

Want to volunteer but don't know where to begin? The following tips should help you get started!

1. Contact the community partner. You are **strongly encouraged** to call them on the phone to speak with someone about their volunteer opportunities. Many community partners will have email addresses, but telephone remains the best way to contact a non-profit organization.
2. Don't get discouraged if it takes some back and forth to connect with the community partner. They are often understaffed-- that is why they need volunteer assistance!
3. Ask about any necessary training or background checks. Ask about costs, if any, associated with those.
4. Ask about schedule, volunteer duties, office atmosphere, appropriate attire, parking, safety, and level of commitment expected of volunteers.
5. Be sure to describe your interests, talents, and needs to the community partner representative.
6. If **transportation** is a concern, check to see if they are on the CAT bus route, or if they know of other Clemson student volunteers who may be available for carpool.
7. Turn in your service hours! Let us know about your service experience by using the forms found on the Civic Engagement website in the Log Your Hours section. We can use this information to brag on all of the great things Clemson students are doing to help the community.

Keep the following in mind to help make the most of your community service experience:

1. Clarify Expectations- Be honest with yourself and those you volunteer with about what you can accomplish and what you hope to gain.
2. Be Responsible - Know that someone is counting on you and be on time and consistent. If you know you will be late or absent, call in advance. If you decide you need to quit the volunteer experience, always discuss this with the community partner contact ahead of time.
3. Be Flexible- Things will not always go as planned. Be prepared for these bumps in the road and try to go with the flow.
4. Be Sensitive- You may find yourself working with people who are very different from you. This is a great chance to learn about different backgrounds, cultures or personality traits. Be sure to treat people with respect and dignity.
5. Be Safe- If you ever feel you are in a situation that is unsafe for any reason, do not hesitate to change the situation or stop what you are doing. Don't take unnecessary chances. Protect yourself and the people you work with.
6. Deal with Difficulties- If you experience problems, bring them up with someone at the site or at the Civic Engagement office. Things rarely get better on their own.