

What is Community Service?

When someone performs an action which benefits his or her community, it is known as community service. Some people associate community service with punishment, since it is often offered to small-time offenders as an alternative to fines or jail time. However, community service can also be altruistic, and it is a vital part of many small communities. Getting involved in your community makes it healthier and livelier, and numerous organizations around the world support community service activities.

Things which could be considered community service include tutoring children, building homes in low income areas with [Habitat for Humanity](#), assisting the elderly, socializing animals at animal shelters, being a museum docent, performing habitat restoration, contributing to the operations of volunteer fire departments and emergency services, or helping with civic beautification. In all cases, community service work is performed by volunteers who are not paid for their time. In some instances, the work would not be accomplished without the work of such volunteers, and many small organizations rely on people with community spirit to survive.

For people who are given community service as a punishment or sentence, it can be an opportunity to atone for a crime. Others engage in community service out of a spirit of [altruism](#), or a desire to connect with their communities by helping out. For people who are new to a community, community service can be a great way to learn more about the place in which they live and the people they live with. Community service may also be required for things like high school graduation or membership in an organization, in which case the school or organization often helps to organize community service opportunities.

For people who are not affiliated with an organization, finding community service opportunities is easy. In many cases, an organization which needs the assistance of volunteers has a [volunteer coordinator](#). Contact the organization you are interested in to ask about volunteers, or check bulletin boards around town for organized community service activities. You may find anything from a group of birdwatchers performing habitat restoration in a local [wetlands](#) to an association of businesses sponsoring graffiti cleanup.

Many people engage in community service because they believe that it carries rewards beyond the obvious and tangible. Clearly, engaging in things like environmental restoration and civic beautification will make your life enjoyable by making the world around you more pleasant. But community service can also help to ensure that important services like meals for the elderly and volunteer fire departments continue to run. It also helps to build a rich and supportive community of people who know each other and lend each other a hand when it is needed.