

Commonwealth Connections

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# Queen's Baton Relay: Activities for schools

October 2021

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## Celebrate the Queen's Baton Relay

For over sixty years, the Queen's Baton Relay has been one of the most exciting events of the Commonwealth Games, reaching people from across the Commonwealth.

The Queen's Baton Relay for the 2022 Birmingham Games begins in October 2021 and lasts for 294 days. During this time, the Baton will travel to every corner of the Commonwealth, passing from one hand to another, connecting communities across the globe. It will visit all 72 nations and territories taking part in the Games, travelling across Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania, the Caribbean and the Americas.

The relay starts its journey at Buckingham Palace in London, when the Head of the Commonwealth Queen Elizabeth II will place a special message inside the Baton. The Queen will pass the Baton to the first of thousands of Baton bearers who will carry this message across the Commonwealth, until the Baton arrives safely at the Opening Ceremony in Birmingham on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The final relay runner will hand the baton back to the Queen at the opening ceremony. She will then read the message aloud and officially open the Games.

### Get involved

If you and your students would like to become involved in this historic global event and learn more about the Commonwealth and its values and principles, try out some of the following activities, as the countdown to the 2022 Birmingham Games begins!

#### Activity 1 - Design and make your own baton

The Baton for the 2022 Commonwealth Games will feature a unique design, embodying the spirit of the city of Birmingham, the West Midlands and the modern Commonwealth.

Ask your students to locate Birmingham on a map of the UK, find out about its cultural diversity and history as Britain's second city, as it evolved from the industrial revolution.

Encourage your students to then design and make batons of their own which celebrate the unique geography and heritage of their hometown. Remember that their final product will need to be light enough to be carried by people of different ages including those with disabilities and sturdy enough to survive a long journey.

In order to promote the importance of sustainability and protecting the environment which are integral values of the [Commonwealth Charter](#), perhaps set your students the additional challenge of making their batons only out of recycled materials.

Encourage your students to share their ideas and designs with a partner school if you have one and to take photographs of their completed Batons to share more widely using the hashtag **#CommonwealthConnections** and **#QBR2022**

#### Activity 2- Nominate Baton bearers

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During the Queen's Baton Relay tens of thousands of Baton bearers will carry the Baton across the Commonwealth. In the past, these bearers have included great athletes such as Sir Chris Hoy, who was the final Baton bearer in 2014, and Sally Pearson who completed the 2018 Relay at the Gold Coast Games.

Alongside athletes and para-athletes are 'local legends' nominated by their peers to carry the Baton for their achievements and contributions to the community. Ask your students to carry out some research and choose two people who they think inspire others and represent the spirit of the Commonwealth and should therefore carry the baton in your country. Your students should be able to give clear reasons for their nominations.

You could organise a class debate where members of the class put forward their nominations and then vote for two final class nominees. Compare your choices with those of your partner school if you have one. You could also enter your suggestions into the official nomination process, which opens later this year.

### **Activity 3 - Write a Baton message to the Commonwealth**

Did you know that about 30% of the world's people live in the Commonwealth? That's nearly two and a half billion citizens and more than 60% are under thirty.

Traditionally the Queen's Baton carries a hidden message on its journey to the citizens and athletes of the Commonwealth. If your students could send a message to such a vast global audience what would they say? For inspiration they could find out about some of the key themes of the Commonwealth Values such as protecting the environment, human rights and gender equality or they could research other important global issues linked to the Sustainable Development Goals using the Connecting Classrooms for Global Learning resources at: <https://connecting-classrooms.britishcouncil.org/resources>

When they have completed their research, ask your students to write their letter to the citizens of the Commonwealth. If you have a partner school, you could share your Baton messages with each other.

### **Activity 4 - Follow the Baton as it travels the world**

The Queen's Baton Relay will leave Buckingham Palace in October 2021 on the start of its epic journey. Discuss and plot this journey on a large classroom display with your students.

Different members of the class could be responsible for updating the journey as it travels from nation to nation, calculating the distance it has travelled and being responsible for writing blogs of any local stories or notable Baton bearers, as it travels through 'their' nations.

Share photographs of your displays with your partner school or with a wider audience using the hashtag **#CommonwealthConnections** and **#QBR2022**

### **Activity 5 - Find out about the Commonwealth Past and Present**

The long roots of the Commonwealth go back to the British Empire, which at one time included countries in Asia, Africa, the Pacific, the Caribbean and the Americas.

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

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However, today the Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 54 independent and equal countries working together for prosperity, democracy and peace. Any country can join the Commonwealth of Nations, and the last country to do so was Rwanda, which had no previous ties to the Commonwealth.

There is a focus on friendship and respect between individuals and nations and programmes give a voice to small states, and the importance of protecting the environment.

