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Starting Your Own Business

By Cindy Grigg

Caption: Elise and Evan Macmillan, teen owners of The Chocolate Farm.

So you want to earn some money? Starting your own business is something many kids do. They become entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur is a person who organizes and runs his or her own business. Make a list of things you like to do. What things do you do well? Of those things, what things will people pay you money to do? Great business ideas are based on things people need and want.



Kids often get jobs cutting grass and weeding and watering people's lawns. Many people these days are too busy with their jobs to do their own yard work. Many older people are physically unable to do their yard work as they used to.

You need to know how to operate a lawn mower and/or a trimmer. Don't use any equipment or tools that you don't know how to use safely. Give attention to details. Homeowners may ask you to cut in a certain direction, rake up clippings, avoid areas where grass seed or fertilizer has been used, or clean up driveways, patios, and sidewalks. You can make around \$5 per hour, depending on where you live.

Other jobs for kids are babysitter, dog washer and groomer, dog walker, car washer, computer tutor, errand runner, recycler, gardener, house sitter, pet sitter, parent helper, party helper or clown, or gift shopper. With any job, find out how much other kids or businesses are charging in your neighborhood first. You want to charge about the same amount. If you charge too much, you won't get many customers. If you charge too little, you could be making more money!

Is starting this business going to cost you any money? Will you need any equipment or supplies? How much will they cost? How does this compare to the price you can charge? You want to buy your supplies at a low price and sell your product or service for a higher price. If you don't, you'll lose money instead of make it. Don't forget to deduct the price of your supplies from the amount you earn. This will be the amount of your profit, or the money you get to keep.

Some kids have started very successful businesses. Elise and Evan Macmillan are a brother and sister who went into business for themselves in 1999. Elise was ten years old, and Evan was thirteen. Elise had learned to make chocolates from her grandmother when she was very small. A local bank was having a marketplace for kids to sell things. They decided to sell chocolates for this one-day event. They both liked animals. They bought some animal-shaped molds and some chocolate. They made chocolate cows and pigs in the mud. People loved their product. That day, they took orders from people to make more. Elise liked making chocolates. Evan liked working with computers. They sold their homemade chocolates to local stores in Denver, Colorado. Evan started a Web site, and the business took off. In 2001, their business, called the Chocolate Farm, sold more than one million dollars!

Of course, not every kid can start a million dollar business. But most kids can do something to earn money and be successful at it. If you decide to start your own business, don't forget to advertise it. Tell your friends and family. Offer your service or product for free or at a discount to a few people. If they like it, they will tell their friends and neighbors about your business. If you make something like jewelry, give or lend a sample to a friend. When people compliment her on the jewelry, she will send them to you. Word of mouth can be the best advertising, and it's free.

You can also make a flier that has the name of your business and what service or product you offer. It should include your name and phone number and the times you are available. You can include how much you charge, or you can say that people should call you for that information. Post fliers in your neighborhood. Ask local stores and businesses if you can put a flier in their window or on a bulletin board. If your parents agree it's safe, you can

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even go door to door. Dress neatly and be cheerful and friendly. Once people have met you, they will be more likely to hire you.

Once you're hired to do a job, show up on time. Do the job well, and do it completely. Put on your best smile. Everyone likes a cheerful worker. You'll brighten your customers' day and probably get their business again.

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Questions

1. What is an entrepreneur?

2. Who might hire a kid to do their yard work?

- A. busy people who work long hours at their own jobs
- B. elderly people who are physically unable to do yard work
- C. both A and B

3. Jon is paid \$20 to mow his neighbor's yard. It takes three hours to mow and \$2 worth of gasoline. How much does Jon earn per hour?

4. Name two ways you could advertise your business.

5. Kendra started making jewelry to sell. She spent \$12 for supplies to make four bracelets. She will sell the bracelets for \$5 each. If each bracelet takes two hours to make, how much money will Kendra earn per hour?

6. What's the best way to run a business?

- A. Be there on time, be cheerful, and do the job well.
- B. Overbook so you don't have time to do some of the jobs, then charge more for the jobs you do.
- C. Get there late, make excuses, argue with the customer, and leave early.

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7. Sam started a dog-walking business. He charges \$5 for each dog for a thirty-minute walk. How much does Sam earn per hour walking just one dog?

8. Christie sells lemonade in her driveway. She spends \$20 for supplies: lemons, sugar, and cups. With these supplies, she can make enough lemonade to sell 100 cups of lemonade. If she charges a quarter per cup, how much profit will she make?

Write a paragraph about a business you would like to start. What products or services would you offer? How much would you charge? How would you advertise it? Why would you choose this business?

How could Christie (in question #8) increase her profit? If you could give her some business advice, what would you tell her?



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