



Biology

Week 2017

Event guide
for Member
Organisations

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Introduction to Biology Week

Biology Week is an annual celebration of biology with events all over the UK and beyond for everyone, regardless of background in biology. The week is a great opportunity to share a passion for biology and the natural world.

This guide is suitable for small to medium membership organisations, that may not have organised a Biology Week event before.

The week celebrates the whole of biosciences and encompasses events and activities that appeal to all audiences.

Topics covered in the past have included citizen science projects, conservation, dinosaurs, drug development, mental health, biochemistry, physiology, fungi and more.

Around 100 events and activities take place during a typical Biology Week. These have included:

- A debate on the implications of using DNA to predict cancer
- Nationwide polls to find the UK's favourite species
- UK Fungus Day
- Bioscience Careers Day
- Starling murmuration survey
- BioArt Attack competitions
- BioBakes competitions
- 24 hour lecturethons
- Workshops on food security and recycling
- Trips to museums, wildlife reserves and zoos
- Biology pub quizzes

This year's Biology Week calendar can be found on the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) website: www.rsb.org.uk/2017calendar

Why take part in Biology Week?

Biology Week is a great way to showcase your organisation's area of bioscience, increase its following, and get everyone involved in celebrating the work that you do.

You can reach out to new audiences by taking part in Biology Week and help celebrate the diversity and breadth of the biosciences.

Your organisation can run a public or outreach event or activity for Biology Week or contribute to an existing event featured on our online calendar: www.rsb.org.uk/2017calendar.

We can then help advertise your event, and provide branding and other communication tools if you want to reach out to a wider audience or get the local community involved too.

Through the week, we aim to share your passion for biology with as many people as possible. Your support will allow us to maximise the impact and coverage of events and activities to give people of all ages and backgrounds the chance to learn about the biosciences.

Help us achieve our vision of a world that understands the true value of biology and how it can contribute to improving life for all.



Event ideas

Your event will need to attract the desired audience, engage them with the subject, while also informing and educating them.

There are many event formats and ideas, and if you find one that works well, it is certainly worth using it again. However, do not be afraid to take a creative and innovative approach, as these are often very likely to generate new interest and attract a more diverse and inclusive audience.

Below are some ideas for events you could run during Biology Week:

Biology Quiz

Running a biology quiz is a simple and effective means of engaging an audience with whatever biological topics you want to tackle, and the difficulty of the quiz can easily be tailored to your audience.

Quizzes are suitable for a classroom, pub, or any other place where people can be organised into separate teams. You do not need to adopt a standard quiz format either, instead you could try incorporating problem solving or simple experiments into the quiz to make it more stimulating and challenging.

Lectures

Scientists from local universities, charities and companies can make ideal speakers. They can give talks or even take part with others for a panel discussion on an interesting topic.

Workshops or training events

Training events or workshops are a good way of passing on core and specialised biology skills. Schools, universities, local museums and science centres are great venues for such events, and your members, local natural history societies or other biology organisations are often a good source of experts.

Getting involved with BioSocs

Getting in touch with a university's Biology Society is a great way to also help them provide students with outreach and engagement opportunities, for building relationships and meeting potential new members.

Example events include arranging talks for undergraduates, putting together networking evenings, helping them with career development or mentoring schemes, or helping them

deliver their own outreach and engagement event for local schools or communities.

Debates or discussions

Both panel debates and facilitated discussions are easy to set up and run. Many topics in biology either leave scientists divided or are accompanied by ethical issues which make them ideal debate topics and by organising an event you can give members of the public the chance to develop and express their opinions.

Science busking

This is the art of using simple science experiments to entertain and educate people. These can be performed anywhere, from the corner of a street, in a school classroom, or at a science festival.

Science busking is more likely to add to an event rather than serve as a standalone event, but can be fun to do in public locations with high footfall, such as on the high street or at train stations – just make sure you get the correct permissions from those in charge of the space.

Guided walks / visits

Organise a visit to a local area of scientific interest. This might be a local nature reserve or protected area, or could be a laboratory or research facility nearby.

