



# The Good Guide to Volunteering

South Africa has a rich heritage of volunteerism and service to communities. Millions of South Africans serve as volunteers – from caring for ill neighbours to church work or coaching the local soccer team. These are the unsung heroes of our communities, working for little reward to build a better country.

These are our top tips for being a great volunteer and a truly great South African:

## 1. Be mindful of need

It's great that you want to volunteer but remember that volunteering, while it can be hugely fulfilling, is not about you. It is about helping the cause to serve their beneficiaries better. Be mindful of what the cause actually needs and don't be disappointed if they say: "no, thanks". Some causes can't take on volunteers, others will only consider long-term volunteers. Let them know you want to help and ask them what they need.

## 2. Stick to your commitment

Once you have made a commitment, stick to it. Causes rely on a particular number of volunteers turning up and if they don't, the project often can't go ahead. If you are working with vulnerable children, letting them down can be devastating. If you really can't make it, let them know in good time so they can make other plans.

## 3. Be on time and ready to work

As they say in the movie business, time is money. If you're late, it can set a project back and perhaps even hamper its completion. Remember, staff time and resources are scarce at non profits so wasted time means wasted money for the cause. Wear sensible clothes and bring along something to drink and eat.

## 4. Respect your environment

You will find yourself in a variety of different environments. Be sensitive to the people and communities where you volunteer, particularly children, the elderly and those with disabilities. Be considerate of the organisation's environment and their limited resources. When you bring along food and snacks, consider sharing these with the beneficiaries, if appropriate. For your own safety and the safety of beneficiaries, alcohol should never be consumed while volunteering.

## 5. Follow the leader

The organisation has prepared and planned for the volunteering activity. Follow their instructions to achieve what you set out to do in a fun, safe and respectful way. Some organisations struggle with resources and capacity and may sometimes appear not to be as prepared as they should be. You can help by using your leadership skills to support their efforts to manage the activity.

## 6. Become a change agent

Being an agent for change is empowering. Use this opportunity to forge a lasting relationship with the cause you are supporting on the day and have a much greater impact on your community. Share your experience with others and encourage them to support the cause as well. Ongoing and regular financial support for causes is the very best, and most sustainable, way to make a difference in your community.

## 7. Keep in touch

Don't be a stranger – if you can, keep in touch with the cause and connect with our giving community - [www.myggsa.co.za](http://www.myggsa.co.za). This is where you will find updates on your cause's progress, new causes to support and other good people with the same interest in making a difference.

> Join our giving community at [www.myggsa.co.za](http://www.myggsa.co.za)