



Top Ten Tips for Environmental Projects

by Lorraine Nasser



1. **Don't feel like you're alone:** there are always other people who feel the same way or who would be willing to support you.
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While on an international conference abroad, my community group and I had a vision of cleaning the riverside near the conference location, but had no resources to do so. We decided to ask people who were sitting along the riverside for bags, gloves, and hats, and sure enough, within fifteen minutes we had all we needed to start our project.

2. **Passion is contagious:** if other people see your enthusiasm, they'll be more inclined to join you. Start with building friendships and relationships with likeminded people, and project ideas and partnerships will form naturally.
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During my undergraduate studies, my university offered a program called "Green Campus" for all students. Participants were to dedicate 3-4 hours a week to doing environmentally friendly small projects. After signing up and volunteering for a week, I shared some of my stories with my friends, who consequently became interested in joining the program. My friends ended up bringing friends of their own, and this way the program expanded.

3. **Just go for it:** apply for everything, sign up for a lot of opportunities, talk to as many people as possible, aim big and see what comes back in your favor.
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If the chance of getting your program started is one in a hundred, be that one. Do not give up if you get rejected, just keep going. Remember the saying "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Take that first step.

4. **A friendly face helps when you need donations:** people appreciate an informal approach and the effort you put into getting to know them. You are also more likely to get support if you are clear about why you need their help and how you're going to use what they're willing to give (money, items, time, expertise, etc.).
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When my community group asked people to help us with the riverside cleaning, all we needed to do was explain our motives with a friendly smile on our face. As a result, not only did we receive the resources we needed, but a few local people even offered to help us with the cleaning project. A smile really goes a long way!

5. **Learn by teaching:** volunteering to teach local school groups about environmental issues is a great way to learn about the issues yourself and discover the best resources on the topics.
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Green Campus supervisors would encourage us to give talks at nearby elementary schools to raise awareness for environmentally friendly habits. Every month we would address a different topic. This meant we needed to do online/library research to check our facts, and we learned in the process as well. Here are some websites we found helpful:



Global Issues

www.globalissues.org



www.earthtimes.org



Friends of the Earth

www.foe.org



Earth911
More Ideas, Less Waste

www.earth911.com

6. **Think of new ideas:** Picking up garbage and planting trees? Great work! Here are some other environmental topics that need your creative attention, too:

- You can save wasted electricity by turning off the AC in unused classrooms at your university.
- You can recycle empty water bottles and newspapers around your campus.
- You can contact your city council to set up recycling bins around your neighborhood if there are not any.

7. **Start small:** helping the world become greener does not happen overnight. You are not expected to found an organization with hundreds of participants. You can start on little projects and find support from already existing programs/organizations who share your passion for the environment.

During my exchange year, I joined our high school's Key Club. One of my favorite things about Key Club is the fact that it promoted environmental awareness. I found a place where my concern for the environment was heard and appreciated.

8. **Start with yourself:** do not get so busy with projects and official commitments that you forget about your own behavior and pledge to environmental sustainability.

I always try my best not to waste water, electricity, or neglecting my plants. I keep separate bins at home for recyclable trash. Just like working on yourself starts on the inside, it's the same with environmental change; it starts at home and then it influences people in your social circles.

9. **The best leaders follow through:** if you plan on starting your own project, do not get caught up in the planning and the formalities that you forget to actually do what you planned. Planning is important, but setting an example for others to follow is even more important.

Our local YES program coordinator and her assistant are never seen sitting on benches during our volunteer work. Instead, they are the first to participate in the manual work on top of their other responsibilities. This way, you almost never see anyone slacking around –everybody is motivated to follow such great leaders.

10. **Don't forget your local YES program coordinator is there for you:** if you have an idea for a creative project, do not hesitate to share it with your local YES program coordinator.

I wouldn't be able to share my 10 tips with you if it weren't for my YES program coordinator. I shared with her my passion for this topic, and helped connect me to this opportunity to share my thoughts.

Biography



My name is Lorraine Nasser, and I was a Kennedy-Lugar YES student in Texas from 2009-2010. I recently finished my undergraduate degree in English Language in Literature, and will focus on English Literature and American Studies during my graduate degree. Over the last few years, I have participated in several environmental projects. Our national YES alumni visited a children's shelter where we cleaned their front yard, planted plants and trees, and decorated the entrance with handmade crafts. I also volunteered at Green Campus through Haifa University for an entire academic year. I dedicated four hours a week to recycling empty water bottles around campus, turning off the AC and lights in empty classrooms, and visiting nearby schools to raise awareness for environmentally friendly habits. While on an international students' conference in Warsaw, Poland, my entire group took it upon ourselves to clean the riverside for several hours, with local help to provide tools and equipment. Henry David Thoreau said: "what is the use of a fine house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?" His words motivate me to keep my priorities straight by being active as well as by sharing the importance of saving our planet with others.