

Summertime, and the Livin' is ... Work

By Amy Lindgren

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Hey kids, are you ready? Because summer is just around the corner. Remember when that used to signal long, lazy days outside and warm, dusky evenings playing cards on the porch? No, neither do I.

A lot of my memories include fruitless hours looking for someone to hang out with who wasn't visiting distant relatives. Things got a little better — and a little worse, frankly — when I started picking up jobs over the summer. At least then I got paid for being bored.

Yikes — attitude problem! What my summers lacked most of all was a plan. We just weren't good organizers in my house. In the hopes that you can learn from my mistakes, I'm giving you four ideas for a more productive and interesting summer, even when money is tight.

1. Work. Of course, this is the Big Idea for every teenager. Get a summer job someplace cool, hang out with friends and earn the big bucks. That's a good goal and it just might work. You know all the steps already, but here's the refresher:

- Make a resume that shows your skills, as well as volunteer or paid work you've done.
- Bring your resume to places you'd like to work; dress neatly and be ready to fill out applications.
- Try an online job search if you must, but remember that the direct approach is faster.
- Tell everyone that you're looking for work

Remember: If you really want a job, don't limit yourself to just a few places, or to only the cool places. The ickier the job is, the • less competition you'll have.

2. Volunteer. Yup, teenagers today know all about volunteering. They've been pressed into community service since they were tots, whether they wanted to be or not. I'm not criticizing the program ... just wondering: If someone makes you do it, are you volunteering? In any case, anyone who's a teenager now is old enough to give their time and gifts freely. The big question is how? Where? A few ideas to consider:

- Think local. Who do you know on your block who needs help? Hint: Think about families with young kids, with parents serving in the military or with only elderly people in the house. You may not like cleaning the garage or doing laundry at home, but it's actually kind of fun to do it somewhere else.
- Think small business. Your family probably knows someone who runs a one- or two-person business. Can they use some help even one day a week? Depending on

the business, and your skills, you might work on a Web site, research their competitors, answer phones, clean the warehouse or run errands.

For this to work, you need to really contribute and not expect to be entertained. On the other hand, you'd be surprised how a little volunteering this year can turn into an actual job next year, when the business owner has had time to plan for your salary.

- Think hotline. Almost every community has some sort of hotline or database to help you find volunteer jobs that fit your interests and skills.

3. Organize. Not every summer activity has to be work-based. Think of something you like doing and find ways to organize activities around that. Suppose you enjoy biking. What if you chose a different trail to ride every Friday and spent the rest of the week getting trail maps, enlisting other people to ride along and persuading a parent to haul the bikes for you?

Add some maintenance workshops at the local bike shop and a couple of overnight rides and you could have a lot of fun without much expense.

4. Learn. You knew this was coming, didn't you? Summer school, the get-ahead or catch-up session for the super-ambitious or the sorta slow. Well, sure, those profiles might fit you and if they do, that's probably reason enough to take classes over the summer. But what about just learning something that interests you?

Maybe you'd like to take apart engines or learn to use PhotoShop or cook Thai food. Think of things you'd like to learn, then think about who would be able to teach you. Check the listings for community education and online classes too, as they can be a good value.

Whatever you end up doing this summer, take a minute to write it down when September rolls around. Although it's probably not the goal, the fact is that some of the things you do will look good on a resume later and may help you explain your skills to an employer. Bonus! Have a good summer, in any case.

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