

Tips for Volunteering

10 TIPS ON BECOMING A VOLUNTEER

(adapted from materials compiled by the nonprofit coalition Independent Sector)

1. Research the causes or issues important to you: Look for a group that deals with issues about which you feel strongly.

2. Consider the skills you have to offer: If you enjoy outdoor work, have a knack for teaching, or just enjoy interacting with people, you may want to look for volunteer work that incorporates these aspects of your personality.

3. Many community groups that are looking for volunteers may not have occurred to you. Think outside the box when looking for an organization that appeals to you such as neighborhood watch programs; prisons; disaster relief; youth organizations; intergenerational programs; and park services.

4. There's no need to wait to be asked. There are many ways to find organizations that are looking for volunteers. Ask your friends or colleagues about their own volunteering activities. Make use of the Internet and online volunteer referral services, including www.volunteer.gov. Or visit your local volunteer center. These different services can all help you to find the right volunteer opportunity.

5. When you find an organization that meets your interests, request an interview and plan for it in much the same way that you would plan for a job interview. In addition to being ready to describe your interests, qualifications, and background, you should also be prepared to ask your interviewers about their organization and the benefits they offer to their volunteers. An interview will allow you and the organization to find the right match for your skills and interests.

6. Would you like to learn something new? Consider whether the organization offers training or professional development opportunities for their volunteers. Volunteering can provide you with the chance to learn something new or develop skills in a new area.

7. Find the volunteer activity that fits your schedule. Organizations need different levels of commitment for different types of volunteer activities. Serving as a mentor, for example, will require a regular, intensive commitment, while volunteering for a walk-a-thon is a seasonal commitment.

8. Volunteer as a Family: Think about looking for a volunteer opportunity that would be suitable for parents and children to do together, or for husband and wife to take on as a team.

9. Virtual Volunteering: Yes, there is such a thing. If you have computer access and the necessary skills, some organizations now offer the opportunity to do volunteer work over the computer.

10. Give voice to your heart through your giving and volunteering! Bring your heart and your sense of humor to your volunteer service. These, along with an enthusiastic spirit, are priceless.