

A GUIDE FOR TEENS

Planning Your Own Green Service-Learning Project



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How To Get Started

What to Expect? Starting Your Green Service-Learning Project

Service-learning projects and initiatives can be daunting for sure. That's why we put together this guide to help. Below you'll learn the definition of service learning, discover a way to determine your unique service-learning personality, and find methods for project planning and hours-tracking. Once the project is over, there will be time for reflection (which makes a great segue to college applications!). Your life is busy enough. Finding the right project and making it a success can be difficult, but here are the steps you'll follow:



What Is Service Learning?

Service learning is a methodology in which students develop and/or assist in service projects to help local agencies affect positive change in the community. The project is a learning experience that helps you develop personal and educational skills along the way. In this case, we are going to focus on green or environmental sustainability projects. There are a variety of environmental sustainability efforts you can pursue. For example, you could grow a school garden or beautify your school grounds, monitor water quality, start a school-wide recycling initiative, investigate and help promote awareness of local environmental issues, or even organize a park cleanup! The possibilities are endless.

Determine the Type of Project

It can be difficult to determine what kind of green service-learning project is right for you. Luckily, we have a quiz for that! By answering some questions about real-life situations, you'll learn if you should do a DIRECT SERVICE, INDIRECT SERVICE, ADVOCACY, or RESEARCH project!



How To Get Started and What To Expect

Narrow Down the Scope

This brainstorm sheet isn't something you'll necessarily complete in a day. It takes time to find an organization to support or an environmental project that you want to engage in. You may even want to interview fellow students and the larger community. The more people who get on board and rally behind the cause, the more success you'll have!

Document All the Details

Once your group has chosen a project, it's time to list out the specifics. How much time do you have? Who exactly is participating? What do you need to achieve to know this project is a success, and how will success be measured? These elements help to further define and develop your project.

Track Your Hours

Included in the guide is a sheet to track your hours. Fill it out or use it as a template to create something online. Start tracking your time immediately, even as you start brainstorming concepts.

Reflect on the Experience

At the midway point, and after you complete your project, there is a self-reflection form to fill out. This form really allows you to take a step back and evaluate your contribution and the success of the project.

You may not realize it, but we promise you'll learn valuable skills that will help you far beyond your volunteer efforts. Job skills, college essay topics, and being a good citizen are just the beginning!

Best of luck in moving forward with your environmental sustainability project!



What Kind of Project Should You Take On?

Answer the following questions. At the end, tally up your answers to see what type of project would be best for you to participate in.



Quiz

1. School club sign-ups are happening. You sign up for:

- (A) Peer tutoring. You like working one-on-one.
- (B) Community outreach. You like helping the community at large.
- (C) Debate club. You like presenting and being an advocate for one side.
- (D) Travel club. You get to research remote locations and discuss other cultures.

2. Your World History teacher tasks your small group with a presentation. You:

- (A) Start researching facts for the topic. You're ready to build out your slides.
- (B) Start practicing the presentation. You can't wait to get in front of the class.
- (C) Look at the bigger picture. How can this really help the world?
- (D) Sit down with each of your peers and discuss their thoughts on the topic and how they want to help.

3. You are on the yearbook committee and your favorite job would be:

- (A) Working on the sports and club pages that showcase groups.
- (B) Putting together pages about the state of the nation and ways to help.
- (C) Interviewing students one-on-one to create an aspirations page spread.
- (D) Conducting a survey that allows students to vote on topics and creating a layout of the results.

4. You're tasked with babysitting your younger cousin. You:

- (A) Spend an hour catching up. What book did he read last? What are his favorite games? What about his friends?
- (B) Set up a tea party and pretend-play one-on-one!
- (C) Take him to visit the retirement home where you volunteer each week.
- (D) Teach her all about recycling and sort through the trash together.

