

Getting the most out of D of E

We often hear the complaint that young people take up ringing to gain a Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE), and give up ringing as soon as they achieve that award, but it does not need to be that way.

How does the Award programme work

14-24 year-olds can do a DofE programme at one of three progressive levels:

- Bronze – for those aged 14+ years
- Silver – for those aged 15+ years
- Gold – for those aged 16+ years

There are four sections to complete at Bronze and Silver level and five at Gold.

- **Physical section** Any sport, dance or fitness activity – in short, anything that requires a sustained level of energy and physical activity. For example, playing a sport regularly and showing personal improvement would count. Bellringing does not.
- **Skills section** An activity that will allow you to prove you have broadened your understanding and increased your expertise in your chosen skill. It should not be a physical activity. Church Bell Ringing is specifically listed as an activity by DofE in the Skills section, under music.
- **Volunteering section** Volunteering is about choosing to give time to help people, the community or society, the environment or animals. It is about doing something useful without getting paid (apart from expenses). You can also volunteer in a team. Teaching or coaching other bell-ringers would count in the volunteering section.
- **Expedition section** An unaccompanied, self-reliant expedition with an agreed aim. You must do the correct training for your level and mode of travel, at least one practice expedition, a qualifying expedition (the one that is assessed) and a final presentation in order to complete the section. The expedition must be completed by the participants own physical efforts with minimal external intervention and without motorised assistance.
- **Residential section - Gold only** A shared activity or specific course with people you don't know, in a residential setting away from home and in an unfamiliar environment. Evenings are often as much a part of the experience as daytime activities. It must be done with an organised group, registered charity or Approved Activity Provider. Participants must join it individually and not with an existing group of friends or relatives. This could be a five day residential ringing course, whether learning to handle a bell for the first time, or learning to ring more complex methods, or it could be a residential ringing trip, in this country or even overseas.

What is the time commitment?

The minimum time commitment is expected to average at least one hour per week for the duration given, with the first and last activities being the full section duration apart. It can help for the activity to be longer (in terms of hours per session) but less often.

Level	Minimum time	Notes
Bronze	3 to 6 months	Participants need to do one of the Volunteering, Physical or Skills sections for 6 months, the others for 3.
Silver	3 to 6 months	Volunteering section: 6 months. Physical and Skills sections: One section for 6 months and the other section for 3 months If the participant didn't do Bronze, they must undertake a further 6 months in either the Volunteering or the longer of the Physical or Skills sections.
Gold	6 to 12 months	Volunteering section: 12 months. Physical and Skills sections: One section for 12 months and the other section for 6 months. If the participant didn't do Silver, they must undertake a further 6 months in either the Volunteering or the longer of the Physical or Skills sections.

How can ART and Learning the Ropes help?

Participants in the Skills section need not be absolute beginners. It is about developing a skill and showing progress in it. Therefore if you already have young ringers, please do encourage them to choose bellringing as a Skill when they enrol on the Bronze (or Silver or Gold) programmes. Thereafter they can continue with this as a skill as they progress on to the subsequent awards. Over the course of the three sections it is a realistic expectation to start as a beginner and reach Level 5 of Learning the Ropes. If you do not encourage them to do this, there is a danger that they will need to take up other activities instead.

The [Learning the Ropes](#) programme is an ideal tool to use and demonstrate progress, whether for absolute beginners or people who already have some ringing experience. Therefore the programme also caters for existing ringers.

Bellringing is a skill which takes a significant amount of time and practice to develop, and that needs to be made clear from the outset. Therefore do encourage participants to sign up to bellringing a skill for a minimum of six months. Three months would only allow you to teach them to handle. If they progress on to rounds and call-changes and beyond for Silver and Gold, you will then have them for a significant period of time. They are also at an age where they will learn quickly, so progress could be as follows:

Learning the Ropes Level	Description	Timescale at average of 1 hour per week
1	Bell handling including ringing up and down 'Solo'	1 week* - 3 Months
2	Foundation skills: Rounds, call-changes, Kaleidoscope places and dodging etc)	6-8 Months
3	Covering and ringing the treble to a method to quarter peal standard	6-8 Months
4	First method inside to quarter peal standard	3-4 Months
5	Second method inside to quarter peal standard	3-4 Months

** Often people are quite keen in the early stages and if lessons can be more frequent than 1 hour per week, at least to start with, less will be forgotten between lessons. It is possible to complete Level 1 in a week, if the new ringer receives an hour's tuition each evening and/or longer sessions at the weekend. Teaching handling is best delivered in dedicated lessons on a 1:1 basis. Teaching for a few minutes between touches on the regular practice night involves a lot of sitting out. Consequently with less 'rope time' more will be forgotten between lessons and it will take much longer to learn.*

[Learning the Ropes Plus](#), [Learning the Ropes Handbells](#) and [50 Ringing Things](#) also offer a number of different pathways where people who can already ring can develop their skill and demonstrate progress.

The amount and rate of progress does depend on the ability of the Local band that the young ringer rings with. Some village bands may have difficulty taking young ringers through to the higher levels, but most Guilds and Associations now have young ringers groups. Also, there are a number of residential ringing courses available, as well as Guild/Association/Branch/District training days.

The input needs to be spread out at the average rate of 1 hour per week. Four hours on a training day would count towards the total, so long as the average over 3 or 6 months worked out at a minimum of one hour per week.

The Volunteering section

At least three quarters of the time spent in this section must be on practical volunteering. However, up to a quarter of the time can be spent in training, so long as the participant then goes on and volunteers to practice what he/she has learnt.

