

Tips for Finding the Right Volunteer Opportunities For Your Campers

Finding the right volunteer activities can be overwhelming at times. You may feel uncertain about what is expected and question whether your campers can participate. It is so important that the kids feel comfortable where you volunteer, get inspired by the work you do, and enjoy themselves. Without these three components, they won't reap all the amazing benefits of volunteering outside in nature. When searching for the appropriate activity, consider the following priorities:

Project Focus. The first step is to brainstorm to decide what types of volunteer activities your camp is interested in doing. It is important to narrow down your choices and focus on projects that your campers and staff will get the most out of.

Organization's Mission. Do your research before you sign up with a specific organization. Find out the group's history and how it got started, the goals and mission, who its leaders are, and how it is funded. Check their website, search online for press coverage, and visit sites like www.charitywatch.org and www.charitynavigator.org. If possible, ask a current or past volunteer about the pros and cons of the organization. Getting a referral from someone you know is the best option, especially because groups of children will be participating.

Location. Search for projects that are close to your site so you do not have to drag your campers too far to volunteer.

Cost Of Volunteer Activities. Although rare, check to see if there are any fees to volunteer. Consider any other costs involved like travel, equipment required, or requested products or monetary donations.

Time Commitment. Decide how much time you want to commit to a volunteer project. Will this be a one-time thing, or will you be participating throughout the summer? How long will each project take?

Age Range Guidelines. Before you commit to a project, check to see if there are any age requirements listed.

Activity Expectations. Before you show up, find out exactly what you will be doing. Will there be heavy lifting involved? Will you have to get down and dirty? Will the project be a boring and repetitive task that will make the kids annoyed? Make sure the activity is something that your campers will actually enjoy before you invest your time.

Safety. No matter what, safety needs to come first when children are involved. You may want to avoid going to activities in neighborhoods that make you uncomfortable. Some kids may be scared to talk to strangers, so consider starting with familiar people and places. As they get older, you can venture out and expose them to more mature situations.

Weather. Temperature and sun exposure play a role when we volunteer outdoors. Please remember to protect campers from sunburn: apply sunscreen every two hours, wear hats and long sleeves, and seek out shade breaks. Be mindful of weather reports and if it's too hot and humid, it may be a good idea to skip the volunteer project that day. In hot climates, try to schedule volunteering in the morning or late afternoon hours to avoid the heat and strong sun. And, of course, make sure the kids drink plenty of water.

Fun Factor. If it isn't an enjoyable experience for the kids, then what's the point? Choose projects that involve the kids in a fun way, but also teach and inspire them. Be sure to engage with them afterward and ask what they thought, and if they would be willing to do it again.

Some good resources for finding outdoor volunteering opportunities for kids include:

- Contact your city's sustainability or environmental director.
- Search for environmental organizations in your area.
- Find beach cleanups here: [Ocean Conservancy](#), [Surfrider Foundation](#), [volunteercleanup.org](#).
- Check websites like [Corporation for National and Community Service](#), [Volunteer Match](#), [Create The Good](#), [Just Serve](#).