

Who We Are

A Teenager's Survival Guide to Our Town

Project Description for Students



Our community helps define who we are. It helps to define our values, how we think about others, and how we think about ourselves. It helps determine whether we feel safe or at risk, whether we are alone or have company. Communities are complex mixes of people, institutions, and environments. Each of us must find a way to navigate this mess in a way that feels right and good.

Teenagers, in particular, are in a constant state of defining and redefining who they are. It's what teens are supposed to do. Things don't always go well. We make mistakes and sometimes others do us harm. Sometimes, it feels like it's a battle to "survive". This is generally a metaphor, but sometimes we really do have to struggle to survive. The Teenagers Survival Guide to (your town) project can help you and others to better cope with the challenges related to everyday survival in your community.

This is a multi-activity project that will be worked on over an extended period. You and others will create a practical 8-16 page guide for other teenagers that provides information and tips about ways to “survive” growing up in the local community. It will include articles about resources available to teenagers as well as tips and “How To” information for things such as getting a driver’s license, succeeding in school, preparing for a test, finding the school that’s best for you, managing stress in your life, mediating conflict, and getting help to deal with problems.

To develop this document, you will identify what topics they want to work on, work in groups to determine how best to approach the topic, research the topic, gather pictures and other graphics, prepare and revise drafts, discuss how to combine topics into a coherent whole. This project description assumes that a single document will be produced as a collaboration between all of the young people involved, however, other options (such as doing a series of individual projects) could be considered.

You will gain a better understanding of the community and you will develop skills related to research and working productively in groups, computer design and publishing, reading and writing to provide information, and you will develop editing and critical thinking skills.

So the project has three basic purposes:

1. You will produce a document that has value for other teenagers.
2. You will develop skills that are useful in other situations.
3. You should have fun in doing the project and find it interesting.

The following outlines the basic activities for conducting the project:

ACTIVITIES

1. Introduction to Project

Your teacher or other project leader will explain the project in general and indicates the steps to be taken in development of the project.

2. Research Activity: Conduct Survey of Teenagers’ Interests

You and other project participants will conduct a basic to get a sense of what topics interest other young people. The survey relates to potential sections or articles in the Teenagers' Survival Guide.

Resource: A Teenager's Guide Questionnaire

3. Planning Activity: Discussion and Brainstorming of Survival Guide Topics

Your teacher or other project leader will lead a discussion to identify potential sections of the guide. You will answer the question: "What topics do we want to include in the Students' Survival Guide?" The discussion will follow a standard "brainstorming" model. You will consider what topics were most popular on the survey and list these on a writing board or tablet. You will then suggest other topics in rapid succession (brainstorming) without halting to discuss any of the ideas.

When you have run out of ideas, you can then discuss the various topics. One way to determine how popular various ideas are to the group is to "vote" by "sticky dot.". Each person is given 2 or 3 sticky dots. They are asked to put one dot next to the top two or three subjects they like the best. Then count the dots next to each topic and rank them from highest number of votes to lowest. This shouldn't necessarily dictate which topics should be used, but it does help find those areas where there is clear agreement. In the end if there is not general agreement, the teacher or lead person, acting as senior editor, will make the final decision.

Resource: How We Think and Learn: Brainstorming Guidelines

Resource: Sample Topics List (at end of document)

4. Planning Activity: Assignment of Topics to Students

After the topics have been gleaned to a reasonable size (approximately 8-12), the teacher will list the topics on the board and asks participants to write their names next to the two topics they would like to work on. Participants should write a 1 or 2 next to their first and second choices. The teacher will then determine which students will work on which topics, attempting to honor at least one of their choices. Teams will be comprised of from 2 to 4 participants. After the assignments have been made, students will be asked to meet in their topic groups to discuss and complete an outline of the topic and production process.

5. Planning Activity: Planning Approach to Topic

Participants will meet in their workgroups to discuss their assignment and outline their approach to the subject. A basic work plan and individual responsibilities will be written by the group. Participants may have to conduct some research prior to completing their work plan. The teacher must review and approve all work plans prior to participants beginning their work on the topic. Participants are responsible for typing up the finalized work plan and are expected to check off items as they are completed.

Work plans may be changed from time to time but changes must be approved by the teacher.

Resource: Creating a Publication Planning and Performance Standards Rubric

6. Project Activity: Gathering Information/Conducting Research

Participants will meet in their groups to work through their work plans. Depending on the topic, they may need to interview people in the community, conduct research on the Internet, gather and reproduce information from other documents, or take pictures. After they have collected necessary information, participants are ready to prepare their rough draft.

7. Project Activity: Developing Rough Draft of Topic

After conducting necessary research and having it approved by the teacher, participants may begin working on their rough draft. Unless otherwise determined, participants should limit their topic to one page. Ultimately, pages will be expected to fit into an overall look and feel for the entire product, but for now participants should experiment with what they think works best for their individual topic.

8. Project Activity: Editorial Review and Overall Document Design Standards

Participants select representatives to meet on an editorial committee to make decisions about the overall design and content of the document. From 2-5 members should suffice. This group will likely meet several times to decide what articles should go where and what can be done to make the overall document look consistent. The teacher, as the executive editor, will resolve any disputes, but students should be encouraged to seek to resolve differences cooperatively. The editorial committee should specify basic design standards for the whole document by the end of the rough draft period, although there should be an effort to allow as much creativity as possible on individual pages.

9. Project Activity: Completion of Final Draft

Participants work on their final drafts, making sure to review how well they meet the document design standards issued by the editorial committee and how they meet the performance standards specified in the Project Standards Form. Drafts are submitted to the editorial committee for review and modified as requested. Participants complete a self-evaluation at the end.

10. Completion and Distribution of Final Document

The final document is completed and printed. Depending on the success of the project, copies are distributed to appropriate audiences.

Extension Activity: Participants create PowerPoint presentation about their topics and present to other groups or classes.

SAMPLE TOPICS LIST

Best places for:

- Getting cheap and decent food
- Hanging out and using the Internet
- Shopping for cool and affordable clothes
- Listening to music
- Getting your mind straight
- Getting help
- Getting a part-time job

How to:

- Manage stress
- Succeed in school
- Cope with bullies
- Pass a test
- Write a winning essay
- Deal with a bully
- Help save the local environment
- Get a driver's license
- Avoid drugs
- Deal with racism
- Survive a dog attack
- Find the best deals on gear
- Trouble-shoot a stalled car
- Get around using public transportation
- Get help for family problems
- Control anger
- Get a date
- Parallel park
- Find what you need on the Web
- Get a passport