

How Do I Become a Volunteer?

Want to be a volunteer but not sure how to get started? Are you having a hard time finding the right place to volunteer? How can you decide which volunteer opportunity is right for you? There are a number of resources available to you **FREE** to help you answer these questions!

Step 1: Figure out **WHY** you want to volunteer? Are you looking for someplace to test out a career? Do you want to learn new job skills? Are you bored, lonely or tired of doing the same things you always do?

Step 2: Decide **WHAT** kind of volunteer work you would like to do. Do you like to work with people? What kind of people: children? Students? Seniors? Elderly? Sick people? People doing sports? Would you rather work with animals? Plants and parks? Or, do you want to volunteer in a job that you would work by yourself? In a volunteering role, you get to decide the **KIND** of work you want to do, then you just need to find a place looking for someone to do **THAT**!

Step 3: Finding an organization **WHERE** you can use the skills you want to use may be easier than you think. A simple Google search on "Volunteer" can turn up many sites that will help you find a volunteer site close to home.



You can also check out an organization directly on the internet. If you know you want to work with animals, check out a zoo site and search for their volunteer opportunities!

A screenshot of the Minnesota Zoo website's "Volunteer Opportunities" page. The header includes the Minnesota Zoo logo, a search bar, and navigation links for "About Us", "Contact Us", "Press Room", "Jobs/Volunteer", and "En Español". A "Fast Find" dropdown menu is set to "--Pick an Area--". The main navigation bar lists "Plan Your Visit", "Animals", "Education", "Conservation", "Membership", and "Support Your Zoo". The left sidebar contains links for "JOB OPPORTUNITIES", "VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES", "INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES", "ZOO JOB PROFILES", "JOB SHADOWING", and "ZOO CAREER DAYS". The main content area features a large image of children and a volunteer, with the text "Volunteer Opportunities" overlaid. Below the image is the text "Go Wild...Volunteer At The Minnesota Zoo!".

Volunteers are seldom paid; not because they are worthless, but because they are PRICELESS!

Step 4. HOW can you get started? Just like applying for a job, organizations have volunteers fill out an application form. Find the volunteer application form on the organization's website--just click on the volunteer page and apply online. You can call the organization directly and ask to speak with the Volunteer Coordinator. Or, just stop in to your target organization in person and fill out a volunteer application on site.

Step 5. WHO you are and how you present yourself matters! Dress professionally, similar to how the organization's employees dress. Look and act like you belong there, even when just picking up that volunteer application form. *This is a work site and you are making your first impression.* Many companies hire from their volunteers to fill full- and part-time jobs in their company.

Step 6. Once you begin your volunteering experience, remember to add the organization and the skills you are using to your **resume!** Many volunteers find unexpected personal benefits from their work---they come out with good references, new job skills and a stronger personal network for their job search.



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