

I started doing Duke of Edinburgh in Year 9 at the school, knowing that it would look good on my C.V. when applying for jobs in the future. I was originally worried about how I would fit in any extra activities throughout my week in order to complete my Bronze Award, but it turned out to be much easier than I thought. As the scheme allows you to have assessed any new or current activities for each respective section of the award, I could already use my football for sports, I took guitar lessons for my skill and used the schools BESLA Leadership initiative for my volunteering. This meant that I could focus more on becoming more comfortable with the expedition section which is always the biggest challenge.

After finishing the Bronze Award, I decided that I should continue and do the Silver Award as it is a lot easier to do whilst still at school. For this step, you are not allowed to use the three activities you chose for your Bronze Award and so can be a lot tougher to finish, as well as a longer expedition. Again, I was able to use certain things I already did for both my skill and physical component, using table tennis and cycling, but had to come up with something new for volunteering. I decided to do maths tutoring at the school, where I would help other students in lower years improve on their fundamental maths knowledge to help them no matter what topic or year they were in.

As I was no longer at school for my Gold Award, I had to look into how I would finish my Duke of Edinburgh journey. Luckily, I was put in touch with another member of the award system who could assess and sign off each of my sections. In the Gold Award, you are able to repeat any previous activities used for bronze and silver, but they must be completed over a much longer period. This is great as you can reselect activities you would already be participating in. In my case, I did football and maths tutoring again. As for my skill, I chose to learn how to drive as this is also an incredibly useful life skill. The additional section you must complete in your gold award is a residential. Quite often you see people going abroad to help small villages and communities in all sorts of places, but you can also do something more local such as the National Citizenship Scheme, a 4 week summer course doing all sorts of different things from outdoor sports to raising money through your own planned projects. As for the expedition, there's a much larger variety of places you can go or transportation you can use. For example, rather than hiking in the Peak District, I cycled 280km over 4 days across The Gambia, learning about the education system and how much different it is in Africa. I did this alongside the Gambian equivalent of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme where I met other people in an entirely different continent who I had both things in common with and things that couldn't be more different!

I feel that no matter what point you stop your journey through the Duke of Edinburgh experience, it's one you can look back on and be proud of. I worked with varying groups of people and personalities but enjoyed each and every one of them for different reasons. It started off just being something to put on my CV but became so much more than that.