

Ninety years of the British Council

The British Council is celebrating its 90th birthday! Find out more about the British Council, what we do and how we're marking the anniversary.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. cultural relations
2. collaboration
3. an anniversary
4. innovative
5. to tackle a problem
6. prosperous
7. to be founded
8. to launch a project

Definition

- a. a day when something important happened in the past
- b. communication between different cultures in order to bring benefits to both of them
- c. (about an organisation) to be created or started
- d. teamwork or working together
- e. to start a new project
- f. new and creative
- g. to solve a problem or try to solve a problem
- h. successful

Ninety years of the British Council

Did you know that the British Council doesn't just teach English? We work with students, teachers, artists, businesses and governments around the world, and this year it's our 90th anniversary.

What is the British Council?

The British Council is an organisation that promotes international cultural relations and education. It was founded by the British government in 1934 and it is one of the oldest cultural relations organisations in the world. We have offices in over 100 countries around the world and we work with people in over 200 countries.

What does the British Council do?

We build connections between people in the UK and countries worldwide, strengthening international collaboration as a way to solve global problems. Here are some recent British Council projects.

- The UK/Ukraine 2022–23 Season of Culture brought the work of 2,445 Ukrainian artists and creators to major UK arts festivals and launched many collaborative projects.
- In Kenya, we have supported 51 creative businesses that are developing innovative approaches in the fashion industry.
- We worked with the Colombian government to create Coding for Kids, a programme that helps students and teachers to develop coding skills. It supported girls to enter STEM fields and helped over 500,000 children.
- In collaboration with Muslim Hands International, we started English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE), a project to organise clubs for girls to improve their English and tech skills and discuss social issues. EDGE began with 45 clubs in Pakistan and it will expand to other countries too, benefiting 40,000 girls.
- We started the Climate Connection, a project to link people around the world to tackle the climate emergency by sharing ideas and taking action together. The Climate Connection has organised workshops, discussions and presentations at major events, including COP28.

What's happening for the 90th anniversary?

We are celebrating the amazing people that we have worked with over the last 90 years. We are collecting stories and experiences about how the British Council has impacted people's lives, and these will be recorded and stored in the British Library audio archive in London.

But we're not just looking back to our history. We're looking forward as well. Our 90 Youth Voices for the Future programme will invite 90 young people from over 50 countries to visit the UK in July 2024. They will join in learning activities, study visits and discussions to explore how the UK and young people around the world can work together on global issues involving the environment, technology and urban spaces.

Another big project is Next Generation UK 2024, a project that explores how young people see the future for themselves, their communities and the UK.

What's next?

There is still a lot of work to do, but the British Council will continue bringing people together and building trust, with the aim of creating a more peaceful and prosperous world.

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
	True	False
1. The British Council's activities are all related to teaching the English language.	True	False
2. The British Council was started by the British government.	True	False
3. The British Council works in over 200 countries.	True	False
4. The Coding for Kids programme has helped over half a million children.	True	False
5. The EDGE programme is already complete.	True	False
6. The 90th anniversary celebrations are about both the past and the future of the organisation.	True	False

Task 2

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

events	connections	organisation
projects	anniversary	problems

- This year, 2024, is the British Council's 90th
- The British Council is a cultural relations
- To solve global, we need international collaboration.
- The British Council launches many each year, such as the Climate Connection.
- The British Council builds between people in the UK and countries all over the world.
- The Climate Connection project has participated in major international such as COP28.

Discussion

How has the British Council and the LearnEnglish website made a difference in your life?

Answers

Preparation task

1. b
2. d
3. a
4. f
5. g
6. h
7. c
8. e

Task 1

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. True
5. False
6. True

Task 2

1. anniversary
2. organisation
3. problems
4. projects
5. connections
6. events