



National Youth
Brass Band
Championships
of Great Britain



Brass Bands
England



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ENGLAND**



All you need
to know to
take part

King Edward's School,
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1. Join the excitement of Youth Champs

The National Youth Brass Band Championships of Great Britain (Youth Champs) is a celebration of youth brass banding across the UK. It brings together young musicians for a day of performance, learning, and inspiration. Whether you're a player, conductor, parent, or supporter, there's something to enjoy, from the buzz of stepping on stage to the joy of discovering new music and meeting fellow brass enthusiasts.

Youth Champs is organised by Brass Bands England (BBE) – the national body for brass bands. We create a safe, fair, and inspiring environment for all participants, while promoting excellence, creativity, and enjoyment in youth brass banding.

At Youth Champs, young musicians can:

- Perform in a supportive, national-level setting
- Connect with other young players from across the UK
- Gain constructive feedback from experienced adjudicators
- Experience the excitement and thrill of performing on a professional stage



Image credit: Dan Johnson

2. What you'll get out of taking part

Taking part in Youth Champs isn't just about performing. You and your band will gain musical skills, confidence and lasting memories:

- **Boost musical skills** - Explore challenging repertoire, refine technique, and develop ensemble playing.
- **Build performance confidence** - Learn how to perform under pressure in a supportive environment.
- **Celebrate achievement** - Receive recognition through awards, certificates, and feedback tailored to encourage progress.
- **Connect and collaborate** - Meet other young musicians, exchange ideas, and build lasting friendships.
- **Develop leadership** - Encourage young musicians to take initiative, support their peers, and grow in confidence within their bands.
- **Have fun!** - Enjoy the excitement of a national event while making memories with your bandmates.

3. Additional aims

Brass Bands England organises Youth Champs with clear principles to ensure the event is safe, fair, and inspiring:

- **Quality and fairness** - We aim for high standards in all sections and ensure adjudication is constructive and transparent.
- **Inclusivity** - All young musicians aged 18 and under are welcome, whatever their background or experience.
- **Safe and secure** - We follow safeguarding rules so everyone can focus on enjoying the music.
- **Supportive experience** - From arrival to performance, BBE staff are on hand to guide bands and answer questions.
- **Respect for tradition and innovation** - We celebrate brass band heritage while encouraging creative and enjoyable programmes.
- **Community engagement** - We encourage young musicians to inspire audiences and foster a love of brass banding in the wider community.
- **Sustainability** - We are committed to making Youth Champs as environmentally responsible as possible, encouraging mindful choices that support a greener future for brass banding.

4. Choosing your section

Youth Champs offers different sections to ensure your band performs in the setting that best suits its age, experience, and size. Picking the right section helps your band enjoy a rewarding experience and ensures fair competition.

- **Section options** – each section is defined by age, education stage, and/or experience level.
- **Matching your band** – read each section carefully to see where your players fit.
- **Performance expectations** – every section has its own repertoire guidance and performance duration.
- **Supportive environment** – even in competitive sections, all bands receive constructive feedback.

Note: Age guidance ensures every band competes in a fair environment and that all players enjoy the experience. Please check the specific guidance for your intended section carefully before submitting.



Image credit: Gavin Joynt, Dan Johnson, Kate Hardy and Mikal Ludlow

5. How each Section works

Showcase Section

This non-competitive section offers bands a friendly space to perform without the pressure of adjudication. Bands may present a 10-minute programme, extendable to 15 minutes with prior approval.

Key details:

- Open to players aged 18 or under on 31 August 2026 (born on or after 1 September 2007).
- Repertoire is entirely own-choice, with no set test required.
- Up to four adult helpers (non-principal positions only) are permitted.
- No awards are given, but participants will receive a token of recognition (such as a certificate or sticker).
- Constructive feedback will be delivered publicly, plus written notes to follow.
- All brass instruments are permitted, including plastic and non-standard types. Singing is also allowed.
- Over 18s must be in full-time school education (not university or full-time employment). Please contact BBE for guidance if unsure.

Performance Section

This section gives young musicians their first experience of competitive performance in a supportive and flexible environment.

Key details:

- Open to players aged 18 or under on 31 August 2026 (born on or after 1 September 2007).
- 15-minute own-choice programme, with no set test required.
- Awards: 1st, 2nd and 3rd place trophies, plus Best Soloist trophy.
- Achievement levels: Gold, Silver, Bronze or Merit.
- Up to four adult helpers allowed in non-principal roles.
- All standard and non-standard brass band instruments permitted. Singing is also allowed.
- Over 18s must be in full-time school education (not university or full-time employment). Please contact BBE for guidance if unsure.

Challenge Section (NEW FOR 2026)

The **Challenge Section** bridges the gap between entry-level competition and the elite Championship Section, offering bands the opportunity to take the next step in their musical journey.

For 2026, bands will perform one challenging work from a pre-selected list as part of a well-rounded programme, with the Section overall encouraging a gradual shift towards more traditional instrumentation and repertoire, while still allowing creativity through own-choice pieces.

From 2027 onwards, bands participating in this section will also be asked to feature at least one student-composed or arranged work, or one piece led by a student conductor.

With its focus on technical ability, imaginative programming and musical exploration, the Challenge Section truly lives up to its name – broadening horizons and pushing bands to reach new heights.

Set work (choose one):

- **Pioneers** - Philip Sparke (6 mins - example performance [here](#))
- **Jubilation** - James Currow (6 mins - example performance [here](#))
- **Alloway Tales** - Peter Graham (6 mins - example performance [here](#))
- **Doyen** - Goff Richards (6 mins - example performance [here](#))
- **Buzz!** - Andrea Price (7 mins - example performance [here](#))

Key details:

- Open to players aged 18 or under on 31 August 2026 (born on or after 1 September 2007).
- Programme must include one of the above works and total no more than 15 minutes.
- Trophies: 1st (returnable), 2nd and 3rd place, and Best Soloist.
- Achievement levels: Gold, Silver, Bronze or Merit.
- Up to three adult helpers allowed in non-principal roles.
- Non-standard brass band instruments (i.e. trumpets, French horns and plastic instruments) are allowed, but all instruments must be from the brass or percussion families.
- Over 18s must be in full-time school education (not university or full-time employment). Please contact BBE for guidance if unsure.

Championship Section (18 and under)

This top-level Section is aimed at youth bands prepared for a high standard of performance, providing a pathway to adult or university banding.

Key details:

- Open to players aged 18 or under on 31 August 2026 (born on or after 1 September 2007).
- Programme must not exceed 20 minutes and must include this year's 9-minute test piece: ***Neverland* by Christopher Bond** ([example performance](#)).
- Trophies: 1st (returnable), 2nd and 3rd place, and Best Soloist.
- Achievement levels: Gold, Silver, Bronze or Merit.
- Up to two adult helpers who have not yet reached their 21st birthday on or before 31 August in the year of the contest will be allowed to perform (for 2026, this means players born on or after 1 September 2005). These individuals should be alumni who have graduated from the band within the last two years. These players cannot play principal seats.
- Non-standard brass band instruments (i.e. trumpets, French horns and plastic instruments) are allowed, but all instruments must be from the brass or percussion families.
- The highest placed English band qualifies for the Development Section of the 2027 European Youth Brass Band Contest (EYBBC).
- Over 18s must be in full-time school education (not university or full-time employment). Please contact BBE for guidance if unsure.



6. Entry requirement and rules

- Bands must have between 5 and 55 players.
- Entries are welcome from anywhere in the UK. International bands should contact youthchamps@bbe.org.uk in advance of any intended registration.
- Entry is subject to availability and may be limited by venue capacity.
- BBE may request proof of age or educational status at any time.
- Please follow the rules carefully - not doing so could mean disqualification or future restrictions.
- Youth Champs locations will rotate to maintain regional fairness.
- No cash prizes are awarded.

7. How much does it cost?

- Entry for each section (Showcase, Performance, Challenge, Championship) is £100 per band.
- BBE member bands receive a 50% discount, paying only £50 per section.
- An additional £2 per player is required for each participating musician within the band.
- Bands entering both a competitive and non-competitive section must submit two separate entries and pay the appropriate fees for both.
- Entry is allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. If capacity is exceeded, a full refund will be offered to any band that cannot be accommodated.



8. Contest timeline

Monday 8 September 2025	●	Applications open Band entry fee only is required on application along with provisional participant numbers.
Tuesday 7 October 2025	●	Info drop-in session (online)
Wednesday 26 November 2025	●	Info drop-in session (online)
Monday 1 December 2025	●	Applications close (and discount ticket scheme opens)
Thursday 11 December 2025	●	Arrival and performance times sent out
Monday 12 January 2026	●	Deadline for confirmed participant numbers and band details (and discount ticket scheme closes)
Friday 30 January 2026	●	Deadline for individual player fees (£2 per player)
Monday 23 February 2026	●	Audience tickets go on sale
Monday 9 March 2026	●	Deadline for scores submission and compere notes
Tuesday 10 March 2026	●	Final info drop-in session (online)
Saturday 28 March 2026	●	Contest Day!

9. Provisional timings

These timings are subject to change depending on final entry numbers. They show the earliest likely performance slots.

Saturday 28 March 2026

Showcase Section

First band performs at 09:30 (arrival 08:30)

Performance Section

First band performs 13:30 (arrival 12:30)

Challenge Section

First band performs 10:00 (arrival 09:00)

Championship Section

First band performs at 14:00 (arrival 13:00)

Please plan travel according to these times. Requests for later performance slots will only be considered in exceptional cases.

10. Draw Method

To ensure fair performance times for all bands:

Morning sessions - bands are drawn based on proximity to the venue:

- **0-50 miles:** first group drawn
- **50 - 100 miles:** second group drawn
- **100+ miles:** final group drawn

Afternoon sessions, the order is reversed.

