the programme participants can develop existing interests but you should encourage them to do something new that would be challenging and enjoyable. Once participants have set their goals, they strive to achieve them, showing improvement throughout their Award journey.





## What is an Assessor?

An Assessor (sometimes known as an Activity Coach) is an adult volunteer who conducts specific training for participants in any section of the Award. They will act as a mentor, instructor and supervisor. They will be the person to sign off a participant's section.

They should have considerable knowledge and experience of the chosen activity and be able to listen and help with a participant's thoughts, concerns and questions. They should encourage participants throughout the activity, assisting them from start through to completion by regularly meeting with them and discussing their goals.

They should check that the young person participates regularly over the minimum time period and shows improvement while striving to achieve their goals. At the end of the process, they will be required to approve the participant's Award activities and to sign off this section.



## Skills section

This section of the Award should stimulate new interests or improve existing ones. These interests are typically of an intellectually challenging or creative nature and may be hobbies, vocational or job-related skills as well as social, individual or cultural activities. Participants should be mindful of choosing an activity which would be more suited to the physical recreation section. Award activities can only be categorised into one or the other and cannot be interchangeable. Participants should be encouraged to interact with people who are experienced in the activity and so can share their enthusiasm and knowledge. Participants may either take up a completely new activity or seek to improve their ability in an activity that they already do.

The specific benefits will obviously depend on the type of Skills activity chosen. Some general benefits include increasing self-confidence by successfully setting and achieving a goal, refining awareness of one's own potential, developing time management and planning skills, improving employability by learning vocational skills and enjoyment.

Participants learn by doing, in keeping with the Award methodology of experiential learning. The Award cultivates skills such as leadership, teamwork and co-operation as well as communication, which not only appeals to employers but which can also drive job creation and socio-economic empowerment.



## Time requirements

The average minimum time spent on the Skills section over the time period is one hour per week. In a structured environment, the weekly sessions may be much longer than one hour and participants would be expected to be involved for the entire session.

	Minimum time	If Skills is chosen as the longest section
Bronze	3 months	6 months
Silver	6 months	12 months (non Bronze holders only or direct entrants)
Gold	12 months	18 months (non Silver holders only)

## Plan

Participants should first think about what kind of Skills activity they would like to do. The Award Leader should discuss with participants their expectations, set goals and ensure that there is suitable cooperation between the Assessor and the Award Leader, for example in the case of a music teacher where the skill is playing an instrument.

The chosen activity can be one which the young person is studying at their regular educational institution or their workplace. However, they must be able to show additional voluntary effort in their own time to enhance what they would have been doing anyway.

A participant may choose to work towards certification from an organisation that delivers and assesses the activity. This is not compulsory to obtain an Award, but it will enhance the sense of achievement of the participant. Participants should be encouraged to update their Online Record Book (ORB) on a regular basis and upload evidence of their activities.

If the initial choice of activity proves to be unsuitable, participants may choose another activity and count the time spent towards their overall minimum time requirement. This needs to be done in consultation with the Award Leader with new goals being agreed in advance of the change. More information about changing activities can be found in the International Handbook for Award Leaders.

## Do

Participants should carry out the Skills activity subject to the time requirements, providing evidence during the activity to contribute to activity logs. Assessors and participants should attend regular meetings to ensure continued support to the participant.

## Review

The Assessor should review the activity and sign off the section when completed. The participant will provide the Assessor with the necessary documents to sign off via the Online Record Book (ORB). They should check that the minimum time requirements have been met or exceeded, and that the participant showed reliability and commitment. This should offer a chance for the participant to critically reflect on their experience, review the high and low points and what they have learned for the future.

## Signing off the section

The Assessor will need to verify that the participant has been showing regular commitment to their activity over at least the required minimum time, and has shown improvement from their initial level of ability. The specific targets which were agreed at the start of the process, or revised ones if applicable, should have been achieved.

However, if the participant has not demonstrated the commitment and progress required to complete their activity, the participant should be encouraged to continue. When the agreed goal is achieved, the Assessor should then sign the section as completed.





**As a non-formal education programme, the Award can help bridge the gap between the skills that employers are looking for, and those which formal educational systems typically provide. The Award cultivates skills which not only appeal to employers but which can also drive job creation and socio-economic empowerment.**

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation  
Award House, 7–11 St Matthew Street, London SW1P 2JT, United Kingdom  
T +44 (0)20 7222 4242 | F +44 (0)20 7222 4141 | [info@intaward.org](mailto:info@intaward.org) | [www.intaward.org](http://www.intaward.org)  
Registered charity in England and Wales number 1072453.  
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