

Unit 6 Web Activity

Working for a Living

Introduction

You are a teenager, and you want to make some money. Because you are honest and hard-working, you decide to get a job. You quickly discover, however, that there are strict limitations regarding what kinds of jobs you can get. For example, the jobs available to you and the hours you can work depend on the industry, your age, and other factors. In this lesson, you will find out what the restrictions are for teenage workers, what their rights are, and how working affects teenagers' grades, mental and physical health, and other factors.

Activity

Step 1:

1. Go to the Department of Labor Web site [Youth Rules!](#) and click on the square that says *Teens*. Follow whatever links necessary to answer the questions below.

According to rules from the federal government:

- What hours may 16- to 17-year-olds work?
 - What hours may 14- to 15-year-olds work?
 - At what age do workers need to obtain work permits?
 - What restrictions are there on the types of work permissible for children of various ages?
 - How are the labor laws different for agricultural workers on family farms?
2. Now follow the link to state labor laws and answer the questions again to find out what the specific rules are for teenage workers in your state. Compare the rules from your state to the rules from the federal government. Are they more or less restrictive/protective?

Step 2:

In 1998, the National Research Council published an extensive study of working adolescents in the United States. Within this report, the National Research Council highlights its recommendations to ensure the protection and safety of young workers. You do not have to read the entire report, but you should review as much of it as possible, in order to answer the questions below. The [Press Release](#) briefly summarizes the main points in the report, and the [Executive Summary](#) of the report is even more specific.

- List some of the dangers for adolescents who work long hours (over 20 hours per week).
- Why do most adolescents want to earn money?
- What types of jobs do most adolescents work?
- What are some of the positive and negative effects associated with working during adolescence?
- Which industries have the highest rates of injury? Why is this so?
- Paraphrase the four guiding principles under which the committee worked.
- The committee made 14 recommendations. Choose the five you think are most important and explain why these are the most crucial for the future. You may bring your personal experience to this reflection.
- Are there any recommendations with which you disagree? If so, what are they and why do you disagree? Are there any recommendations that are not present and you would like to add? You may bring your personal experience to this reflection.

Step 3:

Many adolescents work for the minimum wage, at least when they first start working. In this section, you will explore the rationale and history behind the minimum wage laws.

1. Use either the [Minimum Wage Summary](#) or the [Q & A](#) to find the answers to these questions:
 - What is the federal minimum wage?
 - What is the federal minimum wage for full-time students and for student learners?
 - What is the federal minimum wage for workers younger than 20 years old in the first 90 days of employment?
 - What is the federal minimum wage for workers with disabilities?
 - What size businesses are covered by the law?
 - Which employees can be paid less than the minimum wage?
 - What is the penalty for an employer if he/she is found in violation of the law?
2. Go to the [States' Guide](#) and find your state.
 - What is the minimum wage in your state? Find one state that has a higher minimum wage and one that has a lower minimum wage than the federal standard. What are they? If there is a conflict between federal and state law, which wage applies?

3. Go to [History of the Minimum Wage](#).
 - When was the current \$500,000 annual earnings basis established?
 - When was the current minimum wage established?
 - Go to the [minimum wage chart](#) and find what the minimum wage was the year you were born. What was it the year your mom or dad (or another adult) was born?
 - Why do you think the minimum wage has increased the way it has?

Step 4:

1. In a discussion with your peers, reflect on all that you have learned about adolescent workers. Discuss the questions below, taking into account your own experiences. Take notes on your discussion, as you may want to use the points brought up by other students in the letter you are going to write.
 - What do you think the future holds for adolescent laborers? What do you think it *should* hold?
 - Is the government doing enough to protect teenage workers? Should it be doing more?
 - Is the minimum wage adequate? Should it be higher?
 - Would an increase in the minimum wage mean that small businesses might not hire as many teenage workers?
 - Why do you think the federal and state governments are involved in making rules for workers, especially young workers?
2. After solid deliberation, take your ideas and put them into action by writing a letter to one of your representatives in Congress. (Link to the [U.S. House of Representatives](#) or the [U.S. Senate](#) if you need to find the names and addresses of your representatives in Washington, D.C.) In your letter, express your views about adolescent workers and what you think the laws should be. Include a comment on your opinion about the minimum wage. Support your opinions with evidence from the materials you have studied and from your personal experiences. If you think things are just fine the way they are, say that, but support your opinion.
3. Hand in your letter to your teacher before sending it to your senator or representative.