

An orange t-shirt with the word "VOLUNTEER" printed in large, light-colored, sans-serif capital letters across the chest. The t-shirt is the background of the entire page.

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**Are You
Volunteering to
Gain Experience
and More?**

Are You Volunteering?

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

Volunteering Can Make You More Employable

Employers often prefer to hire someone who is already working. They are concerned if you have been out of work for a while that you are not used to the responsibility of a dedicated work schedule. Regular volunteer work demonstrates that you can stick to a schedule, you are involved, and you are willing to build your resume.





Checklist for Success: Find Out Where You Can Volunteer

- Call or stop by a local house of worship, boys & girls club, community organization, library, senior center, food pantry, museum, nature center or school.
 - Ask if they use volunteers.
 - You can say, "I am looking for a job right now and have the time to do some volunteer work. Do you need any help?"
- Go to the sites of well known large non-profits, like the [American Red Cross](#) or [The United Way](#)
- Go to sites that are dedicated to volunteer work: [Volunteer New York](#) and [VolunteerMatch](#) are two examples.

Organizations may need you to do a variety of tasks, such as reading to children or seniors, filing, making copies, fixing things, cleaning up, preparing mailings, helping serve food, gardening, social media updates, database input, and help with fundraising and special events.

If you are interested in a specific field such as health care, you can volunteer in a nursing home. Any 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 can gain new experience in a volunteer position. For example, if you help answer phones you will get practice dealing with the public, an important customer service skill.

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 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. Letting people know you are looking for a job will be important if you have to change your volunteer schedule to be at an interview. You might work with other volunteers who work for a company that is hiring people just like you.

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.





Take the Extra Step: Find a Reference

When you apply for a paying job, the person you reported to as a volunteer can be a good reference for you. Ask this person if you can use them as a reference and add their name and job title and contact information (telephone number and email address) to your notebook and [Personal Data Form](#) (discussed in Chapter 9).

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 – 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 | 2019-present

Meal Server

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



Write It Down: 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.





True Stories

A job seeker volunteered for a political campaign conducting telephone canvassing. The experience on their resume described responsibilities that helped them get a job in telephone surveys and in person canvassing. There was no need to indicate their political party on the resume, as the work spoke for itself.

Unpaid, volunteer work can build your experience and career path. Not only do you gain experience, you also gain connections and a track record as a responsible worker.



Chapter 3 To Do List

- _____ Find out where you can volunteer
- _____ Sign up and schedule volunteer activities
- _____ Treat volunteer work like a job; be responsible
- _____ Tell people you are looking for a paying job
- _____ Add volunteer work to your resume

Quick Links to Resources

Resource Name	Web Address
American Red Cross	redcross.org
United Way	unitedway.org
Volunteer New York	VolunteerNewYork.org
Volunteer Match	volunteermatch.org





Need Help?

The Westchester Library System offers workshops, resources, and one-to-one counseling to guide your job search and improve your interviewing skills. Find out more at [FirstFind.org](https://www.firstfind.org).

