HOW TO
VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER

[Icons and logos]
OVERVIEW

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, virtualization has become the new way of life for us all. Included in the long list of activities that have had to move online is volunteering. 2020 presented a series of political, social, and economic crises that forced volunteers to approach situations differently. As a student, whether looking to gain career experience, add to your resume, or create an impact, the possibilities are endless. This is especially true, as virtual volunteering can extend as far as a national, or even global position.

PERSONAL INTRO

Personally, I would not have found Oregon Student Voice, or my other position on the other side of the country in Virginia, without my pursuit of virtual volunteering opportunities. While virtual volunteering holds its many possibilities, it can appear overwhelming. Therefore, this guide is here to help you along the way and assist in your journey to student advocacy and leadership.
It is important to begin with something you would find interesting. While some are motivated by counting hours, volunteering should be done out of the pursuit of discovering potential career paths and making a difference. Therefore, **to exercise that level of passion, it is key to specify your searches to your goals and interests.** Start by creating a list of your interests. These can be as simple as your hobbies, such as drawing, to career goals, such as veterinarian. After completion, find commonalities between most of the subjects/activities to form bigger groups. Ideally, try to create two to four big subjects. Next, create a list of your top five or ten physical and personal skills. These can consist of things such as writing emails to being a strong communicator. These two concise lists will guide your search in volunteering to act as a reminder of your purpose and specify your searches.
SEARCHING

While of course there always remains the option to hit the search engine with your skills, interests, followed by “student volunteer,” this can often lead to hours of mindless scrolling. There are three main ways in which you can approach finding virtual volunteering work:

1. PLATFORM
   Online platforms such as VolunteerMatch host many local and national nonprofits and allow you to filter through positions by interest and age to easily find and communicate with coordinators.
   Pros: Filters and easy communication
   Cons: Not designed specifically for students and limited to non-profits.

2. WEBSITE OF ORGANIZATION
   OAdmired cooperation or non-profit website which allows you to browse positions within their specific work.
   Pros: Focused search and less time consuming
   Cons: Not as many options.

3. BLOG ARTICLES
   OBlog articles are a good resource to skim after searching your specific interests followed by “student volunteer.” Click on an article to read short descriptions of select and recommended positions or organizations to choose from.
   Pros: reputable source and select interest focused
   Cons: limited and potentially biased.

TIPS

Make sure to be checking the age requirement of positions constantly. Oftentimes just typing “student” is not enough, as it can pertain to adult college student positions you are ineligible for. In addition, make your search more specific using different position titles such as “student virtual volunteer” “student leadership position,” etc.
STILL NO LUCK?

Find some organizations, companies, non profits, etc. that engage in work you are passionate about and would be able to contribute to. If it is based on a social media account, direct message (DM) them complimenting their work and offering your services. If it is a website, locate the phone number or email address and contact them directly. Note, if it is a large company, I recommend browsing their team tab to find individual member contacts of a recruitment/volunteer coordinator or leader of work you would like to volunteer under. Persistence is key, and do not be afraid to reach out to more than one person. Another resource is your city or state’s government websites. Local governments can often offer student positions.
So, you have found the position you want. Now what? A good way to start is with an email. Key places you can find an email are on the website under the “contact us” tab. If you are still struggling to find a person to contact, find the LinkedIn profile of a staff member or the organization and try to locate contact information from there. If your email is not responded to in a week or so, try locating a phone number or social media account to DM.
Ideally, **do not settle** on the first opportunity you receive information back from. Create a list of a top 3-5 and then reach back out again with follow up questions pertaining to time commitment, skills/experience required, and what your specific work will look like. Evaluate from there on which reply back and what they say. Return to your lists and pick which will best help you reach your future goals and fit your individual skills/interests. Start with only one and schedule a Zoom meeting to gain a better understanding or interview.
If no positions are available or of interest, there is a place for every student with OSV. Membership is open to all middle and high schoolers in Oregon, and we offer volunteer hours. Within the organization, not only are there membership opportunities with training and meetings, but also certain branches that allow for individual work to help you discover your specific interests. Check out our website and Instagram to apply for membership, and if you are already a member, reach out to OSV to find out if there are more ways you can get involved.

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