

**Quintessential Careers:  
Job Ideas for Teens 15 and Younger: Beyond Babysitting and  
Lemonade Stands**



*by Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D.*

Okay, you're somewhere between having your own neighborhood lemonade stand and working at a real job, so what should a young teen do? Many states have laws that limit when teens can get a job and how long they are allowed to work per week, so how are you expected to make the money you need for clothes, dates, cars, etc.? The answer: Go into business for yourself!

Before going into a list of ideas for your new business venture, let's go over a few rules you need to follow to ensure some level of success:

1. **You must be able to promote the business** to potential customers and clients -- thus, you need to be able to talk with people and be able to try to sell them something. Without customers, of course, you do not have a business.
2. **You must be able to make a profit with your business.** Sounds kind of obvious, right? But it is sometimes harder than you might imagine. You need to be able to set prices -- and stick to them (and be able to collect them) -- above your costs.
3. **You must know one of the most important rules of marketing** (and one I force my students to chant) -- you have to satisfy the customer! You must do a good job in your business or you are going to lose customers. Also, the better you are at satisfying customers, the more likely that they are going to recommend others to you -- so you can actually increase your customer base just by doing a good job.
4. **You must avoid serious errors -- in actions of judgment -- in running your business.** If you do something wrong, regardless of whose fault, it can cause anger, disappointment, bad publicity, and at the ultimate -- a lawsuit. You are running a business, so make sure an adult family member knows exactly what you are doing in your business, and if anything bad should ever happen, make sure you face it immediately and deal with it.
5. **You must be prepared to work long hours** at establishing the business -- and then even more hours running the business. They call it work for a reason -- you need to be truly dedicated and determined to establish your own business.

Okay, so those are the rules. They are not meant to scare you off, just to help you do a better job at it. Running a business can be a great experience for you. You can make

money, you can gain valuable experience, and you can use the business on your resume and college applications.

So, what are some ideas for a business beyond a lemonade stand or babysitting? Here goes:

**A cleaning service.** Maybe you hate doing your chores at home, but getting paid for doing them is completely different! You could offer complete housecleaning services, or specialize in one or more areas, such as attic/basement/garage cleanups.

**A yard maintenance service.** There is always something that needs to be done...mowing lawns and weed control in the spring and summer, raking leaves in the fall, and shoveling snow and planting for the spring in the winter.

**A car-detailing business.** With so many people working multiple jobs and having such busy lifestyles, very few people have the time to really take care of their cars -- and you could offer a weekly or monthly service of washing, waxing, vacuuming, etc.

**A pet sitting service.** Typically more of a summer business when people tend to go on vacation, but you might be able to have a year-round business by offering pet walking, bathing, cleaning, etc. services.

**A PC tutor/Web site development service.** Are you a whiz with computers and the Web? Well, many adults are not, and you could make a good business helping people learn to use PCs and develop Web sites for their families -- or for their businesses.

**A catering service.** Do you enjoy cooking and baking? In these busy times, if you can provide a service that offers well-cooked meals, you could do quite well.

**A painting service.** If you have some experience -- or there is a few of your friends that want to go in business with you -- you might consider a painting business. People are always renovating...and you could paint exteriors in the nicer months and interiors during the colder months.

**An errand, messenger, or delivery service.** This idea works best in larger cities where there are more people and public transportation, but these are busy times and people need help with all sorts of errands.

**An educational tutoring service.** If you have expertise in one or more areas -- music, foreign language, math and science, or others -- you could offer tutoring sessions to children, teens, and adults in your neighborhood.

**An online Web business.** If you are a master at creating Web pages, perhaps what you need to do is brainstorm a concept for an online business -- where your potential customers can come from anywhere in the world, not just in your local neighborhood. (See our [Web Resources Page](#) for key information about developing a Website.)

**A freelancing service.** If you are truly gifted in a certain field, such as writing, drawing, or photography, consider starting a freelancing business where you sell your wares to various businesses and media outlets. (Read more about a [freelancing career](#).)

For some ideas on the rules you'll need to follow in running your business, go to [Teen Business Do's and Don'ts](#).

Questions about some of the terminology used in this article? Get more information (definitions and links) on key college, career, and job-search terms by going to our [Job-Seeker's Glossary of Job-Hunting Terms](#).

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