

VOLUNTEER VIRTUALLY- a few ideas!

Sometimes the ideal way to distract yourself from your own struggles during this pandemic is to find a selfless pursuit. As Gandhi once said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Of course, this coronavirus pandemic, insidious and suffocating as it has been, greatly limits the ways in which you can engage in charitable endeavors. Given the challenging realities of social distancing and various degrees of quarantine, the best way to feel useful and make a contribution to your local (or global) community is to volunteer online. What follows are four ways you can be of service from the safety of your own home.

1) Provide Virtual COVID-19 Assistance

While frontline healthcare workers bravely staff hospitals and nursing homes and essential workers take on daily risks to keep our grocery stores and delivery services running, there are also behind-the-scenes ways to make a contribution.

Something as simple as becoming a [Digital Advocate for the Red Cross](#) can allow teens to make an impact on the crisis.

This can involve actions like simply sharing Red Cross content across social media platforms or organizing an online fundraiser. [Points of Light](#) is a group that engages 5 million

volunteers per year across 37 countries. They can connect you to a host of pandemic-oriented causes including email marketing for COVID-19 charities, writing letters to healthcare workers, or facilitating food drives for needy families in your area. If you are over the age of 18, you may also be interested in becoming a [Crisis Counselor](#) who can gain the training necessary to help support those going through a variety of life challenges, including those related directly or indirectly to the coronavirus.

2) Tutor Students Online

Low-income and minority students have incurred great educational losses during the pandemic, as technological barriers and under-resourced urban schools have only increased an already tragic achievement gap. [Teensgive.org](#) allows individuals in 9th-12th grade a bevy of opportunities to tutor peers online. The application process has a fast turnaround time, and you can be helping a child in need within a week of submission. [Schoolonwheels.org](#) allows students aged 16-18 to provide tutoring services to peers through virtual means. Those aged 12-15 can also volunteer, but must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. [Learntobe.org](#) is another option for connecting tutors and in-need students on a virtual platform.

3) Become a Translator

If you happen to be bilingual, there are plenty of ways you can contribute to a great cause right from your laptop. The [United Nations Volunteers](#) organization lists many opportunities for those proficient in two or more languages to make an impact. For example, UN-Habitat needs volunteers to help translate a National Housing Project for Cabo Verde from Portuguese to English. UNICEF presently needs 5 COVID-19-related documents translated from English to French. The UN also needs Chinese reports on pandemic volunteer efforts translated into English. You could also consider joining the army of [TED Talk translators](#) who work on subtitling these inspirational videos so that they can be enjoyed by audiences around the globe. A number of fantastic opportunities can also be accessed through [Translators Without Borders](#).

4) Archive Historical Documents

Fans of history may be interested in becoming [citizen archivists](#) for a non-profit organization such as the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Would you enjoy transcribing

speeches made by Franklin Roosevelt, case histories made by the Tennessee Valley Authority during the Great Depression, or cataloguing Purple Hearts awarded between 1942-1963? All of these tasks are awaiting the help of virtual volunteers right now. The Smithsonian also engages [citizen scholars](#) in tasks such as transcribing diaries of prominent Americans or joining the Wikipedia Volunteer Program's efforts to strengthen the website's offerings on Smithsonian-relevant content.

Final Thoughts

For all Americans, including teenagers, the coronavirus has taken a toll on our collective mental health. Becoming a virtual volunteer may not be the exact summer 2021 that you were dreaming about, but it will almost certainly help return some sense of agency and purpose amidst this backdrop of uncertainty and tragedy. All we can encourage our teens to do right now is to follow the words of Teddy Roosevelt to "Do the best you can, with what you have, where you are." Online volunteer work may prove to be exactly that.