

# It's My Park | Working with Youth

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Youth are our future leaders and park stewards! It's My Park projects are a great way to introduce them to hands-on stewardship, leadership, volunteerism, and collaboration.

## Preparing for the Project

- Talk with the youth group leader before the day of the project to review expectations and ensure they can provide at least one adult chaperone for every five to ten youth. The chaperone should also be willing and able to work alongside the children.
- If youth would like to join the project on their own, we advise that legal guardians volunteer alongside them.
- If you know that specific parents/guardians are bringing children to your next project, share the details with them in advance and ask that they let children know what to expect and how to behave during the project to avoid issues.
- Review our [Important Safety Tips](#) document to take into account any possible safety concerns.

## Introducing the Project

- Begin with a brief introduction about your group, the kinds of work you've done, and what you hope to accomplish in the park and surrounding neighborhood.
- Feel free to engage the group with some questions:
  - *Has anyone here ever volunteered before? What kind of volunteer project was it?*
  - *What do you think of when you hear the word "volunteering"? This is how I define volunteering.*
- Describe the day's project, goals of the project, and the reasons for it.
- Provide a clear demonstration on how to complete each task and reiterate the emphasis on safety.

- Encourage questions from youth participants throughout the introduction to keep them engaged.

#### Throughout the Project

- Check in on chaperones and guardians and provide additional direction as needed.
- Check on the energy level of the group. With groups that are composed of several families, you may decide to give families flexibility with ending times and have parents and their children leave as they get tired.
- Make it fun - Gamify the project! For example, if you're focusing on raking or litter pick-up, break the kids up into teams and make it a competition for groups to pick-up the most leaves or find the most unique pieces of litter.

#### At the End of the Project

- Ask volunteers to share their thoughts and feelings about their volunteer experience. Add creative prompts –“Share your name and two words about your experience today.” Or – “What’s your favorite moment from today’s volunteer project?”

#### Record outcomes

- Take note of what your group has accomplished during your It’s My Park project and fill out our [online outcomes form](#) or e-mail your community engagement coordinator.