



The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Skills section

A session plan for DofE Leaders

What is this resource for?

The following pages provide you with guidance to help the young people in your groups get excited about the Skills section of their DofE programme, help them choose an activity which is specific and relevant to them and plan how they will carry it out. It should be used in conjunction with the Handbook for DofE Leaders.

The resource contains three things:

- A 40-minute session plan: Choosing a skill
- A Programme Planner for the Skills section
- Case studies of other DofE participants.



The Skills section

The aim of the Skills section is to inspire young people to develop practical and social skills and personal interests.

Participants must choose an activity and with your help set an appropriate challenge. They can choose to improve an existing skill or develop a new one. The key is to show progression and sustained interest over time.

Choosing a skill

To help young people make the right choice, as a DofE Leader you must ensure that a participant's choice:

- Focuses on one specific theme or activity.
- Enables the Assessor to easily measure progression over a period of time.
- Is undertaken in accordance with appropriate safe working practices and legal requirements.
- Is normally done in their own time.
- Reflects their individual interests, talents and capabilities.

Achievable by all

As DofE programmes are achievable by all, it is vital that young people can choose an activity that is interesting and challenging to them and suited to their needs.

Leader's checklist

This checklist is a quick and handy reference point for you to decide whether the young people in your group have chosen a programme of activity which meets DofE criteria.

It will help you ensure that the activity is balanced, enjoyable and fulfils the principles of the section. The checklist can be used as a guide for the other sections as well.

Tools to help you

This resource contains a 40-minute session plan to help you bring the Skills section to life with your group and help them explore what they could do. This is just a suggestion and we encourage you and your group to adapt it as you see fit – the session allows plenty of scope for individuality.

There also are a number of other ways that you could encourage young people to select ideas:

Hearing other people's stories: We have provided a few case studies as part of this resource, to show the range of skills activities young people have done. You could encourage the group to interview/ chat to young people who have already done their Skills section in your area, who can explain how it benefited them and what they learnt. You could ask the participants to bring in photos, videos or any other objects which explain their positive experience.

The DofE website: We list on our website a number of skills ideas.

Programme planner: as part of this resource we have included a programme planner. This is a one page sheet with a number of questions for young people to answer, to help them plan what activity they will do and to think about provision. They can be filled in by young people on their own or in conversation with you as their Leader. Programme planners for each section are available on the DofE website.

Aim

For your group to understand the benefits of the Skills section and to help them choose what skill they will do for their DofE programme.

Resources

Flipchart, coloured marker pens, props relating to the different skills categories (below), programme planners for the Skills section, box to use as 'skills bank', Post-It notes.



Useful DofE facts

To complete their Skills section, participants need to choose a skill from one of the following categories: creative arts, performance arts, science and technology, care of animals, music, life skills, learning and collecting, media and communication, natural world, and games and recreation. If they think of a skill that doesn't seem to fit, check with your Operating Authority.

Setting the scene

Before starting these sessions, it is a good idea to set the right atmosphere so that excitement is created in the group. Examples of how to do this are:

- Play music or show a DVD to inspire different ideas of what can be done. We have produced a two and a half minute simple, quick slide show which gives examples of all the activities young people could do for their DofE, which you could show all or part of. Download it from our website: DofE.org/downloads
- Display resources e.g. posters and pictures of people doing different skills-based activities; these could be from your group's previous activities.

Timing	Section	Activity
5 mins	Getting started	<p>Icebreaker</p> <p>Create a 'skills bank' out of a box and put it in the middle of the room. Give everyone small pieces of paper/Post-It notes and get them to write down one existing skill they currently have, without talking to each other e.g. pottery, cookery, astrology, drama and theatre skills, plant growing and put it in the skills bank. Then ask each person to pick out a piece of paper and guess who the skill belongs to. Once guessed correctly, ask the person to say what they enjoy most about that skill. Do the same exercise again, but this time ask the group to put the craziest/most unusual skill they would like to do and put it in the box, e.g. learning how to body paint, learning how to do snooker tricks, pumpkin carving, growing and caring for bonsai trees and get them to guess whose idea it was.</p>
20 mins	Group work	<p>Sharing aim: Explain that for the rest of the session the group will be exploring the benefits of doing the Skills section and look at what activity they may like to do to complete the Skills section of their DofE programme.</p> <p>So much choice: Before the young people arrive, set the room up with areas representing the different categories of the Skills section (above). In the centre of the room place props which relate to those different categories e.g. toy animals, picture of an iPod, CD, DVD, modelling clay, paints, pictures of the solar system, theory driving test book, snooker cue and so on. Ask the young people to place the different props into the categories there are around the room. This could be done as one group with discussion about the activity or done in smaller groups with some feedback afterwards.</p> <p>Exploring the benefits: Ask the young people to go and stand by the category that they know or think is the one that represents the skill they would like to do. Hand out some flipchart paper and ask the young people to write down all the benefits they think they gain by participating in their chosen skill. When it's time to feed back, encourage the young people to identify wider benefits such as improving confidence, social skills, making new friends as well as specific benefits to taking part in their chosen skill.</p>
10 mins	Group work	<p>Introduce the programme planners to the group, giving them one each. Get them to work in pairs to fill them in and to ask questions to their partner, or to you, of anything they are still not clear about. You could put an enlarged version (e.g. A3) of the programme planner on the wall as a visual aid.</p>
5 mins	Summary	<p>Ask the group to take their programme planners away and start to research their chosen activity and where they might do it. You can explain this might be an activity they are already doing or something completely new. Get the young people to bring their research to the next session.</p>



