

Tips for Choosing a Charity

Adapted from GuideStar.org

1. Clarify your personal beliefs and preferences.

- What matters most to you?. The environment? Education? Hunger? Animal welfare? Helping sick children? Economic development? (See, “Mapping Your Heartbreak” Learning to Give activity.)
- Where do you want to make an impact? In your neighborhood? Your state? The nation? Internationally?
- Do you want to support a large or small charity, a new charity or an old one?

2. Make sure mission aligns with your vision.

- Research 3-5 potential charities using tools like [GuideStar](#) and [Great Nonprofits](#). You will also want to take a close look at each organization’s website. What is their mission? How does it align with your passion for making a difference?

3. Verify each charity's legitimacy.

- Look up each nonprofit on [GuideStar](#) to ensure that it is a legitimate tax-exempt organization in good standing with the IRS. Is it listed? What is each organization’s rating?



4. Do your research.

- What are each charity's programs, goals, and achievements? Are their goals measurable? What concrete terms do they use to describe their goals, accomplishments and impact?
- If you compare charities, be sure you compare apples to apples, that is, charities that do the same kind of work, especially if you're looking at their finances. The type of work a charity does can affect its operating costs dramatically.
- Avoid charities that won't share information or pressure you to give. Reputable nonprofits will discuss their programs and finances, won't use pressure tactics, will be willing to send you information about their work, and will take "no" for an answer.

5. Trust your instincts.

- If you still have doubts about a charity, don't contribute to it. Instead, find another nonprofit that does the same kind of work and with which you feel comfortable, then make your donation.

