

What Is Exploring?

**F
A
C
T
S
H
E
E
T**

Program

Exploring is Learning for Life’s career education program for young men and women who are 14 (and have completed the eighth grade) or 15 through 20 years old. Adults are selected by the participating organization for involvement in the program. Color, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, economic status, and citizenship are not criteria for participation.

Exploring’s purpose is to provide experiences to help young people mature and to prepare them to become responsible and caring adults. Explorers are ready to investigate the meaning of interdependence in their personal relationships and communities.

Exploring is based on a unique and dynamic relationship between youth and the organizations in their communities. Local community organizations initiate an Explorer post by matching their people and program resources to the interests of young people in the community. The result is a program of activities that helps youth pursue their special interests, grow, and develop.

Explorer posts can specialize in a variety of career skills. Exploring programs are based on five areas of emphasis: career opportunities, life skills, citizenship, character education, and leadership experience.

- Career Opportunities**
 - Develop potential contacts that may broaden employment options
 - Boost self-confidence and experience success at school and work
- Life Skills**
 - Build physical and mental fitness
 - Experience positive social interaction
- Citizenship**
 - Encourage the skill and desire to help others
 - Gain a keen respect for the basic rights of others
- Character Education**
 - Help make ethical choices
 - Fulfill one’s responsibility to society as a whole
- Leadership Experience**
 - Acquire leadership skills to fulfill one’s responsibilities in society

Goals

Young adults involved in Exploring will

- Gain practical knowledge of and experience in a career
- Engage in a program of activities centered on career opportunities, life skills, service learning, character education, and leadership experience to encourage the development of the whole person
- Experience positive leadership from adult and youth leaders and be given opportunities to take on leadership roles
- Have a chance to learn and grow in a supportive, caring, and enjoyable environment

Methods

The methods of Exploring have been carefully chosen to meet the needs of young adults.

- *Voluntary association between youth and adults.* Because Exploring is voluntary, youth are receptive to new ideas, experiences, and relationships. For the Explorer, these relationships provide a connection to new ways of thinking and acting as well as a new identity as a responsible young adult.
- *Ethical decision making.* Exploring asks young people to be responsible for themselves, for a program of activities and experiences, and for other people, thereby providing numerous opportunities for youth to make effective and ethical decisions. These opportunities are enhanced by the influence of capable adults and structured activities.
- *Group activities.* Exploring activities are interdependent group experiences. Success depends on the cooperation of all.
- *Recognition of achievement.* Recognition might come through formal awards, but it also is achieved through the acknowledgment by peers and adults of a young person's competence and abilities.
- *Democratic process.* Explorer posts provide exposure to democratic ideals and skills that are needed throughout life.
- *Curiosity, exploration, and adventure.* Curiosity is encouraged and a sense of exploration and adventure is developed through new experiences that provide opportunities for youth to acquire new skills and participate in action-oriented activities.

Post Specialties

Every Explorer post specializes in a specific career program area. More than 100 different specialties have been organized, ranging from accounting to zoology. Some specialty programs, such as the following, have grown to include a national committee, activities, and staff support.

Arts and Humanities. The Arts and Humanities specialty area includes posts that are organized around interests in arts and hobbies, acting, commercial art, drama/theater, fashion design/modeling/buying, interior design/decoration, jewelry/watch-making, and movie directing/producing.

Aviation. The Aviation specialty encompasses a range of programs, including maintenance, operations, construction, flight attending, airport management, and aerospace. The Federal Aviation Administration supports this growth, along with aviation organizations, unions, and industries.

Business. Through the Business specialty area, young adults become prepared for many types of careers, from accounting to financial planning. Many posts organize their program around knowledge of business planning and practices in addition to career preparation.

Communications. This specialty is endorsed by the Broadcast Education Association, International Association of Business Communicators, National Association of Broadcasters, National Press Photographers Association Inc., Public Relations Society of America, and Women in Communications. The Exploring program can serve as an effective outreach program that exposes high school students to careers in communications and public relations.

Engineering. Many national engineering societies endorse this specialty area of Exploring. Its goal is to promote post programs that open and expand Explorers' understanding of the many opportunities in engineering and technology.