Conservation work / ecological surveying

Organising a practical conservation session or coordinated ecological survey is often a very good way of promoting a cause and engaging with an audience, while also benefiting the local environment.

This type of activity is best delivered in partnership with other relevant local organisations: a local wildlife trust, natural history group, or nature reserve would all be good to approach.

Hands-on activities at other events

Setting up stands and running simple but exciting demonstrations at larger events such as fairs, festivals or fetes is a great way to reach an audience with which you might not usually meet and interact with.

If you need some activities, check out our downloadable Gopher Science Labs packs with activities suitable for primary school age children: www.rsb.org.uk/gopher-science. All of the experiments are easy to use and easy to resource as most of the equipment can be bought at a local supermarket.

Our 21st Century BioChallenges resources are suited for children who are of secondary school age: www.rsb.org.uk/activity-kits.

Citizen science projects

Why not gather volunteers to do some scientific research by taking part in a citizen science project.

Some projects in which you can take part include:

- Britain Breathing – this citizen science project aims to engage the UK public to act as ‘citizen sensors’ to help scientists discover more about seasonal allergies such as hay fever or asthma. Find out more online: www.britainbreathing.org
- The National Bat Monitoring Programme – this project is looking to find out more about how bats are doing in the UK. Bat surveys involve counting bats and help the Bat Conservation Trust work out how bats are faring and identify changes in bat populations. You don't need to have specialist skills or equipment to take part with surveys suitable for bat beginners as well as experts. Find out more online: www.bigbatmap.org

Run a Big Biology Day

There are numerous science festivals in the UK that occur throughout the year. These are a perfect opportunity to talk to and engage with large numbers of people in a very short period of time. The event need not be on a large scale and could just involve a handful of exhibitors. Local schools, professional biology related organisations, STEM ambassadors, natural history societies / community groups might all be suitable exhibitors.

For more information on how to run your own mini-festival, check out our Big Biology Day page on our website: www.rsb.org.uk/big-biology-day

Take part in our first ever social media campaign

The RSB is running a social media campaign called #iamabiologist on Twitter on 13th October. Take a photo of you and your team at work and share with the hashtag and tag @RoyalSocBio account and we'll share our favourites.

Get baking with the Physiology Society #BioBakes competition

If you love biology and baking, this is a great way to embrace both! Submit a picture of your biology-inspired bake and let the public decide which biology-inspired baked good is the best.

Find out more about the competition online: www.physoc.org/biobakes2017

Accessibility and Inclusion

To ensure that as many people as possible can get involved in Biology Week, it is important that the events organised are accessible and inclusive.

Our preference is that arrangements are made in order to make events accessible so that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, are able to attend.

Be sure to consider the cost of the event as high costs can exclude those who have little disposable income.

When planning your event consider the full range of your organisation's external accessibility policy and include attention to:

- physical accessibility of where you are holding your event
- special needs provision and suitability
- catering for those with dietary, faith and allergy requirements, and ensuring that ingredients that those may be sensitive to are clearly marked
- external environments that may be overwhelming for those with autism. Contact parents or guardians beforehand so they can advise on suitability and options.

Other inclusive measures you should also consider:

- Are there accessible learning materials pitched at different educational abilities available?
- If audio-visual materials are used, do they contain subtitles or is there a transcript available?
- Is the font easy to read? Sans serif fonts are easier for people with dyslexia to read, and a minimum of 12 point font should be used if you are producing literature around your event.

Representation is also important, so also ensure that:

- you consider protected characteristics such as age, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and ability when considering external speakers and presenters
- in imagery used, a suitable representation of the community is presented

Choosing an event venue

Finding an appropriate venue for an event can sometimes be a challenge, and room and facility hire can be very costly. It is always worth shopping around for venues, making use of contacts you might have or approaching potential new venues. The following are good starting points:

Local universities

The Royal Society of Biology has contacts at a number of universities around the country that may be able to help you with finding a room.

