

Surviving Your Service Year: Lifestyle



Live your best life when doing your service year! Being thrifty and resourceful doesn't mean you can't have fun!

Furnishing Your Space

If you are moving and need some items for your new space, save money by purchasing necessities second-hand online or at thrift stores. Sometimes you can find high quality stuff at a much lower price and can even negotiate. Pro tip: travel to affluent neighborhoods and check out those thrift stores – you may find even nicer quality items! Sometimes, these nicer items even make it to the curb on garbage days. One person's trash can be another's treasure! For things you need to buy new, it might be worth investing in nicer pieces that will last you longer, but if that isn't an option, check your local dollar store to find essentials like mixing bowls or cooking utensils for a low price.

Building a Professional Wardrobe

If you don't have a uniform for your service year and have to wear professional clothing, there are plenty of ways to save money when expanding your wardrobe! Look for timeless basics that can be worn with different outfits and that you can dress up or down.

- Make thrift stores your best friend! Using the same logic as with furnishing your space, you can often find great deals on items you would pay hundreds for elsewhere at places like [Goodwill](#), [Buffalo Exchange](#), and [Salvation Army](#).

Make it a fun outing with your service year friends – if nothing else, you'll get some good laughs trying on some of the 80s prom dresses!

- If you prefer online shopping or don't have any thrift stores near you, websites like [Poshmark](#), [Tread Up](#), and [Mercari](#) are great options to buy clothes at a discounted rate.
- Check out off-priced retail like Marshalls, TJMaxx, and Ross. You can find similar items to those sold at normal retailers but for a fraction of the cost.

Exercise

We all know how important exercising is, and luckily, it does not need to cost much!

- Find free workout videos by searching on YouTube or Pinterest.
- Running and hiking is free to do and gets you outdoors! If you like doing these activities with others, you can often find groups to join who get together for these activities.
- See if your local Parks & Rec or YMCA has free or reduced classes or workout equipment to use.
- Lots of yoga and other fitness centers offer a free class or a free week to test out that kind of workout. You often can test out a bunch of different classes around your area without having to commit to a year long contract. You may also have access to public or free outdoor classes you can participate in. Yoga in the park, anyone?
- Looking for a tough workout? See if the

[November Project](#) is near you! You'll meet new people and get a killer workout in as well.

- Don't forget to pick a great [Spotify playlist](#) to accompany you! If you don't pay for a music streaming service, [Pandora workout station](#) or [YouTube](#) both have free workout playlists, too.

Entertainment

There are endless opportunities to find things to do at little-to-no cost. Be open to trying out new things!

Some low-cost entertainment options:

- Join listservs to get notice of free concerts, festivals, and other events in your area. You can even go old school and read a newspaper for upcoming events. Your local library is a great source of information as well!
- Can't afford to go to that event or concert? Try volunteering for a shift. You help out for a bit, sometimes get free food or swag, and once you are done you can get in for free and be able to enjoy your time after your shift is complete.
- If you are a movie person, consider joining [MoviePass](#). For just under \$10 a month you are able to go to unlimited movies a month! Make sure theaters in your area allow you to use MoviePass before purchasing a membership.
- If you live in a college town, see if they have any fun free events! You may even be able to catch theater productions for very cheap.
- Some museums and zoos provide free or reduced admission several days throughout the month. If you're a frequent visitor, buying a pass might be a better option overall.

- Check out [Groupon](#) to save money on services, products, or events in your area.
- [Meetup](#) is a great way to find new people to do fun things, which is especially great if you relocated for your service year.
- Create your own fun. Invite over some friends and have a game night! Many libraries have board games that you can check out.

Treat Yo Self

Though [going out to eat](#), [grabbing coffee](#), and [for going out for happy hour](#) probably shouldn't be regular part of your routine, sometimes you need a pick-me-up to get through a tough week! Make the most of your money by looking for specials, splitting costs with your service year friends, using coupons, or joining rewards programs or apps that earn you points for your purchases.

Animal Lovers Unite!

If you are an animal lover but can't have a pet with you during your service year, consider different ways to get your dog and cat cuddles! [Volunteering at a local shelter or rescue group](#), [pet sitting](#), or [dog walking](#) are great ways to spend time with pets (and you might even make some extra money!).

Plan a staycation

If you are starting to get burned out and need of a vacation but can't afford to travel, planning a [staycation](#) might be the perfect thing for you. Find some time, maybe even take a three day weekend, to disconnect, relax, and prioritize all your [favorite things to do](#). That may involve having an all day movie marathon, hiking, or having a DIY spa day!