Fire/Emergency Services. This specialty is endorsed by International Association of Fire Chiefs, National Volunteer Fire Council, U.S. Fire Administration National Fire Academy, and local fire authorities. Posts are organized around interests in fire/emergency services, civil defense, first aid/ambulance corps, fire fighting, rescue service, paramedic, EMT, and volunteer fire fighting. The national Fire/Emergency Services Exploring committee conducts every odd number year the national Fire/Emergency Services Exploring conference, which is open to all fire/emergency services Explorers and post Advisors.

Law and Government. The American Bar Association and other organizations support the high interest of many youth in law or government participation through Exploring. Law Day activities, mock trials, and other law-related activities provide firsthand experience in America's legal and court system.

Law Enforcement. This specialty is endorsed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the National Sheriffs' Association and is helped by other national law enforcement organizations and industries. Departments and Explorers gain firsthand knowledge of each other. Explorers can support many community-based programs of the department. The post program is supported by national law enforcement competitions and academies.

Medical and Health Careers. The American Medical Association and other national health organizations support the establishment of posts in hospitals, clinics, medical centers, schools, and other health-care organizations. These posts render valuable community service and give members an insight into a variety of career opportunities.

Science. The Science specialty area includes posts that are organized around interests in general science, anthropology, archaeology, a career as an astronaut, astronomy, biochemistry, biology, chemistry, computers/programming, conservation/ecology, environmental science, wildlife/fish management, and zoology/zoo direction.

Skilled Trades. The Skilled Trades specialty area includes posts that are organized around interests in auto repair, cosmetology, electrical, carpentry, and construction, to name a few.

Social Services. The Social Services area includes posts that are organized around interests in social service, adult care, child care, drug/alcohol counseling, exercise attending, funeral direction, home economy, librarian work, museum curation, school counseling, social work, teaching, volunteer work, youth organization volunteerism, and disabled career profession.

Others. In addition to the above, other popular Explorer post specialties include conservation, computers, music, rescue, radio-TV, architecture, photography, and journalism.

Character Education An important goal of Exploring is to help young adults be responsible and caring people, both now and in the future. Exploring uses character education activities to help young adults develop the ability to make responsible choices that reflect their concern for what is at risk and for the people involved. Because a character education activity is a problem-solving situation, leaders expect young adults to use empathy, invention, and selection when they think through their position and work toward a solution.

Post Activities What an Explorer post does is limited only by the imagination and involvement of its leaders —build a glider, make an electric car, produce a play, conduct a mock trial, or teach disabled people to swim. Posts across the country today are experiencing all these adventures and many more. All that is needed are concerned adults who are willing to share a little bit of themselves with today's youth —tomorrow's citizens.

Getting Your Post Up and Running Organizing an Explorer post (group) in your organization is easy! Just follow the Five-Step Plan for Post Program Development:

1. **Organization's Commitment:** Secure a commitment from the chief executive officer of the participating organization.
2. **Career Opportunities Development Meeting:** A training and program development meeting for post adult leaders conducted by an Exploring program representative.
3. **Post Firstnighter Meeting:** A special and exciting hands-on meeting held annually by each post to recruit new youth participants.
4. **Post Activities Development Meeting:** A program planning meeting with Explorers' input to reach agreement on post monthly activities.
5. **Explorer Post Officers' Seminar:** Training meeting for elected post officers.

What Youth Want Exploring research has revealed these major points:

- High school students are interested in careers/vocations.
- Teenagers want a broader experience that supplements career information with practical, hands-on experience and is tailored to their cultural backgrounds.
- Teenagers want to belong to a group that provides a supportive place from which they can address the issues that affect them as they grow and develop. These issues include becoming more independent, developing social relationships, undergoing psychological changes, reaching sexual maturity, and re-evaluating values.

Program Support

Learning for Life provides Explorer posts with the following support:

- Professional and volunteer staff to help the post succeed
- Recruiting, training, and guiding of a volunteer district/division support staff organization
- An annual Explorer program planning conference
- An annual career interest survey of all high schools in the community
- Activity planning and the use of Learning for Life facilities, such as camp

Learning for Life Web Site—www.learningforlife.org

Visit the Learning for Life Web site for ideas on how your business can connect with today's Explorers.

Liability Insurance for Participating Organizations

General liability insurance covers the participating organization on a primary basis for any responsibility they may have on Exploring-related matters without asking the participating organization or its own insurance to be involved.

Adult and Youth Leader Training

Learning for Life provides basic and advanced adult leader training sessions along with an annual post leader workshop, quarterly Advisor meetings, and an annual Learning for Life program planning conference.

