

Get Ready to Get Involved



Just because you may not be 18 years old yet doesn't mean that you should just sit back and leave the fate of your country in other people's hands. There's plenty you can do right now, without a whole lot of effort. Answer the following questions to see how you will fit into the future of your school, your city, your country, and your world.

unite and fight

The colonists wouldn't have gotten anywhere in the fight for independence if they hadn't joined together.

What school clubs or other organizations do you belong to?

sign your name

When all the delegates put their signatures on the Declaration of Independence, perhaps the most important petition in U.S. history, they proved that there's power in numbers.

What would you like to petition to change in your school, and how many signatures do you think you could get?

spread the news

There was no e-mail to spread the revolutionary word in 1776. The Declaration of Independence was read aloud to people at town meetings and gatherings.

Where and when is the next community or town meeting in your neighborhood? What's the topic?

give it up

In order to get, you need to give. Whether it's a couple of hours, a couple of dollars, or a couple of canned goods, there are people out there who could use it.

What are you willing to part with in order to make a change?

organize and maximize

One voice is powerful, and many voices can move mountains. If you don't like something or you think it can be done better, ask around. You can bet there are people who think the same way you do.

What would you like to change in your town or city?

shout

The U.S. Constitution gives you the right to assemble—and not just to play video games. Many people your age in 1776 were protesting King George III.

What national issue makes you want to pick up a sign and shout about it?

speak up

There are people out there—senators and representatives, for instance—who write some of the laws that define your life. Let them know directly what you're not happy about.

Who are your state's senators and what law would you like them to change?

go on a writing rampage

Newspapers are a powerful tool for getting your voice heard by a whole town or city. And there are no age restrictions on who can write a letter to the editor.

Identify an issue that you care enough about to write a letter to the editor.

testify

City Council meetings, Board of Supervisors' meetings, School Board meetings—sound like boring stuff to you? That's where changes happen that affect where you play sports, who sets rules for your school, and what's happening with your skateboard park.

When is the next supervisors or council meeting for your locality, and what's on the agenda?

get on a list

Do you have a problem with racism? The rising price of college tuition? School violence? You can bet that a lot of other people do, too, and there's most likely a newsletter about it.

What newsletter would you like to see in your snail mail or e-mail box?

campaign

Why wait until you're 18 to get involved in the vote? Candidates in local and national elections could use your voice today to gain support.

What local or state politician would you campaign for in this year's elections?

register or lose out

Voting is the only way to make democracy work. You can't vote if you don't register.

What's the deadline for voter registration in Virginia?

vote, vote, vote

61% of the 18-year-olds in this country didn't bother to vote in the 2004 presidential election. Maybe you missed that number: 61%. How do you feel about that?

Do you promise to vote at the first chance you get, once you turn 18? Yes No

drag a friend to the polls

If every single one of the 39% of the 18-year-olds who voted in 2004 had dragged one friend with him or her to the polls, the number would have increased to 78%.

Who are you going to bring with you?

get on the ballot

We're not kidding. Marcus Molinara was elected mayor of Tivoli, N.Y., when he was 19.

What office would you like to run for?

courtesy of:

