

NATIONAL HEDGELAYING SOCIETY

NHLS

ASSESSOR GUIDE

Marking standards

South of England Style.

NHLS ASSESSOR GUIDE TEMPLATE

Marks for certificate level	<i>Bronze</i>	<i>Silver</i>	<i>Gold</i>
Cut & Pleach			
Marks Available	20	20	20
Section Pass Mark	10	12	15
<p>1. Excellent cutting throughout. Clean finish on cuts, smooth to the touch. All cuts starting at the correct height in relation to diameter of the stem. Hinges low to the ground and strong. No split backs due to over thick strap. Good axe work shown and if using a chainsaw all cuts smoothed off with axe (top grade only) All cuts even and consistent along the length of the hedge Secondary laying of side branches clean, firm, and effective</p>			
<p>2. Generally good cutting. Some stems cut at incorrect height Occasional overly long cuts forming running tongue. No split backs. Some cuts finishing too high from the ground. Some cuts not starting at correct height in relation to diameter. Some stems not smoothly cut but still strong Secondary branch laying satisfactory throughout</p>			
<p>3. Below average cutting in general Numerous kick-backs Cuts not generally smooth but 'hacked' Entering cut to high and to sharply forming long running tongue Cutting not starting at correct height in relation to diameter on many stems Some stems hardly holding on Little secondary laying and to a poor standard</p>			
<p>4. Little evidence of sound cutting technique. Some stems have broken off. Some stems very weak. Numerous split backs. Stems are 'hacked'. Little skill with hand tools resulting in poor work. Poor secondary laying</p>			

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Marks for certificate level	<i>Bronze</i>	<i>Silver</i>	<i>Gold</i>
Heel			
Marks Available	20	20	20
Section Pass Mark	10	12	15
<p>1. All heels removed. Heels taken of low to the ground, the cut sloping away from the pleacher, correct for style Smooth cutting with no damage to the Bark below. Clean soil around heel, no chippings.</p>			
<p>2. Most heels taken off low enough and at an adequate angle. Some roughness to cutting but good enough to provide regrowth. Occasional heel taken off too flat or too high. Only occasional damage to bark around the heel.</p>			
<p>3. An attempt made to take off each heel but cuts very rough. Many cuts too flat or too high. Heels often with frequent splitting. Heels badly hacked.</p>			
<p>4. Little understanding of how to take the heel off. Some heels not removed. No angle to cuts, mostly flat or facing back towards the stem. Badly damaged or split heels incapable of providing regrowth.</p>			

<i>Marks for certificate level</i>	<i>Bronze</i>	<i>Silver</i>	<i>Gold</i>
Stakes and Binders			
Marks Available	20	20	20
Section Pass Mark	10	12	15
<p>1. Stakes Stakes chosen of good quality and suitable for the style, sharpened at the thick end and placed thick end in the ground. Stakes in a uniform, correctly spaced pattern and on the correct line. Stakes upright in both planes and trimmed to the correct height and angle above the binders. Stakes forming as straight a line as possible down the centre of the hedge.</p> <p>Binders Binders to start at the correct end of the hedge and woven tightly in the correct pattern. Finished height of binding level and correct. Binders inserted behind each stake correctly and trimmed to leave the correct amount of tail. Binders not cracked or damaged during the trimming of the stakes. Binders correctly trimmed off at the end of the hedge.</p>			
<p>2. Stakes Stakes placed at adequate spacing and correct angle. Not all stakes in a good straight line but holding the hedge firmly. Height of some stakes not consistent to style height, or too low.</p>			

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<p>Binders Correct to style. May be an incorrect number of binders behind no more than one stake. Binders may be protruding too much behind the stake line and / or not trimmed correctly. Binding correct, but only just level.</p>			
<p>3. Stakes Poor choice of stakes. No uniform angle or straightness of line. Unevenly spaced and / or not tight in the ground. Damaged tops. Not holding hedge secure. Missed one or more pleacher.</p> <p>Binders May be too large or too light. May be an unequal number of binders behind some stakes. Possible incorrect binding pattern along the length.</p>			
<p>4. Stakes Little understanding of how to create a straight stake line. Stakes pointed at the thin end and placed thin end into the ground. Poor spacing and at an incorrect angle.</p> <p>Binders Little understanding of how to attach binders. No pattern to weave with incorrect placing between stakes. Binders started on the wrong side, or wrong end of the hedge.</p>			

Marks for certificate level	<i>Bronze</i>	<i>Silver</i>	<i>Gold</i>
Back lay			
Marks Available	NA	20	20
Section Pass Mark	NA	12	15
<p>1. Good preparation of stem for back lay Both directional cuts cleanly achieved Correct height of the upper cut placing the pleacher at the correct finished angle in the hedge. Both cuts strong and viable. Heels removed correctly</p>			
<p>2. One of the cuts poor but overall, the back lay still reasonably strong. Finished pleacher not sitting in the hedge correctly (too flat) Finished back lay adequately robust. Heels removed correctly</p>			
<p>3. Poor preparation of stem for back laying. Both cuts poor in quality. Pleacher finishing at wrong angle in the hedge. Both cuts poor and possibly unviable.</p>			
<p>4. No understanding of back laying. Task not completed or stem broken off. Finished stem unviable.</p>			

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Marks for certificate level			
Side lay			
Marks Available	NA	20	20
Section Pass Mark	NA	12	15
1. Correct choice of stems chosen to side lay. The stem is cut at the correct height, correct angle, & correct position. The stem is correctly twisted around & laid to blend seamlessly within the build of the hedge. All cuts clean & smooth. Hinge well attached.			
2. Stem choice correct. Insufficient preparation of the stem to enable it to be placed in hedge correctly. Untidy cuts but still adequately attached.			
3. Stem choice not suitable. Poor preparation of the stem. Stem does not blend within the built hedge. Cutting work not acceptable. Cut stem hardly viable.			
4. No understanding of side laying. Poor stem selection. Pleach cut at the wrong angle. Pleached stems broken off. Cuts ragged and / or heel cut at the incorrect angle. Stem does not blend within the built hedge.			

Marks for certificate level	<i>Bronze</i>	<i>Silver</i>	<i>Gold</i>
Root Lay			
Marks Available	NA	20	20
Section Pass Mark	NA	12	15
1. Roots well revealed below ground level. Rear roots severed and good choice of remaining hinge root. Good cut running down into root which is still firmly attached. Earth dug out in front of the root laying to avoid bridging on the ground. No splitting on the pleach.			
2. Shows understanding of root laying. Little digging around base of stem to reveal roots. Cut not completely running down into root. Cutting untidy but still firmly attached.			
3. Cut not running down into root. Almost no clearance around roots. Pleacher badly split Unviable, weak attachment on strap.			

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Marks for certificate level	Bronze	Silver	Gold
<u>BUILD OF HEDGE APPROPRIATE FOR STYLE... South of England</u>			
Marks Available	20	20	20
Section Pass Mark	10	12	15
<p>1. Pleachers laying at appropriate angle. Pleachers crossed over to securely build the hedge. Good double brush, evenly along the hedge covering all pleachers to protecting the regrowth from grazing livestock. Stakes cut off directly along the hedge matching the pleach cut angle, 4 inches above the binders. No stems used from too far out of the line. Good use of secondary cutting to build the hedge & cover pleachers. Good, well filled hedge, finished height 4 feet at top of binders. Hedge trimmed to 3 feet wide. Even placement of stakes that are set vertical. Binders level. Top line of the binders follows the ground level. Very stock proof.</p>			
<p>2. Some stems laying too flat within the hedge Pleaching good Stakes well placed and firm but tops poorly removed. Occasional stem used from outside of hedge line. Some pleachers visible, allowing livestock to graze the regrowth. Top line of the binders uneven. Stake spacing uneven. Occasional small gap.</p>			
<p>3. Very irregular placement of stems, poor build. Poor cutting, no regularity to pleachers. Very irregular build, some stems laid off too far. Poor stake line, crude bindings. Sides of hedge uneven, wide / thin, with poor secondary cutting. Many pleachers visible, allowing livestock to graze the regrowth. Little attempt to build a consistent stockproof hedge. Many gaps along length.</p>			
<p>4. No understanding of correct build for style. Very poor pleaching and little attempt at secondary cutting. Poor removal of heels, too high, too low, wrong angle. Overall poor build. “Air gaps” under the binders, uneven stake placement. “Roller coaster” topline to binders. Uneven or no trimming of sides of hedge Many pleachers visible, allowing livestock to graze the regrowth. Many gaps. Hedge Laid down hill.</p>			

