Volunteering for kids

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Volunteering for kids is helping out for free: at home, at school, in the neighborhood, with animals and for the planet. Here are 60 ideas sorted by age and place, each one free, with a grown-up along for anything away from home or school. Print the helper card below and tick off one kind thing a day.

Ideas by age

- Age: Ages 3 to 5 · Ideas: Set the table without being asked, Sort the toys you have outgrown, Leave a thank-you note on someone's pillow · Count: 34
- Age: Ages 6 to 8 · Ideas: Set the table without being asked, Sort the toys you have outgrown, Fill a box with books you have finished · Count: 56
- Age: Ages 9 to 12 · Ideas: Set the table without being asked, Sort the toys you have outgrown, Fill a box with books you have finished · Count: 58
- Age: 13 and up · Ideas: Sort the toys you have outgrown, Fill a box with books you have finished, Help make dinner · Count: 40

Ideas by place

"Grown-up? Yes" means a grown-up comes along or does part of it. Every idea away from home or school has one, and none of them needs anything bought.

At home

- Idea: Set the table without being asked · How: Put out plates, forks and cups for everyone before dinner. Ask a grown-up which plates to use. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
- Idea: Sort the toys you have outgrown · How: Put toys you don't play with any more in a box. A grown-up can find a family or a group that would like them. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
- Idea: Fill a box with books you have finished · How: Pick books that are too young for you now and stack them in a box. A grown-up finds a school, a library or a family that wants them. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
- Idea: Leave a thank-you note on someone's pillow · How: Draw or write a thank-you for someone in your home. Leave it on their pillow as a surprise. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
- Idea: Help make dinner · How: Wash the vegetables, stir the pot or set out the bowls. A grown-up does the knife and the stove. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes

• Idea: Fold the laundry · How: Match the socks and fold the towels. Start with one small basket. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Water the plants · How: Give each plant a little water when its soil feels dry. Ask a grown-up how much each one needs. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8 · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Read a story to someone younger · How: Pick a picture book and read it out loud to a younger child in your family, or to a stuffed animal. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Make a kind words jar · How: Write kind things about the people you live with on slips of paper and put them in a jar. Anyone can pull one out on a hard day. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Do a chore as a surprise · How: Sweep the floor, line up the shoes or empty a bin without being asked. Don't tell anyone, and see who notices. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Call a relative who lives far away · How: Ask a grown-up to help you call someone in your family. Tell them one good thing from your week. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Teach someone at home something you know · How: Show a brother, a sister or a grown-up how to do a trick, a game or a drawing. Be patient when they get it wrong. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No

At school

• Idea: Help a new kid find their way · How: Show a new classmate where the lunch room and the bathroom are. Sit with them at lunch on their first day. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Help tidy the classroom · How: Ask your teacher if you can wipe the tables, stack the chairs or sort the crayons at the end of the day. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Make a thank-you card for a teacher · How: Fold a sheet of paper and draw something you learned this year on the front. Inside, say what you liked. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Thank the people who keep school running · How: Draw a card for the lunch staff, the bus driver or the cleaner. Give it to them with your teacher. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Ask someone to play at recess · How: If you see a kid playing alone at recess, ask them to join your game. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Be a reading buddy for a younger class · How: Ask your teacher if your class can read with a younger class. Take turns reading the pages. · Ages: 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Help in the school library · How: Ask the librarian if you can put books back on the

shelves or tidy the reading corner. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Look after a class plant or garden · How: Water the class plant, pull weeds in the school garden, or check the seeds each morning. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Share your supplies · How: Lend a pencil or a crayon to someone who forgot theirs, and don't make a fuss about it. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Write one nice thing about each classmate · How: With your teacher's OK, write one kind thing about each person in your class on a slip of paper. Hand them out together. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Help a classmate with something you're good at · How: If a friend is stuck on a math problem or a hard word, show them how you do it. Let them try the next one. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Sort the lost and found · How: Ask a teacher if your class can fold and sort the lost and found, so people can find their things. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No

In the neighborhood

• Idea: Rake leaves for an older neighbor · How: With a grown-up, rake leaves or sweep the path for an older neighbor your family knows. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Clear snow from a neighbor's steps · How: With a grown-up beside you, sweep or shovel the snow from the steps of a neighbor your family knows. · Ages: 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Draw kind chalk pictures on your sidewalk · How: Draw hearts, suns and happy words on your own sidewalk or driveway for people walking by. Don't sign it. A grown-up stays close. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Put a happy picture in your window · How: Draw a rainbow or a happy picture, and don't sign it. A grown-up helps you tape it in a front window for people walking past. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Leave a thank-you for the mail carrier · How: Draw a thank-you picture for the mail carrier or the delivery driver. Sign it "From a friend". A grown-up helps you tape it to the mailbox or the door. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Leave a book in a book-sharing box · How: If there is a book-sharing box near you, go with a grown-up and leave a book you have finished. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Water a neighbor's garden while they're away · How: If a neighbor your family knows goes away, help a grown-up water their plants each day. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Say good morning on a walk · How: On a walk with your grown-up, smile and say good morning to the neighbors you know. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: Yes

