

VolunTEEN FAQ

Wanna volunteer but don't know what to do? Not too sure you want to volunteer at the library? Read this first.

Can anyone be a VolunTEEN?

Not just anyone. If you'll turn 12 by May 31, you can volunteer, and the maximum age is 18. High school graduates are ineligible.

What is a patron?

A patron is a library customer.

I need service hours for school, does volunteering for you count?

Yes, indeed. However, you are responsible for your service hours.

I got in trouble and now I have court-ordered community service. Can I volunteer for you?

Sorry, no. We do not accept court-ordered community service volunteers.

Do you take everyone who applies?

No. We have rules and sometimes a waiting list. Applying does not guarantee a position as a VolunTEEN.

How do I apply to become a VolunTEEN?

1. Fill out the VolunTEEN application
2. Have your parent or guardian sign your VolunTEEN Application Form.
3. Bring the form back to the library, and the teen assistant will contact you.

Once I turn in my application, when can I actually start volunteering?

First you have to be accepted. Once you are, you must attend an orientation session with your parent. During the orientation you will be able to choose an available shift, and then you can start volunteering.

How long is the orientation?

Usually about one hour, depending upon how many teens we have.

What do we do at orientation?

We cover the rules, how to do some basic things, and you get a tour. Then you get to learn the computer software for the Summer Library Club. Afterwards you and the other teens throw down for available shifts.

If I was a VolunTEEN last year do I need to attend orientation again?

No. Returning VolunTEEN's from the previous year do not need to attend the VolunTEEN training session. Any minor changes in the program will be addressed as needed by the teen assistant during your first shift worked. Although you still need to fill out an application form and turn it in to your local library.

Will I get paid?

No. Volunteers don't get paid. If you are getting service hours for school or a club, though, you do sort of get paid in time.

How many hours a week will I volunteer?

Most teens work a two-hour shift, one or two days a week, depending upon our needs.

Do I get hours for the orientation?

Yes.

May I volunteer whenever I want to volunteer?

Not really, no. Some people luck out and get the shift they really want, but most VolunTEENs have to accommodate our schedule. Remember, you are helping us, so part of helping us is volunteering when we need you most. You aren't allowed to just show up out of the blue and volunteer, either. Stick with the shift with which you've been assigned.

May I volunteer on Saturday?

It depends upon our needs.

How will you communicate with me?

Either by e-mail or phone.

Do you keep track of my hours?

You need to keep track on your VolunTEEN hour's log. Please round your time to the nearest quarter hour. The teen assistant will give you a certificate with your total hours at the end of the summer. If you need your hours for school, it is your responsibility to turn your hours in to your school.

Is there any way you can just tell the school I've worked enough hours, even though I haven't?

No. We can only tell the school the truth. Your hours are your responsibility.

What will I be doing?

Basically, you will shelve. A lot. Shelving things, that is. Putting stuff in the right place so other people can find it later is one of the most important jobs in the library.

How do you shelve?

You will be trained at orientation, so don't worry. You will be stooping, bending, lifting, pushing and reading. A lot.

What else will I do?

Pick up the room. Help librarians prepare for programs. Assist with the Summer Library Club. Be prepared for anything, even being a magician's assistant or performing a puppet show.

Do volunteers get fired?

We may ask you to stop volunteering for at least one semester to one year if you break the rules enough. There are some instances where we may ask you not to come back, but they are pretty serious offenses. Follow the rules, use common sense, and you should be fine.

My mom wants me to watch my sister while I volunteer. Is that cool?

No. You are too busy working for us to babysit at the same time. If family responsibilities interfere with the shift you have, you might need to change your shift. Family comes first.

Can I bring my best friend to help me out?

No. But you can ask your friend to become a volunteer. If you are working an event for teens or all ages, ask your friend to attend.

What if I am shelving but I forgot where they go?

Ask the staff person at the desk how to shelve it. You can also ask another volunteer or a staff person who is shelving. Don't put it just anywhere, please. We'd much rather help you find the right place to shelve it than lose it due to misfiling.

I'm out of stuff to do. What now?

Ok, so you've shelved everything there is to shelve, right? You looked in the black book on the teen table and nothing was there. In that case, you can:

1. Walk around the floor picking up books that are lying around and take them to the circulation desk.
2. Tidy the library, throw away garbage. Straighten the kiddie tables and chairs.
3. Straighten the magazines. Make sure the most recent edition is the one the public sees first. Don't forget the teen and kiddie magazines.
4. EDGE, when you have nothing else to do. Straighten and edge. Got five minutes left? Edge those shelves!

What do I do if I can't make it for my shift?

Call the teen assistant and let him or her know. If you let us know in advance, it will be an excused absence. If you wait until after the shift, it will be unexcused.

What if I'm going to be late?

Call the library and let the staff person who answers the phone know you are running late, and give the time you think you will get to the library.

I can't volunteer on Fridays anymore. Can I switch it to Saturday?

You can change your schedule by talking to your teen assistant. However, you may not get your first choice.

What happens if I just stop showing up?

We will drop you from the VolunTEEN program. If you know you will be out of town let the teen assistant know ahead of time.

Well, can I appeal if you drop me from the program?

No. There is no appeals process. If we drop you, it will be for a good reason, and we will inform you as to why.

Can I go on probation and prove myself?

No. We do not have a probationary process either. Your job as a VolunTEEN is to help us. A probationary period would create work for us, not help us. Remember, you are responsible for your VolunTEEN hours. It is not the library's responsibility to ensure that you meet your requirement.

But I didn't know that rule. Why am I being held responsible for a rule I didn't know?

Ignorance of the law is no excuse. In other words, you are held responsible for the contents of this FAQ, the information given to you at orientation, and the patron code of conduct. All of these are available to you when you become a VolunTEEN. It may seem unfair, but this is part of the job skills that you are learning as a VolunTEEN.

This lady asked me to watch her little kid while she goes to the bathroom. What should I do?

Politely say, "No, ma'am. I'm sorry but I'm not allowed to do that. Please ask someone at the desk for help." It is against library policy for the lady to leave her child, so the desk attendant will confirm that we cannot watch her child.

May I use my phone or other communication device?

No. No texting, no phone calls, etc. while you are working. It's just rude. Besides, texting and shelving at the same time can only lead to mistakes.

May I sit behind the desk?

No. Not under any circumstances.

Am I allowed to use the laminator?

No. Not under any circumstances.

Am I allowed to use the paper cutter?

No. Even if a staff worker asks you to, politely refuse, citing this FAQ.

OK. So what is the best way for me to keep track of my hours?

Since your hours are really and truly your responsibility, the best way is for you to keep

track of them yourself. We keep track anyway, but we should be your back-up, not your everything. Get whatever forms your school or group requires and bring it with you every single time you volunteer. Fill it out and get it signed as you complete your hours.