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Marks for certificate level	Bronze	Silver	Gold
<u>Tools (Bronze only)</u>			
Marks Available	10	N/A	N/A
Section Pass Mark	5	N/A	N/A
1. Very good, well maintained and presented well, very efficient in their task, pride, and care in tools. Fully understands the need for sharpness, maintenance, and upkeep.			
2. Presented well, efficient in their task, understands the need for maintenance. Remembers to take care of them.			
3. Maintenance / sharpening could be better. Care is lacking just slightly along with pride in tools.			
4. No care or maintenance of tools, sharpening needs improving. Understanding and care of tools is needed.			

Marks for certificate level	Bronze	Silver	Gold
<u>Start and Finish (Gold Only)</u>			
Marks Available	N/A	N/A	20
Section Pass Mark	N/A	N/A	15
1. Start – No ends cut off. If working with adjoining hedger, lay pleachers out to either side so they can lift in when finishing their length. If working to a gate post or end, lay to end or gate with full hedge to style. Finish – If working with an adjoining hedger, lift in pleachers that have been laid out. If working to a gate post or end of hedge, back lay or opposite lay to fill hedge to style.			
2. Good attempt made, but some pleachers not lifted in. Start and finish could be tidier.			
3. Not tied in with adjoining hedger. Gaps at start / finish.			
4. No attempt made to present a start or finish.			

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Marks for certificate level	Bronze	Silver	Gold
<u>Questions and Answers</u>			
Marks Available	10	10	10
Section Pass Mark	5	6	7
1. All questions answered fully. Shows clear knowledge of the subject.			
2. Most questions answered accurately. Could give more detail to verify understanding.			
3. Less than 50% of questions answered correctly. Needs a greater understanding of the subject.			
4. Less than 25% of questions answered correctly. Poor knowledge of the subject.			

Marks for certificate level	Bronze	Silver	Gold
<u>Health and Safety</u>			
Marks Available	20	20	20
Section Pass Mark	10	12	15
1. Arrived with appropriate weather-related clothing and PPE in good condition. Lone working – notify a responsible person of location, check mobile phone signal. Correct PPE always worn. Have an up-to-date personal first aid kit. Make a note of public access and always ensure a safe working environment. If using a chainsaw, have evidence of relevant certification. Risk assessment completed. Work area safe and clear of brash. Good hand eye coordination and safe working practices.			
2. Arrived with full PPE all in good condition. Assessed the site, made relevant notes and pointed out possible issues. Third party knows of work location, expected time home, grid reference / what3words & contact details. Nearest hospital noted, first aid kit in truck. Phone signals checked. Visual check for overhead and possible underground issues along with any public roads, rights of way, open access.			
3. Arrived with full PPE, some close to needing replacing. Assessed the site. Third party knows of work location, expected time home.			
4. Arrived with full PPE, but in generally poor condition and some needs replacing. Looked at the site. Third party knows of work location, expected time home.			

OVERALL PASS MARKS	Bronze	Silver	Gold
TOTAL MARKS AVAILABLE	120	170	190
TOTAL MARKS NEEDED TO PASS	60	102	142