Local science centres or museums

These are often able to provide an event for free or at a discounted rate. The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement has advice online on working with museums and science centres: www.publicengagement.ac.uk

Find your nearest centre on the UK Association for Science and Discovery Centre's online map: www.sciencecentres.org.uk/centres

Local parks or communal green space

If the weather permits, take your event outside, where you can engage with the local community too. Contact the local authority for more information on organising an event in a local park or other public space.

Village halls and community centres

These have the benefit of offering very cheap hire rates and also they serve as a natural hub for the local community. They often have more than enough space and basic facilities available as well.

Find details of your nearest village hall or community centre online: www.hallshire.com

Schools / sixth form colleges

Local schools or sixth form colleges often have suitable facilities for events and are worth approaching to hire a space for an evening or weekend event.

Somewhere completely different!

Anywhere with high footfall will ensure you have a large potential audience, so think about setting up a science busking point or carrying out demonstrations in shopping centres, train stations, the high street or outside of sporting events.

Natural History Societies and Wildlife Trusts

The UK has an extensive network of natural history organisations, within which an impressive array of specialist skills and knowledge exists.

Natural history groups are a source of potential speakers for events and they often have extensive knowledge on local biology and as a result are able to lead guided walks and visits to sites of interests.

The Natural History Museum has an online database of many UK natural history groups: www.nhm.ac.uk/take-part/nature-groups-near-you.

Local businesses

Commercial organisations in the area may be able to offer skills, resources, advice, or sponsorship for an event if it is relevant and beneficial for them to do so.

Those with a link to the biosciences are the most obvious option; however, other organisations may also consider supporting your event, and may donate food or other resources if your budget is tight.

Local community groups

If you are looking to put on an event open to the local community, then it would be worth seeking to collaborate with other local community groups.

Local authority websites should have details of the community groups and organisations that exist in your area. These can include community centres, religious groups, Scouting or Girl Guide patrols, or residential homes, foster housing or nurseries and playgroups.



Potential collaborations and partnerships

Collaborative projects enable the sharing of ideas, resources, efforts and funds.

When organising a partnership event, establishing partnerships early on can increase the chances of your event being a success. It is important however, to agree at the start of the process what is expected from the various parties involved.

It might be possible to seek collaborations with the following:

Other membership organisations

The RSB has multiple Member Organisations with which it is closely affiliated. Many of these have a presence throughout the UK, and would be suitable to approach to collaborate on an event (dependent on the location or subject matter proposed).

RSB is a member of the Biology Big Top: a consortium of different biosciences organisations who come together to take part in public engagement activities, sharing resources and the efforts needed to attend fairs, festivals and other outreach events.

Get in touch if you think your organisation would be interested in joining the Biology Big Top! You can find out more on our website on how to get involved: www.rsb.org.uk/volunteer-with-us.

Local schools and universities

School and universities can be potential collaborators. RSB has contacts at a number of universities around the country that may be able to help you with your event. Local authorities will often have a means of contacting local schools in the area to promote an event or to send out a request for collaboration. You can join with departments, student societies or even the student union if they are interested.

STEM Learning

STEM Learning is an educational charity in the UK that seeks to encourage participation at school and college into science and engineering-related subjects and work. Their STEM Ambassadors connect with schools to engage and inspire potential young scientists.

If you want to run an event that you think would benefit from the involvement of STEM Ambassadors, then contact the relevant regional coordinator online: www.stem.org.uk/stem-ambassador-hub-contacts

Event checklist

The following list includes a number of key considerations to take into account when organising and delivering a successful event:

Why are you holding the event?

- What purposes are you trying to fulfill with your event?
- What audience do you want to reach with your event?
- What do you consider to be a successful event, and how are you going to measure if the event is a success?

Who is involved in organising and delivering the event?

- How are you going to delegate tasks needed to be done to those running the event?
- Who is the best point of contact for press? Or volunteer management?
- Are there any other useful partners or collaborators you can or should approach?

What resources will be required?

- Do you require specific technical or practical equipment?
- Are these resources available and where are they coming from?
- What are the costs of the resources, and can they be reused or returned after the event?
- If funding is required, where can this be secured from?
- Are you going to seek funding for your event? Will this pose any conflicts of interest?

When in Biology Week should you hold the event?