National Studies

In 1969, a study was made of the special-interest posts being organized by William H. Spurgeon III, a businessman from California, and the newly completed research project for Exploring by Daniel Yankelovich. The study indicated that 83 percent of youth surveyed wanted more information on careers than they were getting at home or in school, and 94 percent wanted adult associations. Coed participation, sports, and adult-like recognition were found necessary to attract young adults to Exploring.

As a result of this study, special-interest Explorer posts were organized by businesses and professional and trade organizations. The career interest survey of high school students was developed to identify and recruit members.

In 1971, the upper age limit in Exploring was changed to age 20 for young men and women.

In 1981, the rapid growth of Exploring led to the development of national specialty programs in arts and humanities, aviation, business, communications, engineering, fire/emergency services, health careers, law and government, law enforcement, science, skilled trades, and social services.

In 1998, Louis Harris & Associates of New York was commissioned to undertake the challenge of identifying and uncovering the aspects of the Exploring program that serve as indicators of positive outcomes. They found the program contributes to the healthy development of today's young adults by providing them with the environment, resources, and relationships they need to learn and grow.

Today, Exploring is Learning for Life's career education program and exists to accomplish a major goal: to provide the structure and resources needed for the youth of America to learn about career opportunities, make ethical choices, and achieve their full potentials as individuals.

National Awards, Activities, and Scholarships

Awards

- Career Achievement Award Program—certificate for career proficiency achievement giving students distinguished credentials for their resume in the following Exploring career clusters: arts and humanities, aviation, business, communications, engineering, fire/emergency services, health, law and government, law enforcement, science, skilled trades, and social services
- Council Young American Award—plaque for youth between the ages of 15 and 25
- Congressional Awards—bronze/silver/gold medal for youth between the ages of 14 and 23
- Law Enforcement Exploring Proficiency Awards—ribbon awards in 13 proficiency component programs
- Learning for Life Leadership Award—for youth and adults
- National Exploring Excellence Award—for posts
- William H. Spurgeon III Award—for individuals and organizations in Exploring

Activities

- Aviation Explorer Base Camp at EAA AirVenture, Oshkosh, Wis.
- Character Education Activities—26 components
- Character Education in Exploring—four components
- Challenge Initiative Games—nine components
- Cooperative Initiative Games—21 components
- Engineering Explorer Academy at Georgia Tech, Atlanta, Ga.
- Engineering Explorer Academy at Georgia Tech, Savannah, Ga.
- Engineering Explorer Academy at Marshall University, Huntington, W.Va.
- Engineering Explorer Camp at The University of Alabama, Huntsville, Ala.
- Health Careers Exploring Exposition at the National Institutes of Health and the Uniformed Service University, Bethesda, Md.
- Law Explorer National Mock Trial Competition
- Law Enforcement Explorer National Law Enforcement Conference
- Law Enforcement Exploring, FBI Academy
- Law Enforcement Exploring, DEA Academy
- Law Enforcement Exploring, U.S. Marshals Academy
- Law Enforcement Exploring, U.S. Army Military Police Academy
- Leadership Workshop Series—16 components

Scholarships

- AFL-CIO Skilled Trades Explorer Scholarship, 2/\$1,000
- ATFRA Special Agents' Law Enforcement Explorer Scholarship, 2/\$1,000
- Capt. James T. Regan Memorial Law Enforcement Explorer Scholarship, 2/\$500
- DEA Drug Abuse Prevention Service Award, \$1,000
- Federal Criminal Investigators Law Enforcement Explorer Service Award, \$500
- Floyd Boring Law Enforcement Explorer Scholarship, 2/\$2,000
- International Association of Fire Chiefs Foundation Fire Service Explorer Scholarship, \$500
- National Young American Award, 5/\$5,000
- Sheryl A. Horak Memorial Law Enforcement Explorer Scholarship, \$1,000
- Spartan School of Aeronautics Scholarship, 4/\$2,000
- Sporty's Pilot Shop Aviation Explorer Scholarship, 2/\$1,000

**For More
Information**

Exploring Program, Learning for Life National Office, P.O. Box 152079, Irving, TX
75015-2079. Phone: 972-580-2433. Fax: 972-580-2137.

Please mail a postcard with your name, address, and telephone number. Indicate
your interest in

Youth—Scholarship Information Youth—How to Join Exploring

Company—How to Organize a Post Adult—Helping Mentor

Other— _____