

Make the most of your volunteer experience!

Explore Your Options

Ask yourself two questions, “What issues are important to me?” and, “What kinds of activities do I like?” If you love making the environment a better place, would you rather help an agency do this by working in their office, or by going outside and cleaning up a stream? If you are passionate about working with younger people, would you rather be a tutor or work in an after-school sports program? Also think about how far you are willing to travel and how much time you can commit. It’s better to start small than to make a commitment you can’t keep!

Pick Up The Phone

Once you search through the Directory of Youth Service Opportunities and find an opportunity that looks interesting, call the agency and make sure it’s right for you. Make sure you pay close attention to the minimum age requirements before you pick up the phone. When you call, ask for the contact person listed or the current volunteer manager. If you have to leave a message, make sure you that you speak slowly and clearly, include your full name and phone number, and a time that you can be reached. Before calling the agency, plan what you are going to say. An example is:

“Hi, my name is Jane Smith and I am 14 years old. I’m interested in volunteering, and I would appreciate it if you could tell me more about it. You can call me back at 703-555-1234 any time after 4:00. Thank you!”

Ask The Right Question

When you speak to the volunteer manager, tell her or him about yourself. Find out if the organization is a good match for you. Some questions you might want to ask are:

- What does your organization do?
- What type of work would I be doing as a volunteer?
- Do you provide training?
- Who will be my supervisor?
- Where are you located?
- When do you need help?
- Do I need to commit for a certain amount of time?

Visit The Organization

By seeing the agency in action, you can get a good idea of what it would be like to work there. Also, the volunteer coordinator may want to interview you before you start. Try to give her or him the best impression of who you are and what you can do for the organization.

Make sure the volunteer manager understands what you want to get out of the experience, and that he or she agrees that the opportunity is a good match. You may even want to write down what you'd like to learn and do and have the manager sign off on it. Agreeing with the volunteer manager about what you want to accomplish reduces the chance of having a bad volunteer experience.

Be a Great Volunteer

Remember that you are representing yourself and your generation. Be on time, have a good attitude, and be flexible when it comes to the tasks you perform. Keep in mind that the work you do as a volunteer is always important and the agency is depending on you to fulfill your commitment.

Keep in mind that helping out doesn't have to be boring. You can meet people, gain skills, and even get a recommendation for a job or college!

To learn more about how to make service work for you, [click here](#). To organize a volunteer project that you and your friends can all participate in, [click here](#).