- Will it clash with any other similar events or any popular national events?
- Is the weather a factor?
- Will it be easy for those who work or need to secure childcare to attend?

Where should you hold the event?

- What locations are easily accessible by your target audience?
- How big does the space need to be?
- Will it require adding a price or entry fee for people attending?
- Is it easy to get to via public transportation routes?
- Do you have funds to pay for a venue?

How will you reach your audience?

- Who is your target audience, and why?
- What audience is your event most suited for?
- What communication channels does your target audience favour?
- Is your event newsworthy, and would the local press consider covering the event?
- What capacity do you have to curate communications material?
- Are you collaborating with anyone who can help with the communication of the event?
- Is your audience online? Can they get involved with some or part of the event through digital channels?

How will you evaluate your event?

- What would make your event a success and how can you measure this?
- How do you plan to collect feedback from your event?

Safety, security and back-up plans

- Do you need to complete a risk assessment for your event? Your student union or department should be able to help you with this.
- Do you have relevant insurance for your event if it is required?
- Will you be taking photos or video on the day, and are children involved?
- Will you need DBS checks for those involved?
- Do you have a contingency plan in place if the weather isn't ideal or key staff/ speakers/ volunteers can't attend?



Publicising your event

We hope to have as many people as possible involved in Biology Week, and we are able to help advertise your events where possible.

You can let us know if you are running an event by completing a form online on our calendar page: www.rsb.org.uk/2017calendar

We will then advertise your event through our own channels, including:

- Online Biology Week events calendar: www.rsb.org.uk/2017calendar
- Monthly e-newsletters which go out to our members and member organisations
- Social media platforms using the hashtag #BiologyWeek where appropriate
- On our website or news pages

You can download a digital media pack from our website, which includes:

- High resolution files of the Biology Week logo
- Sample posters to display at your organisation / event

A press and communications pack can also be downloaded from our website, which includes:

- Sample press releases
- Sample press invites
- Sample social media posts (e.g. for Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

Find social media and communications advice online: www.rsb.org.uk/biology-week-comms

Find logo and branding material online: www.rsb.org.uk/biology-week-branding

Evaluating your event

There are a number of ways to evaluate the success of your event. You may consider recording certain Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) during the event, for example:

- Number of attendees at the event
- Attendee age
- Distance travelled by attendees to take part in your event
- Their understanding of science

You may wish to use the simple form (see next page) at your event to record attendee feedback.



Event feedback form

Please tell us what you thought about today's event.

1. How did you hear about the event?

2. How old are you? Please circle:

Under 11 | 11-18 | 19-34 | 35-59 | over 60

3. Do you have a degree in a science subject?

Yes

No

4. Did you study science past GCSE?

Yes

No

5. What did you like most about the event?

6. What could have made the event better?

10. Any other comments?

Thanks for your feedback!

Become a Member Organisation

The Royal Society of Biology represents and supports a diverse membership of more than 17,400 individuals, from school students to Nobel laureates in academia, education and industry, alongside 100 learned societies, companies and institutes working within the life sciences.

Benefits of joining us as an organisation include contributing to the RSB's policy work on issues concerning the UK biosciences community, free CPD course approval, exclusive events for our 70+ member organisations, your own membership or staff benefiting from 50% off their first two years of RSB membership fees, and many more.

Find further details on organisational membership, and its benefits online:

www.rsb.org.uk/membership/organisational-membership



Contact us

You can find more resources on how to run events in Biology Week on our website:

More about Biology Week

www.rsb.org.uk/biologyweek

Our 2017 Events Calendar

www.rsb.org.uk/2017calendar

Guidance on how to run a Biology Week event

www.rsb.org.uk/organise-an-event

Biology Week logos and branding

www.rsb.org.uk/biology-week-branding

Press and communications help

www.rsb.org.uk/biology-week-comms

You can also contact the RSB on our social media channels if you need help promoting or sharing your content:

Twitter

@RoyalSocBio

Instagram

@RoyalSocBio

Facebook

facebook.com/RoyalSocBio

Flickr

flickr.com/RoyalSocBio

For further information on Biology Week or advice on running an event please contact:

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