ART run two one-day teacher training modules:

- **Teaching Foundation Skills M2F:** Covers the stages of teaching people who can already handle a bell (Level 1) and taking them through stages 2 and 3. This is the most appropriate stage to start as there will usually be a number of other ringers at this stage that can be helped. To complete the course and become accredited the participant must help run at least six one-hour training sessions. The Minimum age to attend an ART Module is 14 and once assessed, the participant can become a member of ART once they reach the age of 18.
- **Teaching Bell Handling M1:** This stage is less appropriate as it requires the participant to cover all the stages to teach someone to handle, including ringing a single bell up and down. This does depend on having other people who are wishing to learn to handle, which is not necessarily possible. However it would be feasible if undertaken as part of a group teaching scheme in a local ART Hub.

In addition ART deliver a series of Workshops, and the following seems the most appropriate for the volunteering section:

- **Calling Plain Bob Doubles:** A half day introduction to calling Bob Doubles combining both theory and practical sessions. The workshop is open to ringers able to ring touches of Bob Doubles inside confidently. After the workshop participants should be able to call a number of different touches of Bob Doubles and should aim to call a quarter peal soon afterwards. They could then volunteer to call quarter peal for other young ringers.

There is also a half day conducting workshop which covers Plain Bob Minor and teaches how to apply coursing orders to conducting. Other ART workshops include Tower Maintenance and Tower Leadership

The Programme Planner

Each participant should develop a programme which is specific and relevant to them at that stage. This should be drawn up and agreed with their Assessor (tower captain or teacher). There is a downloadable sheet on the DofE website:

Programme plan for:	John Smith
What kind of skills do you want to develop? (tick box)	Music ☒
Detailed activity chosen:	Learning to ring Church Bells
Where are you going to do it?	St John's Church New Alresford
What are your goals? What do you want to achieve?	Over a period of six months I wish to learn to handle a bell, to raise and lower it on my own and to be able to ring rounds, to lead, and to ring call-changes and kaleidoscope places and dodges. This will enable me to achieve Levels 1 and 2 of Learning the Ropes
Who is going to support and assess you?	The Tower Captain, Ian Redway.

The goals could be adjusted for any young ringer who has already completed one or more levels of Learning the Ropes, or is moving on to the next level in the DofE scheme. In setting goals, these should be challenging, but realistic. Achieving Level 2 within six months, and Level 3 (first quarter) within 12 months of starting is quite realistic, and provide sufficient challenge to meet the objectives of the DofE scheme.

For the Volunteering section, the following might be appropriate:

Programme plan for:	John Smith
What kind of volunteering do you want to get involved with in your community? (tick box)	Coaching, teaching and leadership ☒
Detailed activity chosen:	Teaching other young people to ring Church Bells
Where are you going to do it?	St John's Church New Alresford and Winchester & Portsmouth Guild Young Ringers Group
What are your goals? What do you want to achieve?	Attend an ART Module 2F Teacher Training Course and subsequently to help run 'Foundation Skills' training sessions and activities for my own tower and the W&P Young Ringers Group.* Attend an ART Calling Plain Bob Doubles Workshop and afterwards call quarter peals to help develop other members of my local band/ the W&P youth group* To attend an ART Tower Maintenance Workshop and afterwards help with adjusting and spicing ropes, routine maintenance and keeping tower tidy*
Who is going to support and assess you?	The Tower Captain, Ian Redway and Andy Ingram of the W&P Youth group.

*Delete/amend as appropriate. There is plenty to choose from and you will easily reach 26 hours over six months.

The Activity Log

Is a personal record of the time spent on the activities for each section. – Participants are encouraged to add this information, along with scans, photographs etc. (as high resolution jpegs) as evidence into the electronic portal (eDofE). – Participants can ask their Assessor or another instructor to initial each entry.

Date	What you did	Hours	Initials
02.09.19	First tied bell lesson. Went to see bells. Started to learn backstroke and handstroke.	1.0	JB
03.09.19	Second tied bell lesson. Started to put both strokes together	1.0	JB
04.09.19	Third tied bell lesson. Can now ring both strokes together. Started to learn to set bell	1.0	JB
05.09.19	Fourth tied bell lesson. Rang a bell down for the first time. Also practicing setting at handstroke and backstroke several times in a row	1.0	JB
06.09.19	Fifth tied bell lesson. Rang a bell up and down. Also set ten times in a row.	1.0	JB
09.09.19	Beginners session on simulator. Rang rounds on 4 for the first time. Then spent time practicing adjusting position of hands on rope to change speed. Passed Level 1 of Learning the Ropes.	1.5	JB

Choosing Assessors

An Assessor checks a participants progress and agrees the completion of a section of their programme. They must be independent. Therefore, they cannot be a family member. An Assessor can be anyone who is interested in helping, has some knowledge of the activity and can be available over the time that the participant is doing it. They will produce or sign off the relevant Assessor's report for that section, which is uploaded into eDofE.

The Assessor should refer to the relevant sectional Assessor's card from the participants Welcome Pack. Once a section is complete the Assessor will meet with the participant to discuss their performance, experiences and achievements. The Assessor will also decide whether the participant has also met the DofE requirements – that they've demonstrated effort, perseverance, improvement and made progress towards their section goals. This information, along with comments from the Assessor, should be recorded on the Assessor's report which can be submitted online.

The feedback within the Assessor's Report must be personal to the individual and usually made up of several short paragraphs. It is not acceptable to simply say "he/she satisfactorily completed the Volunteering section".

