



National Volunteer Week



Ten Tips on Volunteering Wisely

- 1. Research the causes or issues important to you.** Look for a group that works with issues about which you feel strongly. If you can't find such an organization, here's a challenging and intriguing thought: why not start one yourself? There is no end to the creative avenues for volunteering, just as there is no end to the need for volunteers.
- 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 which would incorporate these aspects of your personality.
- 3. Would you like to learn something new?** Perhaps you would like to learn a new skill or gain exposure to a new situation. Consider seeking a volunteer opportunity where you'll learn something new. Many nonprofits seek out people who are willing to learn. Realize beforehand, however, that such work might require a time commitment for training before the actual volunteer assignment begins.
- 4. Combine your goals.** Look for volunteer opportunities that will also help you achieve your other goals for your life.
- 5. Don't over-commit your schedule.** Make sure the volunteer hours you want to give fit into your hectic life, so that you don't frustrate your family, exhaust yourself, shortchange the organization you're trying to help or neglect your job. Do you want a long-term assignment or something temporary? If you are unsure about your availability, or want to see how the work suits you before making an extensive commitment, see whether the organization will start you out on a limited number of hours until you get the feel of things.
- 6. Nonprofits may have questions, too.** While most nonprofits are eager to find volunteer help, they have to be careful when accepting the services you offer. If you contact an organization with an offer to donate your time, you may be asked to come in for an interview, fill out a volunteer application, describe your qualifica-



tions and your background - just as you would at an interview for a paying job. It is in the organization's interest and more beneficial to the people it serves to make certain you have the skills needed, that you are truly committed to doing the work, and that your interests match those of the nonprofit. Furthermore, in volunteer work involving children or other at-risk populations, there are legal ramifications for the organization to consider.

7. Consider volunteering as a family.

Think about looking for a volunteer opportunity suitable for parents and children to do together, or for a husband and wife to take on as a team. When a family volunteers to work together at a nonprofit organization, the experience can bring them closer together, teach young children the value of giving their time and effort, introduce everyone in the family to skills and experiences never before encountered, and give the entire family a shared experience as a wonderful family memory.

8. 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.

9. I never thought of that! Many community groups are looking for volunteers, and some may not have occurred to you. Most of us know that hospitals, libraries, and churches use volunteers for a great deal of their work, but here are some volunteer opportunities that may not have crossed your mind: day care centers, Meals on Wheels, community theatre, neighborhood parks, museums, shelters, schools, half-way houses, youth organizations and national parks.

10. Give voice to your heart through your giving and volunteering! Bring your heart and your sense of humor to your volunteer service, along with your enthusiastic spirit, which in itself is a priceless gift. What you'll get back will be immeasurable! To the millions of people who volunteer and give, thank you. Just imagine what more could do.

Source: <http://www.independentsector.org/>