What is community service for high school students?

Community service can be an activity that teens do alone, with their families, or as a volunteer group. Community service work can be done throughout the school year, over vacations, and during the summer. Volunteer opportunities can be local, national, or international. Some examples of activities are:

- Mentoring another student
- Being a Big Brother or Big Sister
- Working on environmental projects
- Collecting clothes, toiletries for needy families
- Reading to children at a daycare center

Why do community service?

Many schools require or strongly encourage students to perform community service. Students often view these hours simply as another onerous task that must be squeezed into an already tight schedule. Colleges also give the impression that no application is complete unless the student can document a service experience. With the right attitude and approach, volunteering can actually open doors to exciting career opportunities and a life-long passion for giving back.

The Benefits of Volunteer Work for Teenagers

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What are the benefits of community service for teens?

1. **It's proven to make you happier.** Adolescents who enjoy pro-social activities, like community service, are happier than their counterparts. Researchers found that 15 to 16 year olds who derive pleasure from altruistic deeds are less likely to become depressed.

2. **Volunteers gain professional experience.** The work and training teens receive through volunteer work will help determine their strengths and weaknesses. Through working with non-profit agencies, volunteers learn about the functions and operations of companies and pressing social issues.

3. **It provides more flexibility and options.** There are opportunities and choices right outside your front door. As long as it's something you believe in, volunteering will foster your interest.
4. **Valuable community service experience makes great topics of conversation and can inspire students to write insightful college essays.** Adults view teenagers and high school students as more mature and socially responsible after completing volunteer work.

5. **Make a difference.** By volunteering, teens have the chance to make a difference in their community that will benefit people you care about. Volunteer work looks good on a resume because engaging in community service says a lot about a teen as a citizen. Volunteer work isn’t just about how it looks on paper, but more about what you can give and gain from this experience.

**How to find a volunteer opportunity or program**

Many local, domestic, and international community service organizations are looking for teen volunteers.

- Teenlife.com lists over 1,000 volunteer opportunities, covering all areas of interest. [www.teenlife.com/volunteer](http://www.teenlife.com/volunteer)
- The TeenLife Guide to Overnight Summer Programs features several community service-related programs. [www.teenlife.com/tlgsummer2014](http://www.teenlife.com/tlgsummer2014)
- Volunteer Match allows students to search by interest and location. They even offer virtual volunteer programs. [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)
- Schools share various volunteer opportunities for students on their websites, community service fairs, and in pamphlets. Ask your guidance counselor or school administrator for current opportunities.

**How to evaluate a volunteer opportunity**

Not all volunteer organizations allow teenagers under the age of 18 to participate. When approaching an organization, be sure to inquire about age requirements. Find out if other students have volunteered there and for how long. Ask about the schedule and frequency. Some organizations are willing to train you only if you can make a longer commitment. And don’t forget to think about transportation issues! If a parent has to drive you it will be harder to be a consistent volunteer.

**Additional Resources**

**WEBSITES**
- TeenLife.com ([www.teenlife.com/volunteer](http://www.teenlife.com/volunteer))
- Corporation for National & Community Service ([www.nationalserviceresources.gov](http://www.nationalserviceresources.gov))
- Volunteer Match ([www.volunteermatch.com](http://www.volunteermatch.com))
- Generation On ([www.generationon.org/teens](http://www.generationon.org/teens))
- Idealist ([www.idealista.org](http://www.idealista.org))
- DoSomething.org ([www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org))

**BLOGS**
- Corporation for National & Community Service Official Blog ([www.nationalservice.tumblr.com](http://www.nationalservice.tumblr.com))
- Service Now Blog ([www.community.servicenow.com/community/learn/blog](http://www.community.servicenow.com/community/learn/blog))

**VIDEOS**
- Corporation for National & Community Service YouTube ([www.youtube.com/user/nationalservice](http://www.youtube.com/user/nationalservice))

**BOOKS & GUIDES**
- TeenLife Guide to Overnight Summer Programs ([www.teenlife.com/osp](http://www.teenlife.com/osp))
- *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects: Over 500 Service Ideas for Young People Who Want to Make a Difference* by Barbara A. Lewis
- *Every Human Has Rights: What You Need to Know About Your Human Rights* by National Geographic

Questions? Email us at info@teenlife.com. We are also happy to add (and maintain) listings for community service opportunities you suggest!