



Chapter Two

Getting an Idea

A Collection of Micro Business Ideas Best for Teenagers

A Good Micro Business

What's a good micro business for a teenager? As the mother of two teenagers and an accountant who advises micro business owners, I think a successful micro business needs to have these qualities:

Low start up cost. I do not like debt or loans, so the start-up needs to be self-funded. How can you get the money to start a micro business? Sell something, work at another job to earn the start-up cash or negotiate a *small* loan from your parents. By small, I mean a loan that you could pay back in less than three months or by having only a handful of customers or sales.

Low risk. You are in this to make money, not to lose it! Risky businesses are for people with plenty of experience in running a business, but not for your first venture.

Balanced. You should be able to run a micro business without losing your life to it. You have a life—you are a full time student. You should be able to get your homework finished, be involved in sports and church youth group and still run a micro business. Life is more than working on your business—keep a balance.

Home-based or transportation provided. I love it when the parents pick up my daughter for her babysitting jobs; one family even let my 17-year-old drive their extra car for two weeks while she was their nanny. An ideal micro business can be run from your home or at least not cause a transportation headache for your family.

Use skills and talent. Many lists of business opportunities are out of reach for most teenagers because they lack the experience or skills. You will get there in time, but most teenagers

need to grow in experience. It is best to stick to something you know well, like computers, algebra or music.

Ideas for Micro Businesses

I have browsed through hundreds of small business ideas to bring you these micro business ideas that are best for teenagers. I once read a list of business ideas for teenagers, and it listed “Run a restaurant” as if that is a reasonable idea for a teenager who needs to go to school, do homework and still eat and sleep! The ideas I share are all possible for a busy teenager. I personally (or virtually) know of teenagers running every one of these types of businesses, so I know that they work.

A word of caution: *Do not be too hasty to reject some of these ideas.* No one likes any job that has the word “cleaning” in it, but you will not be doing it for the rest of your life. Your first micro business may be a temporary business, but it could help accomplish your goal to learn something and make money doing it.

Also realize that you may not have this business for a very long time. Micro businesses are easy to start and they are easy to close down. Many teenagers only run their business in the summer, or only run it for a few months.

Art lessons. Offer a few private or group art classes to younger children. Let them paint, sculpt with clay or make paper mache. The messier the project, the more the parents will love you for doing the clean up (and pay you for it)!

Artist. Use your skills to paint or draw portraits of people, houses or pets—the more personal the better. Charge an additional fee to mat and frame the drawing.

Russ has two broken lawn mowers in his garage. He offered them to his son for a micro business. “Fix these up and start a business to sell them,” he encouraged his son, Brady. Brady might only work on those two lawn mowers and then close the business if he does not care for the work. Or he may find out he is good at it lawn mower repair and keep the business growing.

One student made her babysitting micro business unique by advertised to neighbors that she was hosting a regular babysitting service every Tuesday evening from 6:00 to 8:00 pm in her home. Her customers could plan ahead knowing they had babysitting that evening.

Author. Write articles for magazines in print or on the web and get paid. Start by reading some books about writing for magazines. Consider writing your own book and self publish it. Electronic books—ebooks—are a quick and easy way to sell what you write. See Chapter Five for links to get you started on self publishing.

Baby sitting. The time-honored profession of teenagers is babysitting. Put a unique twist on your business by adding extra services such as laundry, chauffeur, pet-walking or light housecleaning for an extra fee. Offer a short time frame of child care, such as two to three hours on a regular basis. Parents can use the time for running errands or going out. Watch

several children at once to maximize your profit.

Baking. Many people will hire someone to bake something as simple as cupcakes! There are several zoning and health regulations when preparing food for resale, so check with your local county extension office to learn your local area regulations. The Appendix has some helpful information and links.

Bookkeeping. If you've taken a basic accounting class, you can do some bookkeeping. You can charge a higher rate if you learn an accounting package like QuickBooks. Visit your library or local bookstore for information on the software or your local community college may also offer classes. There are also on-line QuickBooks training classes, some for free! Find them by doing an internet search on "learn QuickBooks online"

Hannah makes luscious buckeye candies every Christmas and pockets a nice profit. Buckeyes are peanut butter balls dipped in chocolate. Yum!

Candy making. Similar to the baking, but candy making may have different health requirements that are easier to live with. Box them up nicely and candy can make an excellent gift.

A single idea / the sudden flash of a thought / may be worth a million dollars.

Robert Collier, author of self help books

Car-detailing. Wash, wax and vacuum inside of cars and minivans. Do it like the professionals. Offer to go to the customers home for an additional fee.

Catering. You can offer to work under a professional caterer to learn the ropes before you launch your own business. Health regulations are strict when it comes to food preparation, so be sure to read the section in the Appendix on preparing food at home for resale.

Cleaning. houses, garages, yards and cars all need to be cleaned at some point. You could be the person that gets paid for doing it! It may be hard work and you will get messy, but cleaning pays very well.

Kalief Rollins sells a T-shirt that reads "Caution: Educated African American Male." He won a \$10,000 grand prize from the National Youth Entrepreneurship Competition for his micro business.

Clothing. Screen printing T-shirts, shorts or sweat pants can be very profitable, especially if you come up with a catchy phrase. Some teenagers make clothing for others to try out fashion design as a career.

Computer Help Desk. Be on call from your home or for an additional fee, make house calls to sick computers. Or just answer