In 2013, every country in the Commonwealth signed a shared charter, or set of values. The charter states what the Commonwealth believes in, what it tries to do and how it aims to achieve its goals. These goals include commitments to holding fair and free elections, respecting human rights and protecting the environment.

Ask your students to find out more about how the Commonwealth has changed since its formation and what it is trying to achieve today? Ask them to focus on one particular Commonwealth Value and create a poster to raise awareness of why this Value continues to be important globally in the twenty first century.

### **Activity 6 - Find out more about Commonwealth countries.**

The countries of the Commonwealth are a very diverse group ranging from small islands like Nauru in the Pacific, to vast countries like India and Canada. As the Queen's Baton begins its travels around the world, ask your pupils if they have any connections with Commonwealth countries and mark these associations on a world map.

Invite your students to choose one Commonwealth country that they would like to know more about. Ask them to note down what they already know and what they would like to find out. This could include facts about the climate, flag, flora and fauna, along with information about its history and culture. They could also research challenges that young people face living there today and stories of Commonwealth Athletes who may have overcome barriers and challenges to represent their country.

Ask them to present their research creatively. This could be as a presentation, display, fact file or wikipage, or based on an idea of their own. These could be shared within the class and used to create a quiz for other classes or your partner school if you have one.

### **Activity 7 - Debate issues and try out Commonwealth sports**

The Queens Baton relay is designed to raise awareness of the Commonwealth Games which is an international multi – sport event that take place every four years. It is known as 'the friendly Games,' because it uses sports to bring people across the globe together.

Sixteen core sports and four core para-sports must be included in the Games programme. In 2022 for the first time 13 mixed events will be contested and the number of events available to elite athletes with disabilities (EAD) has also increased from 36 to 42. Invite your pupils to discuss the arrangement of including para events such as para athletics and wheelchair basketball within the Games, rather than in a separate event like the Paralympics. Do they think that full integration would be a positive way forward for other competitions like the Olympic Games? Ask them to state their opinions as part of a class debate.

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The host nation may choose to include a number of optional sports and disciplines in the Games. For 2022 women's T20 cricket, beach volleyball and para table tennis have been introduced. If your students were on the organising committee what sports would they choose to include and why?

Encourage your students to find out about the sports that will feature in the 2022 Games and to try out at least one of the sports that they have never tried before.

### **Activity 8 - Make a Difference**

One of the Commonwealth Values focuses on the importance of young people and how they can help shape the future. Even small actions can make a difference but imagine if all the young people in the Commonwealth drew attention to important global issues. By working together, young people can bring about real change.

One issue currently being championed by the Commonwealth is access to quality education for girls. According to UNESCO estimates, around the world, 132 million girls are out of school, including 34.3 million of primary school age, 30 million of lower-secondary school age, and 67.4 million of upper-secondary school age.

COVID-19 is also negatively impacting girls' health and well-being and many are at risk of not returning to schools once they reopen. Ask your students how they might go about creating a campaign to raise awareness of gender equality and the importance of good quality girls' education across the world. Ask them to design a slogan and image to draw attention to this important issue. Share your ideas with your partner school if you have one.

### **Activity 9 - Organise your own special event**

To celebrate the Queens Baton Relay reaching your country, why not organise your own special event. This might be a Baton relay around your school grounds, an opening ceremony assembly to celebrate the unity and diversity of the Commonwealth or a festival of sports or arts with other local schools.

Previously schools in many Commonwealth nations have developed their own exciting events to celebrate the Baton Relay coming to their hometown or city. In one English Primary School pupils paraded around the school field holding flags they had made and dressed in the colours of the different nation teams that each class represented. Other schools organised quizzes and poetry competitions and read stories that originated from different Commonwealth countries with their partner schools.

On a larger scale, the Queen's Baton Relay Games took place at the Chattarsal Stadium in Delhi and was attended by more than 2,000 students from 65 schools. Opened by Akhil Kumar, a gold medalist in boxing, the event included a participants' march-past and track events. Each school also created a collage, portraying the essence of the different Commonwealth nations they represented.

Whatever the size of your event you could invite a special guest to open or close it, read out your Baton messages and award certificates to those students demonstrating Commonwealth values such as tolerance, respect and understanding.

### **Activity 10 - Share your activities with others**

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Whatever activities you choose to take part in, remember to invite your parents, school community and local media to get involved. Don't forget to share photos and clips using the hashtag **#CommonwealthConnections** and **#QBR2022** to show what your school has learnt and achieved and find out about the exciting projects happening across the Commonwealth as the games draw near.

For more learning activities and supporting resources about the 2022 Commonwealth games and the Queens Baton Relay go to the **Commonwealth Games School Resource Pack** at: [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/commonwealth\\_games\\_resource.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/commonwealth_games_resource.pdf)

You can also find additional help with making connections with other schools and resources to help you learn more about global issues in the Connecting Classrooms for Global Learning resource bank at: <https://connectingclassrooms.britishcouncil.org/resources>