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# Six Ways To Help Your Teenager Get A Job

Is your teenager ready to join the workforce? Here's how you can help them land the best possible gig.



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Whether it's a few hours after school or a steady gig for the summer, a part-time job can teach your teen enormous lessons about responsibility, different personality types, and workplace skills—not to mention the extra cash in their pockets.

And the benefits may extend beyond job readiness and economics. A [2014](#) study published in the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* found that low-income students who participated in the New York City Summer Youth Employment Program, which provides training and summer jobs for young people ages 14 to 21, were more engaged and successful in school.

"If your child is mature enough to get to a job on time and keep showing up and is ready for some added responsibility, a part-time job can be a good idea," says Brette Sember, JD, author of *The Everything Kids' Money Book*. However, it's important to consider the big picture, including how a job will fit in with academic responsibilities and other activities, such as family, sports, clubs, and other commitments, she says.

If you think your teen is ready for the challenge, here are some steps to ensure you help them find the right job and get the most out of it.

## COACH—DON'T CO-OPT

You've been there and done that more than a few times, so it can seem like a no-brainer to take over the job search project, make a few calls, and land your kid a job without even an application or interview to slow down the process. You might want to rethink that approach, says Cheryl Rogers, founder of Mentor Me Career Network, an online career mentoring community. Your child should have some responsibility in the process.

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"If they're going to be mature enough to hold a job, they should be mature enough to find it," Rogers says. Even if you had an "in" to get your child the job, he or she should still do an interview for the experience.

## HELP HIGHLIGHT STRENGTHS

You know your child better than anyone, so you can help them recognize strengths and

abilities that might make them good at certain jobs, Rogers says. Parents can help children by discussing different types of jobs and what will typically be expected of them. She says it's also a good idea to do some interview practice. Role play as if you're the prospective boss and ask questions that your child might typically encounter in an interview setting to make them more comfortable with such inquiries. You can also help children find their strengths and interests through volunteer work or even by starting their own entrepreneurial ventures, she says.

## CULTIVATE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

To help your child develop the right attitude about work, help them see how their contributions will fit into the big picture, says Joline Godfrey, founder of Independent Means, a financial education company for families and family offices and author of *Raising Financially Fit Kids*. Helping them understand how their work contributes to a bigger picture will help set them up for success, she says.

"If children don't have opportunities to practice where they sit in the big picture, then they walk into a workplace a little bit clueless about what's going on there," she says. Helping your child see how a "boring" job contributes to the overall success of the organization may help them be more engaged in their work, too, she says.

## COVER THE LEGAL BASES

If your child is under age 16 or 18, depending on the state, he or she may need an employment certificate, or "working papers," Sember says. Typically, this is a simple matter of providing proof of age and parental permission, although it may also require a physician's certification that the child is fit to work. If you have concerns about the safety of the workplace, feel free to check it out or call the supervisor, she adds.

"If your child is talking about 'working off the books for a friend of a friend,' you should be concerned. Not only is this illegal and a tax violation, but the job may not be as squeaky-clean as you might like. Get details. Ask questions. Make phone calls," she says.

## SET SOME SPENDING GROUND RULES

Godfrey is an advocate of setting "serious ground rules" when it comes to the money your child earns. This is a prime opportunity to teach him or her about budgeting, saving, and investing by allocating a portion of each paycheck for spending and saving. It's common to encounter objections from your child who may feel as if he or she earned the money and has the right to spend it. You may need to help your child set bigger goals, such as explaining your expectations about his or her role in saving for a car or college education, she says.

## DON'T STRESS, BUT DON'T SETTLE

But one area where parents worry too much is the type of job the child lands. A first job is just that—the first step to learn how to operate in a workplace, develop some basic skills, and earn a little cash, she says. It's not a career path. But help your child understand what he or she is worth, and negotiate for the best possible compensation, she says.



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