Programme planner

When completing each section of your DofE programme, you should develop a programme which is specific and relevant to you. This sheet will help you to plan your DofE programme for the Skills section. For help and support see your DofE Leader or visit DofE.org/skills

Skills

Programme plan for: (your name)

What kind of skills do you want to develop?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Games and recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Care of animals | <input type="checkbox"/> Science and technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning and collecting | <input type="checkbox"/> Media and communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Performance arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural world | <input type="checkbox"/> Life skills |

Level	Age	Minimum time
Bronze	14+	3–6 months
You need to do one of your Volunteering, Physical or Skills sections for 6 months, the others for 3.		
Silver	15+	6 –12 months
You need to do either the Physical or Skills section for 6 months, the other for 3. If you haven't achieved Bronze you must extend your Volunteering or the longer of your Physical or Skills sections to 12 months.		
Gold	16+	12 –18 months
You need to do either the Physical or Skills section for 12 months, the other for 6. If you haven't achieved Silver you must extend your Volunteering or the longer of your Physical or Skills sections to 18 months.		

How will you find out how you can do this locally? E.g. speak to friends and family, research on the internet, library, instruction manuals.

What are you specifically going to learn and do?

What practical and/ or social skills will you learn that are of personal interest to you?

What do you want to achieve? What are your specific goals?

Who is going to help you complete your activity? E.g. Will you ask someone to teach/show you or will you learn on your own?

What evidence will you collect to show your progress?

Below are some recent examples of skills activities which were undertaken by young people for their DofE programme.

Skills

Category: Natural world

Darren had been referred to the Towers Project in Newtownards, Northern Ireland (a Project run by the Youth Justice Agency) due to issues at home and in school. A package was set up to suit his needs and personality. With the guidance of the basket maker at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Darren acquired willow work and basket making skills. He used this knowledge to make and successfully launch his hand made two-man Currach (a wooden boat) on the river.



“The bit I enjoyed the most was making the Currach and launching it on the River Lagan. I would make another Currach because it is fun and it’s a really skilful thing to do, but it’s better when you get to sail it.” – Darren, DofE participant

Category: Games and recreation

Ted, from Devon, decided to take on fly fishing at his local river, even though he knew that it would take a lot of perseverance and patience. He stuck at it, improved his fishing skills and knowledge and even started to develop his own style of casting.



“Fly fishing was very exciting, especially when I caught a 31/2 lb trout.”
– Ted, DofE participant

Category: Life skills

Young people leaving care in London joined a Life Skills programme that would prepare them for their transition from care into independent living. They learnt about drug awareness, cannabis and the law, healthy cooking, emotional wellbeing, sexual health, health and nutrition, about knife culture as well as how to use and access the internet. The sessions were led by youth workers as well as the police and specialist charities.



“I would like to study politics at university. I have to work hard at the moment to be one of these people who can help some people. I know I can become all that thing because I’m intelligent and determined!” – Tom, DofE participant

Category: Creative arts

A group of young people in Neath Port Talbot took part in a graffiti art project. Sponsorship was secured for the goggles and breathing masks needed. The young people loved the project and finished with a range of large boards with their final ‘sprays’ on that have been displayed around the school. The project was good for the perception of the DofE. A group of young people with special needs chose this for their Skills section and sprayed a wall at their activity club building.



“It’s amazing that you get to do incredible new things like this, I never thought I would be learning how to do graffiti when I showed an interest in doing my DofE.” – Martha, DofE participant

Category: Learning and collecting

Some young people in Edinburgh were very keen to learn about their local history. Through a youth heritage project, a volunteer, Julie King, ran a course for young people called ‘Edinburgh’s Darker Side’, where they learned about hauntings, hangings, witchcraft and ghouls which revealed the secrets of the city’s past.



“We had such a fantastic time, I was quite shocked and even scared at times but it was really interesting and important to know about what happened here long ago.”
– Sarah, DofE participant