Bands may request an earlier draw. Requests to perform later than scheduled will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

11. Adjudication

- All adjudication is open - with adjudicators providing public feedback at the end of each Section.
- No numerical scores will be given. Instead, adjudicators will use certificate levels – Gold, Silver, Bronze, or Merit – to reflect each band’s performance.
- Each band must submit a digital copy of all music scores in advance.
- The adjudicators’ decisions are final and not subject to be appealed.

12. Facilities

Arrival, registration and band facilities

- From your band’s stated arrival time (issued following the draw), a nominated band representative will collect wristbands for all performers and hand over any required documentation to BBE staff at the registration area.
- The full band will then be guided to a designated classroom, which will serve as their base for the duration of their time in the contest system. This room will be used for storing coats, bags and cases, and must be vacated immediately after the band’s performance.
- **Important:** due to safeguarding requirements, this space cannot be used as a changing area. Performers should arrive in uniform, ready to perform. Only designated chaperones will be allowed access to this area.
- Parents dropping off or collecting young players must not enter band-only areas of the venue. Instead, they should arrange to meet a chaperone outside, who will escort the young person into the contest system.

Warm up areas

Dedicated warm up areas are available to all participating bands/groups before they go on stage. All items you require for your performance (music, additional percussion etc) must be taken with you into the warm-up area.

Toilets

Separate toilet facilities for performers and audience members will be provided and clearly signposted.

Parking

Coach parking is limited on site, and is designated for coach drop-off and pick-up only; coaches cannot park on site throughout the day. A local coach park address will be provided for all bands travelling via coach.

Car parking is limited on site, but ample residential parking is available within walking distance to the venue.

Other facilities

A social room will be available on site for groups to gather throughout the day, although we encourage all participants and spectators to listen to as many of the other participating bands as possible. In the event of nice weather, there are plenty of outside facilities within the grounds to enjoy.

Food vans will be on-site all day, serving a variety of catering options (including both hot and cold drinks).



13. Entry and tickets

Wristbands

Wristbands for players, the conductor and up to four helpers will be given to the official of each band upon arrival. These wristbands grant access to the backstage area prior to and during the performance, and into the auditoriums for the duration of the day.

Tickets

Tickets will be available from the BBE website from 23 February 2026: youthchamps.uk/tickets

Advance tickets

Adults: £13
Children: £5
Under 5: Free

Day tickets

Adults: £16
Children: £5
Under 5: Free

Ticket sales scheme

Participating bands will be able to buy tickets at a discounted rate from BBE and sell them to supporters at the advanced sales rate. Bands can purchase up to 50 tickets with a £1 discount each, allowing them to recoup the BBE members' rate of entry. Bands may buy as many tickets in advance as they wish, but the maximum discount per band per Section is £50.

- If a band enters two sections, the maximum discount rises to £100.
- If an organisation has two bands playing, the maximum discount is also £100.

Bands will be given an order form on application to purchase discounted tickets. After returning this form, an invoice will be sent to the band for payment - after which tickets will be sent in advance of the event. The scheme will open on Monday 1 December until Monday 12 January.

14. Important safeguarding requirements

In order to comply with current legislation regarding child performance licensing, Brass Bands England holds a Body of Persons Approved (BOPA) from the Secretary of State for Education. In order to comply with this BOPA, and as a condition of entry, you must complete the following.

1. Provide an appropriate number of supervising adults to care for children. Supervisors must have a DBS check or update service status within the last three years, verified by the organisation.
 - If any concerning information is on a DBS, a risk assessment must be undertaken before the adult is allowed to care for children, which may include consultation with Brass Bands England.
 - The maximum number of children per supervising adult is 12, but it is recommended to work on a 1:12 ratio plus one additional adult in case of emergency.
2. Sign your organisation in and out at contest control.
3. Maintain permission, photographic consent, emergency medical information, and contact details are available for all child performers at the place of performance.
 - An example BOPA safeguarding consent form can be downloaded and used. Alternatively, organisations may use their own form, provided it contains the required information stated above
4. Ensure no child receives any payment for their performance except for defraying expenses.
5. Ensure that suitable arrangements are made to get the child home or to another approved destination after the last performance or rehearsal each day.

15. Event notes and additional information

- Brass Bands England aims to hold the Youth Champs on a consistent date each year, typically the last weekend of March to avoid school Easter Holidays. Occasionally days may shift to avoid clashing directly with the Easter weekend.
- Important information regarding dates, venues and set test-pieces will be announced at least one year in advance where possible.
- Additional prizes may be offered by external partners or donors. While we don't usually award cash prizes, some may have a cash value.
- Bands qualifying to represent England at the European Youth Brass Band Contest may be eligible to receive support from Brass Bands England, including free access (for member bands only) to fundraising, logistical and marketing resources. The level of support varies annually and is at the discretion of Brass Bands England.
- The reduction in the number of adult helpers permitted as bands progress through the sections reflects the development of the young musicians and the advancement of the youth band. This approach helps ensure that players become more confident and independent, while encouraging bands to be less reliant on adult support as they grow.



Image credit: Dan Johnson

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