

Getting started with volunteering

What is volunteering?

Volunteering means giving your time and skills to help others without getting paid.

Volunteering is a great way for you to:

- Explore interests and try new activities
- Meet new people
- Get comfortable in new places and to new schedules
- Establish routines
- Practice following directions and work expectations
- Learn what you're good at and what needs more practice
- Give back to your community
- Build skills, responsibilities, networks and experiences

Types of volunteering

Informal volunteering

Informal volunteering refers to helping others without being part of a formal organization, like offering your time and skills to friends, family, teachers, or neighbours.

Task at home & chores

Research shows that doing chores and helping family members with tasks at home helps develop responsibility and independence. Start exploring your interests right at home with household chores and tasks. Examples:

- Making lunch
- Cleaning your bedroom
- Setting the table
- Loading/unloading the dishwasher
- Taking out the garbage
- Waking up to an alarm
- Updating the family calendar and chore schedule
- Making a grocery list / put grocery items into cart in an App

You can click [here](#) to find helpful tips on how to teach and select chores. Need more examples of chores? Click [here](#) for articles on different types of chores.

Community & neighbourhood

Community volunteering involves helping others in your local neighbourhood and school.

Examples:

- Shovelling snow or raking leaves for your neighbours
- Walking dogs from your neighbourhood
- Helping your neighbour order groceries online
- Organizing family computer files, photo albums and paperwork
- Picking up litter in your neighbourhood or schoolyard
- Making weekly phone calls to talk to familiar seniors

Formal volunteering

Formal volunteering refers to helping others within a formal organization and program, such as charities, non-profit organizations, libraries, and hospitals.

Here's a list of resources to help you find formal volunteer opportunities near you:

- [Volunteer Toronto](#)
 - For regions outside of Etobicoke, Toronto, North York, and Scarborough, try searching on the internet. A search for "volunteer + your city" often gets you a list
- [Charity Village](#)
- [City of Toronto](#)
- [VolunteerMatch](#)
- Advisory Councils such as:
 - [Holland Bloorview - Youth Advisory Council](#)
 - [TTC Advisory Committee for Accessible Transit](#)
 - [Toronto Public Library Teen Councils](#)
 - [Sick Kids Patient Advisory Council](#)
 - Or search what's in your community!

High school & post-secondary

Ask a teacher or guidance counsellor for any volunteer opportunities, join a school club, or check out your post-secondary school website.

Examples of high school and post-secondary volunteering:

- Become a peer mentor
- Help support school fundraising, orientation days or other events

Matching your skills and interests to volunteer roles

Reflecting on your strengths, interests, likes/dislikes is an important part of finding a volunteer role that is a good fit for you.

Step 1: Use the **About ME** Handout (see page 4 of this resource) to reflect on your chores, responsibilities at home and school, and any volunteer, co-op and/or work experiences. Examples of questions you can reflect on with your family include:

- What chores or responsibilities do I enjoy and don't enjoy? Why?
- What type of role or environment do I want (e.g., social, quiet, moving around or sitting)
- What am I good at?
- Where can I use my strengths to make a difference and help?
- What do I need more practice with?
- Why do I want to volunteer (e.g. experience, build skills, meet new people)?

Step 2: Brainstorm & explore potential volunteering options

- Where do I already go in my community? Is this somewhere I can ask about volunteering?
- What activities/tasks can I do to help my parents, neighbours or teachers? (example: raking your neighbours' leaves)
- Can I volunteer with a club at school?
- Are there any nearby organizations near my home that may have volunteer opportunities?

Example: Local food banks or community centres

Share your About Me with important people in your life to get more ideas.

Step 3: Pick a volunteer role that matches your reflections (i.e.: strengths, likes/dislikes, goals).

Step 4: Act

- Apply to a volunteer role and reach out to contacts
- Fill out any required paperwork and complete volunteer requirements (e.g. training, immunizations, vulnerable sector screening)
- Confirm other details (e.g., transportation, attendant care, schedule)
- Start volunteering

Step 5: Reflect and check in with yourself

- Is this role the right fit or do I need to think about a different role?
- What skills am I using and building?
- What are my next steps in the role (e.g. more or new responsibilities)?
- What supports or accommodations do I need to be able to continue volunteering?

Questions? Email us: employmentpathways@hollandbloorview.ca

Want to read other handouts? Check out all the Employment Pathway's current Tip Sheets under the Holland Bloorview resources for youth & families tab [HERE](#)

About ME

Strengths	Interests
Places I go in my community	Experiences I have really enjoyed
Things to keep in mind	