SCORING:

- 1. A = D, B = I, C = A, D = R
- 2. A = R, B = A, C = I, D = D
- 3. A = I, B = A, C = D, D = R
- 4. A = R, B = D, C = I, D = A

If you got mostly D's—your project type is DIRECT SERVICE

These projects allow you to work directly with individuals one-on-one. You'll get a lot of interaction with people and see your results firsthand. Examples include:

- Reduce school cafeteria waste. Work with other students and determine how much food is being discarded along with ways to stop the waste.
- Teach students and faculty about the importance of recycling and initiate a Recycle Rally program.
- Grow a school garden makerspace and work with students to create recipes and cook them.

If you got mostly A's—your project type is ADVOCACY

These projects will have you educating others on a topic of interest. Your goal is to raise awareness and inspire action on a school or community issue. Examples include:

- Plan and conduct a seminar to inform neighbors about the importance of composting.
- Organize a letter-writing initiative to write to or email your community leaders about environmental concerns.
- Create a campaign to educate community members to use reusable grocery bags as they shop.

If you got mostly I's—your project type is INDIRECT SERVICE

These projects involve working on issues with a broader impact. They are typically more community-driven over individual. Examples include:

- Do a beach, riverfront, or highway cleanup!
- Organize a fundraiser for a local environmental non-profit group.
- Adopt a park! Coordinate with local officials to plant and maintain a portion or entire local park.

If you got mostly R's—your project type is RESEARCH

Here you'll conduct research, gather information, and present it to others. Examples include:

- Research the impact of athletic shoes on landfills and present it to the school to encourage donations.
- Research what is recyclable in your community and map your local recycling facilities to create a community recycling manual.
- Do an energy audit! Research the environmental impacts of energy sources and present your findings.

What Can We Do To Make a Difference?

Project-brainstorming questions to help narrow your focus.

You know a little bit more about the type of project, but now it's time to narrow the scope to fit your interest, skills, and what will most impact your school or community.



Individually answer the following questions:

1. **Do you want to work on a project that is specific to your school? The community? Both?** (This helps you start to focus in on a project topic.)

2. **Is there a pressing need at your school or community that can/should be addressed?** (This may be the best place to start!)

3. **What is your geographical area and are there any specific needs?** (For example, beach cleanups.)

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4. How large is your project group? (The size determines how much you can truly accomplish.)

5. Do you need external help? (This can add time to the project scope.)

6. How much time do you have to complete it? (Look at both the length of time for planning and getting others involved, as well as the length of time of the project itself.)

7. What green topics are you most interested in? (You'll be most successful if you are interested in the results.)

8. Brainstorm possible projects. (You can use the internet or any prior knowledge you have about environmental service projects.)

Once you're finished, come together with your group and share your ideas. Collectively choose the project you want to pursue!

Let's Do This!



You've chosen your environmental service project! Now it's time to actually plan out all the details. Fill in the blanks below.

1. Title of Project: (Make it a fun name so everyone wants to contribute!)

2. Who: (Who will you be helping? And who is involved in the project?)

3. Why: (Why are you helping them? This is super important to know to evaluate the success of your project.)

4. What: (What needs are you addressing in your school or community? What do you plan to do during the project? Be specific!)

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Let's Do This!



5. **When:** (Set a time frame for completion. Is it one day or ongoing? When will you start and end the project?)

6. **Where:** (Will this be happening at school? In the community?)

7. **How:** (What will your role be?)

8. **Resources:** (What external help do you need?)

9. **End Result:** (What needs to happen for this project to be a success? How will you measure or quantify your success?)

What Have You Been Doing?

Tracking your hours is super important! It's much more than just a total number. Tracking your hours and noting what the time was spent on helps people understand exactly what the project involved. Planning actually takes way more time than most people realize. After the event, you can post the total volunteer hours to let the community know just how much effort you put in. You may also use these service hours to work toward any community service requirements you need to fill.

NOTE:
Track everything from start to finish! This includes initial planning meetings, any research you do, and the actual project itself.

Use the chart below to track your hours. Note the date, start time, and finish time. Also include a brief description of what you accomplished or what project milestones you reached.

