

Getting personal

The Personal Challenge Award encourages young people to reach their full potential. For leaders who find supporting this particular badge a little tricky, here are some volunteer tips from across the Movement

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The Personal Challenge Award is a way for Scouts to tackle something that's holding them back or stifling their growth. Whether it's avoiding practising for a music exam, learning how to swim, or speaking in public, we all have hurdles to overcome. The things we fear prevent us from reaching our full potential, which is the very opposite of Scouting's purpose.

With the Personal Challenge Award you can support young people to overcome a challenge they're struggling with. As the award requires the young person to overcome two challenges – one they have set and another a leader sets for them – the badge is a perfect opportunity to learn more about the young people in your section as individuals. By chatting to them about what they'd like to improve, you'll be in a better position to empathise with their struggles, and share in the joy of achievement as they overcome them.

How do young people earn the award?

Young people must complete two personal challenges, agreed upon with their leader. The challenges should be things they find difficult but that they can overcome with commitment.

The challenges can relate to any part of the young person's life – home,

sports, school or Scouts – but they must be challenges that are personal to them, so that young people can take full ownership.

Overcoming challenges can change lives

The Personal Challenge Award is positively challenging and growing young people across the Movement. One mum, Jenny Davis, said her 10-year-old Cub 'does the remembrance parade every year but doesn't stay. This year, his challenge was to stay throughout the wreath laying and speeches.' She explains that because 'he has ADHD, this is extremely challenging for him.'

Carol Blyth says her son was nine when he joined swimming club and his challenge was to swim in a competition and dive off the blocks: 'It took him nearly six months to achieve but he was delighted when he did it!'

Anna L K Whitt says her son had to keep his bedroom tidy for three months for his leader challenge, while he chose to cycle the length of the South Downs Way for his own. 'He found the first part a lot harder than the second,' she says.

Volunteer Anne Addison said their Cub Pack took part in the Save the Children (STC) National Den Day. She explains

that 'they spent the evening building their dens and then the challenge was to sleep out in them.' According to Anne they loved it, and they raised quite a bit for STC as well.

To help you support your young people to achieve their award, here's some useful guidance from other volunteers – from useful methods to inspiring examples.

Tips and ideas

- Timing counts. Encourage young people to tackle the award once they're settled into the section and you've got to know them a bit better, to give you both a chance to identify what to work on.
- Use positive phrasing. Instead of asking what they're good at or not good at, you could ask what they can improve on or what they'd like to get better at. After all, the challenge is not only about developing new skills but also furthering skills they already have.
- Encourage them 'to think of something that will really change their lives and set them a time scale to plan and achieve,' as volunteer Matt Austin suggests. This year, his section was challenged to support its charity Candlelighters, working with mental health charity Mind.
- Although the Personal Challenge Award is about young people



choosing a challenge for themselves, younger sections might benefit from some parental input. Rachel Betteridge says they ask parents about 'things that may benefit at home or things they would like their children to develop.' This input should come out of a discussion between the parents/carers and their children. Dialogue with the young person is key.

- Link their challenge to their Promise and make a good-deed jar each, as Beaver Leader Sara Price suggests. They could 'take their jar home and try to do something kind, helpful or do their best every day and each time put a pasta shape or something similar and see how it fills up over the next few weeks.'
- Rachel Cook was inspired by SMART plans in supporting her Cubs to come up with their challenges, getting them to think of something both achievable and realistic.

One Beaver Leader shares an example method:

1. In one section meeting, set up activity bases that are linked to different badges, one of these focusing on the Personal Challenge.
2. In groups of up to six, ask the young people to rotate around these bases. The Personal Challenge base should feature pictures of example challenges to inspire young people to come up with a challenge of their own.
3. Discuss the importance of challenges with the young people, eg how they feel when they overcome a challenge.
4. Encourage them to draw their challenges.
5. Discuss how to make those challenges achievable and meaningful. For instance, she said that one Beaver wanted to be a superhero, so they discussed the qualities of a superhero, eg being kind – and so, they agreed on a challenge based on that.
6. Chart everyone's challenges on a spreadsheet to keep track.

Challenge ideas from volunteers

- Build a dustbin oven as part of their Scouts Team Leader Challenge Award. [Avril Williams Moir](#)
- Refurbish a bike. Help at Beavers. Do homework when it's set, rather than when it is due. Devise and monitor a cat-feeding rota. [Anna Collins](#)
- Give up Xbox for a month to play outside more, try a rollercoaster for the first time, reach a goal at rookie lifeguards, try a sleepover. [Ellie Hajdasz](#)
- Play trumpet every day for two months up to exams. [Lisa Lawson](#)
- Sleep in a hammock for a night. [Rachel Parkes](#)
- Complete seven acts of random kindness within seven weeks. [Michael Lashbrooke](#) 🌟

Find out more

Take a look at scouts.org.uk/personalchallengeaward where you'll find an example programme for the Personal Challenge Award from 2nd Southampton Scout Troop.