

JOB SEARCH TOOLKIT:

Tools & Techniques You Need for a Successful Job Hunt

The following section is entitled: **Chapter 7: The Value of Volunteer Work**

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The full text of the Job Search Toolkit is available at: ***FirstFind.org>>Look for a Job.***

The Value of Volunteer Work

Volunteer work can help you in many ways when you are looking for a job. It may seem like a waste of time to “work for free” when you really need a paycheck. But volunteering can actually help you get a job.

Volunteer work helps by:

- Giving you experience
- Improving your skills
- Providing potential references
- Increasing the number of people you know for networking
- Making you feel good about yourself because you are helping other people
- Giving you a structure and schedule to follow
- Providing experience you can include on your resume
- Possibly turning into a paying job

Where can you volunteer?

You can volunteer at a local house of worship, boys & girls club, community organization, library, senior center, food pantry, museum, nature center or school. It can be a large or small organization. Call or stop by to ask if they use volunteers. The web can also be a place to research volunteer opportunities. You can go to the sites of well-known large non-profits, like the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org, where you will find links to local volunteer needs, or check out a local service provider. The United Way at www.unitedway.org provides links to local needs under the heading, “Take Action” on its home page.

Organizations may need you to do a variety of tasks, such as reading to children or seniors, filing, making copies, fixing things, cleaning up, stuffing envelopes, helping serve food or gardening.

If you are interested in a specific type of job such as health care, you can volunteer in a nursing home. That experience will be valuable when you are looking for a job. Volunteer work will be valuable even if it's not connected to a specific type of job because it will show an employer that you are an active and involved person. You may also gain new experience in a volunteer position. For example, if you help answer phones you will get practice dealing with the public, which could later be called customer service skills.

Volunteering also offers a chance to do something different. You may gain experience and find new interests that help you consider other types of jobs.

The importance of the people you meet as a volunteer

As a volunteer you will meet new people who can become part of your network when you look for a job. When you feel comfortable, tell people that you are looking for a job. You might work with other volunteers who work for a company that is hiring people just like you.

There is nothing wrong with saying right up front, "I am looking for a job right now and have the time to do some volunteer work. Do you need any help?" Letting people know you are looking for a job also helps if you have to change your volunteer schedule to be at a job interview.

It is important to be responsible and work well as part of a team when you are volunteering. Even though you are not getting paid, you should treat volunteer work just like a job. Later when you apply for a paying job, the person you reported to as a volunteer can be a good reference for you. Add this person's name and job title and contact information (telephone number and address) to your Personal Data Form. Always remember to ask permission before giving someone's name as a reference.

Add it to your resume

Volunteer work can be included on your resume to represent skills, activity and relevant work experience. Including volunteer work on a resume is particularly helpful if you are not working. It shows activity and responsibility. There is no need to indicate that the work is unpaid.

Here's a sample of volunteer activity on a resume:

Bethesda Senior Day Care Center Yonkers, NY May 2015-present

Meal Server

- Serve meals to 75 senior citizens.
- Distribute nutrition information and respond to questions.
- Provide outstanding service.

Add it to your schedule

When you do volunteer work, write it down on your calendar. This will help you stay organized. Having hours on your calendar will also give you structure and a sense of

purpose. It is important that you treat this commitment like a regular job by showing up prepared and on time.

From volunteer to paid employee

Sometimes volunteer work can lead to a paycheck. When you impress the people around you with your hard work, your ability to complete a task and your reliability, they will think of you when there is a job opening.

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