

Next Engineers Volunteer Guidelines: Do's and Don'ts

These guidelines are intended to help volunteers prepare and interact safely with youth during Next Engineers activities. All City Team members and volunteers are expected to follow local laws, student protection policies, and any regulations that apply to their role.

Do's

Prepare Ahead of Time

- Review the schedule, activity guide, community partner contact information, and other information provided.
- Attend check-in calls prior to the activity.
- Block off your calendar including travel time to ensure you can attend.
- Complete background check ahead of time if needed for your city.

Demonstrate Responsible Behavior

- Dress appropriately; wear business appropriate or Next Engineers attire.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes before the activity starts.
- If unable to attend, inform a member of the City Team or the community partner as early as possible.
- Help to clean up the space after the activity.

Share Clear and Concise Information

- Practice and organize your thoughts and key points before sharing them.
- Provide factual information, not opinions when communicating with students.
- Use everyday examples that participants can understand.
- Break down the steps if working through a design challenge so that students understand the instructions.

Use Active Listening Techniques

- Listen to and focus on the student when they are sharing information.
- Summarize and paraphrase what the student said to clarify what was stated.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage students to share more details.

Treat Young People Fairly and Kindly

- Approach students with sincerity and respect.
- Be neutral and take what the young person says seriously.
- Respect students' unique social, personal, and academic needs.
- Treat all students equally; value the unique perspectives and contributions that each student brings.

Remain Present and Engaging

- Put away cell phones, tablets, and other technology.
- Involve all group members.
- Encourage the group to share ideas and ask each other questions.
- Encourage the group or young person using comments or non-verbal gestures (nodding, smiling).



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For additional strategies on how to facilitate a Next Engineers activity, see the [Facilitation Tip Sheet](#)

Don'ts

Don't Use Complex Language

- Avoid jargon or overly technical terms.
- Avoid acronyms that students don't understand.

 **Tip:** Use everyday language that young people can understand

Don't Criticize Students

- Avoid criticizing student efforts.
- Respond positively to all answers, even if they're not fully correct.
- Refrain from disciplining students.

 **Tip:** Guide the students towards the right answer or better designs by providing hints.

 **Tip:** Inform the community partner if there is disruptive student behavior.

Don't Engage with Students Beyond Activities

- Do not offer to help students beyond the scope of duties.
- Do not socialize with students outside of official Next Engineers activities.
- Do not invite students to personal events.

 **Tip:** If a student expresses a need that is beyond your scope of duties, inform the community partner.

Don't Show Favoritism

- Refrain from providing individual coffee, snacks, gifts, etc.
- Do not give favors or special treatment to any particular student.

 **Tip:** If there are incentives for participation, all participants and adults should be aware.

Don't Share Personal Information

- Do not share personal contact with students.
- Do not share personal social media account information with students.
- Do not share personal information with schools.

 **Tip:** If a student ask for your personal contact, respectfully inform them that you are unable to share that information.

Don't Ignore Safeguarding Policies

- Do not be alone with a student, this extends to email/digital communication.
- Do not take photographs of anyone unless you have the express written consent from the student and the program.

 **Tip:** If sending email to a student, copy the community partner, City Team, teachers, or parents, as applicable.