• Idea: Go to a clean-up day with your family · How: Many towns have a day to clean a park or a street. Go with a grown-up, wear gloves, and leave anything sharp for the grown-up. A grown-up does any signing up. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Sort cans at a food bank with a parent · How: Some food banks let children sort cans next to a parent. A grown-up calls first to ask what age they take, and comes too. A grown-up does any signing up. · Ages: 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Make pictures for a care home · How: Draw cheerful pictures and sign them "From a friend". A grown-up asks the care home first and drops them off. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Bring a snack you made to a neighbor · How: Make a snack with a grown-up and bring it together to a neighbor your family knows who is sick or has a new baby. Ask first what they can eat. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes

With animals

• Idea: Make a bird feeder from a pine cone · How: Spread a pine cone with a little seed butter from the kitchen and roll it in oats. A grown-up helps you hang it from a branch. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Put out water for birds · How: Fill a shallow dish with fresh water and set it outside. Change the water every day. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Help feed and care for a pet at home · How: Fill the water bowl, give the food a grown-up measures out, and brush your pet gently. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Read to cats and dogs at an animal shelter · How: Some shelters let children read out loud to shy cats and dogs, next to a parent. A grown-up calls first, does any signing up and comes too. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Give old towels to an animal shelter · How: Ask a grown-up which old towels and blankets you can give. Shelters use them for beds, and a grown-up drops them off. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Build a bug hotel · How: Stack sticks, pine cones and dry leaves in a corner of your yard or on a balcony, so bugs have a safe place to stay. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Make a pet toy from an old sock · How: Tie knots in an old sock to make a tug toy for a dog, or roll scrap paper into a ball for a cat. A grown-up watches while the pet plays. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Learn how to be gentle with animals · How: Ask a grown-up to show you how a pet likes to be touched. Move slowly and let the animal come to you. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8 · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Leave wild animals where you find them · How: If you find a baby bird or a frog, look but don't touch. Tell a grown-up if it looks hurt. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 ·

Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Help clean a pet's cage or bed · How: Help a grown-up clean a cage, a tank or a pet bed, then put in fresh water. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Help look after a pet for a family you know · How: When a family you know goes away, help a grown-up feed and walk their pet. · Ages: 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Leave some flowers for the bees · How: Ask a grown-up to leave a patch of clover or dandelions in the grass. Bees need the flowers. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes

For the planet

• Idea: Turn off the lights when you leave a room · How: Check each room as you leave it. If nobody is there, switch the light off. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Pick up litter with a grown-up · How: Wear gloves and carry a bag. Leave anything sharp or broken for the grown-up. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Sort the recycling at home · How: Rinse the cans and bottles, and put paper, plastic and metal in the right bins. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Give jars and boxes a second life · How: Wash an old jar to hold crayons, or turn a box into a toy garage, before it goes in the bin. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Turn off the tap while you brush · How: Wet your brush, then turn the water off until it is time to rinse. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12 · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Grow a plant from a seed you saved · How: Save a seed from an apple or a pepper, push it into a pot of soil, and water it. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Start a compost pile with a grown-up · How: Put fruit peels, eggshells and dry leaves in a pile or an old bin outside. Turn it with a grown-up every week. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Walk for short trips · How: When a place is close, ask your grown-up if you can walk there together instead of driving. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Use both sides of the paper · How: Draw on the back of old sheets before they go in the recycling. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No
• Idea: Fix a broken toy instead of throwing it away · How: With a grown-up, glue, tape or sew a broken toy or book so it works again. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Pass on clothes you have outgrown · How: Fold clothes that are too small. A grown-up finds someone who can wear them, like a younger cousin or a clothes bank. · Ages: 3 to 5, 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: Yes
• Idea: Make a planet plan with your family · How: Pick one thing your family will do this week, like shorter showers, and draw a chart to tick off each day. · Ages: 6 to 8, 9 to 12, 13+ · Grown-up?: No

How to find a real volunteer spot near you

Many places welcome children with a parent: food banks for sorting, animal shelters for reading to cats, park clean-up days, and libraries. A grown-up calls the place or checks its own website, asks what age they take, and goes with you. Peabody doesn't list or link to places, because the right one is near you.

A helper card to print

Print this page, or copy the list onto a sheet of paper and stick it on the fridge. Tick a box for each kind thing, and when all ten are ticked, pick ten more from the ideas above.

- ? I said thank you to someone who helps me.
- ? I did a chore without being asked.
- ? I asked a kid at school to play.
- ? I made a card or a picture for someone.
- ? I shared something of mine.
- ? I helped look after an animal or a plant.
- ? I picked up litter with a grown-up.
- ? I turned off a light or a tap.
- ? I read to someone younger.
- ? I gave away a toy, a book or clothes I have outgrown.

Questions parents ask

What age can kids start volunteering?

A child can help at home from about age 3, setting the table or watering plants. Places that take volunteers each set their own age, often 8, 12 or older, and most want a parent with a younger child. Ask each place what age they take before you go.

Can kids volunteer without a parent?

Not for the ideas here that leave home or school: a grown-up comes along for every one of those, and at school the teacher is the grown-up. Some places let older teens help on their own, but the place decides, and a parent signs them up.

How do I teach my child kindness?

Do kind things where your child can see, and say why out loud. Notice when they are kind and say what they did. Pick one idea a day from this page together, and talk about how the other person might have felt.

Is this free?

Yes. Every idea here uses things you already have at home, and nothing needs to be bought. Peabody is free through the end of 2027, with no ads and no sign-up, and this page keeps nothing about who reads it.

More ways to help and play

- Kindness activities for kids
- Cook something to share in the kitchen
- Bored? Free things to do

Free at peabody.kids/volunteering-for-kids