Date	Start Time	End Time	Description

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Let's Think About How You've Changed... and Other Interesting Things

Now's the time to do a self-reflection of the volunteer project, the process, your contribution, and how well it came together.

Student Name: _____

Project Name: _____

Project Description: _____

Student Role: _____

Question Bank: Think through the questions you want to use as a midway and final reflection. Check which boxes you'd like to further evaluate, and then reflect in the space below. We recommend answering as many of these as you can!

Midway Progress Check	Final Reflection
<input type="checkbox"/> Is your goal still relevant or should it be updated?	<input type="checkbox"/> What was the best part about working on this project?
<input type="checkbox"/> What is the biggest obstacle that remains in front of you?	<input type="checkbox"/> What is the biggest obstacle you overcame?
<input type="checkbox"/> What is the scariest part of the project thus far?	<input type="checkbox"/> What was the most fun moment throughout the whole project?
<input type="checkbox"/> Has your behavior changed because of the project?	<input type="checkbox"/> What personal qualities did you develop? In what ways will those qualities help you and others in the future?
<input type="checkbox"/> Are you proud of the project and your role thus far?	<input type="checkbox"/> What did you gain from the experience?
<input type="checkbox"/> Do you have enough team members and support for your project? If not, what role(s) or support is needed to bring the project up to the level you are seeking?	<input type="checkbox"/> Have you influenced other peoples' behavior due to your involvement with this project?
<input type="checkbox"/> Do you enjoy working on this project?	<input type="checkbox"/> Do you wish you would have done something differently?
<input type="checkbox"/> What was the most fun moment thus far?	<input type="checkbox"/> Are you proud of the outcome of this project?

Do You Have What It Takes To Change the World?



An Initiator?

You've got the personality to promote change. You motivate those around you and challenge them to do their best. When it comes to volunteering, you are quick to choose a cause, task teammates with roles, and make sure everyone follows through. You're great at speaking with adults and encouraging them to participate too! You can:

- Be project manager or team leader
- Present your idea to adults and secure buy-in
- Head up a project launch meeting

An Amplifier?

As the social one in the group, you are able to talk about your volunteering efforts to the community at large. You know how to share information in ways that others will respond to, inspiring them to participate too. You're great at discussing the benefits, sharing the results, and promoting change. You can:

- Post on social media to drive interest
- Create posters to display in the community
- Talk to people about why they should help

A Data Lover?

Your science and math classes excite you. You enjoy tracking and analyzing data, crunching numbers, and crafting detailed reports. You can:

- Design a log sheet and track project data
- Make recommendations or suggest improvements to the project through data analysis
- Draft reports about your project's findings

An Organizer?

You've got all the details covered. You know the when, the how, the who, the where, and the what. You are great at coordinating the volunteering efforts, making sure teammates know their roles and that they show up. You're adept at helping them track hours and stay on task to make sure your team's service goals are achieved. You can:

- Take minutes at every meeting
- Keep track of all the sign-up sheets
- Proofread all emails or marketing that is distributed

A Tech Enthusiast?

There's no doubt that you are great with technology. You love using computers and other electronic equipment, and you're the first to volunteer to troubleshoot classroom tech issues. You can:

- Manage AV equipment such as projectors, microphones, cameras, cables, and speakers
- Create online presentations, forms, or signup sheets
- Lead your team in developing a website promoting an event, project, or program

A Problem Solver?

You always have the bigger picture in mind. In fact, you may be the one who suggested the volunteering efforts in the first place! You are trusted by your teammates and help overcome any challenges that arise. You can:

- Research the most needed environmental sustainability projects in your community
- Bring forth new ideas to enhance your project's positive impact
- Develop contingency plans

A Finisher?

When someone needs you to do something, you've got it covered. You're focused, on-time, and on-task. Nobody needs to tell you twice to do anything, and that's a great skill to master! You can:

- Sign up as a committee member
- Assist the leadership
- Drive everyone towards the finish line!

