

By ANTONIO DAVIS and AVA RONNING, as told to ELLEN SONG

If you've ever dreamed about turning your passion into a career, you're not alone. According to recent surveys, more than fifty percent of teens would like to run their own business. There are some definite perks to converting your hobby into a part-time job. You get to set your own hours, be your own boss, and do what you love. And, of course, you make money! But running your own business isn't always fun. It can be a lot of work.

Think you're up for the challenge? We interviewed two teens who are converting their love of fashion into cash. Read on to learn more about the rewards and challenges of turning your hobby into a part-time job.

Antonio has always loved making sneakers look good as new.



El Hiller for Scholastic

Ava is often asked where she gets her pants made from T-shirts.



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ONLINE POLL!

Would you ever consider running your own business?
• Sign me up! • Nope.
Go to [scholastic.com/choices](https://www.scholastic.com/choices).

VOCABULARY

profit: money gained after all the expenses are subtracted from the amount received
template: pattern or mold used as a guide to form an item

Cashing In on Fashion

Want to make money doing what you love? Learn from two teens who rescue clothes and shoes as a side hustle.

Antonio uses different tools depending on the material of the shoe.



Antonio Davis, 18, Columbus, OH

PASSION: Sneakers

SIDE HUSTLE: Restoring shoes

I've always had a thing for shoes. I prefer my shoelaces loose, a look that some people call "freaking" your shoes. But that doesn't mean I like dirty shoes. I keep my shoes fresh and clean.

A few years ago, I started cleaning shoes for my friends and family members. People began to leave me cash tips. I realized there was enough demand that I could turn shoe-cleaning into a side business. In

early 2020, I started to focus on making a **profit**. I got customers through word of mouth and Instagram. I also was written about in a local paper. After that, the shoe store DSW gave me a workspace in a store so I could attract more customers, which was a great way to spread the word.

It takes me about an hour to clean a pair of shoes. I use shoe-cleaning kits, which include brushes and leather conditioners. I also do research on different materials. For example, you can't use water on suede (a type of soft leather) because it will ruin the material. I

work on all kinds of shoes, including dress shoes.

These days, I spend about five to eight hours per week on my business. I charge about \$20 for a simple clean and \$30 for a deep clean. My customers usually drop off and pick up their shoes. If I drive over to pick them up, I charge more, because that's an additional service. I have to think about the profit I can make after I account for my time and the money I spend on tools, but I also want my prices to reflect what I can offer. When you're pricing your services, you have to make sure that you can deliver on your promises.

In the future, I plan to attend community college and then transfer to a university in Florida. I'd like to major in business administration so that I can learn how to take my work to the next level. I think there could be a real demand for my services in Florida, since people will be out and about in the good weather, wanting their shoes to look nice and clean.

ANTONIO'S ADVICE:

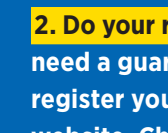
Get comfortable marketing yourself. Don't just put yourself on social media. Pass out business cards and talk to people. Do whatever you have to do to get your name and business out there.

How to Start Your Own Business



1. Come up with an idea.

Do you have a hobby you could get paid for?



2. Do your research. You might need a guardian's help to register your business or start a website. Check the laws in your state. You also might have to pay taxes on money you earn from your business.



3. Set your prices. Think about the time and expenses related to running your business.



4. Market yourself. Get the word out through social media or post flyers in your neighborhood.

FASHIONABLY GOOD

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more than 9 million tons of clothes and shoes end up buried in landfills each year. Landfills contribute to air and water pollution and to climate change. In addition to pursuing their passions and making extra cash, Antonio and Ava are helping to ensure that clothing and shoes stay out of landfills for as long as possible.

Ava Ronning, 17, New York, NY



Ava spends five to six hours making each pair of pants.

PASSION: Thrifting

SIDE HUSTLE: Designing custom pants

I've always been into making things. When I was 9, I attended a camp where I learned to sew, and I made stuffed animals and clothes. Fashion is definitely a big passion of mine.

I also enjoy thrifting. Last year, my closet was overflowing with shirts I'd bought at thrift stores. I got the idea to

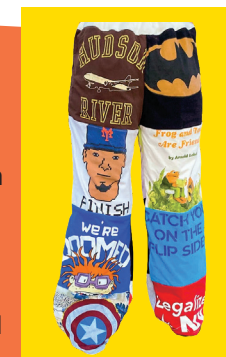
cut patches out of the T-shirts and sew them together to make pants. I made my first pair of pants over the summer of 2022. I worked at Brandy Melville, and people would ask where they could buy the pants. I thought I could create a business. In January 2023, I set up a profile on Instagram advertising my clothing line.

There's a lot of work that goes into these pants. First, I buy T-shirts from the bargain bins at Goodwill. Next, I create a **template** for the pants with a plain white sheet. Finally, I cut out panels of fabric from the shirts, arrange them, and sew them onto the template.

I currently sell each pair for \$95. People have said I could sell them for much more, but I want to make them as affordable as possible for other teens. I originally wanted to sell them for \$50 or less, but then I realized that I spend five or six

hours sewing each pair of pants. I had to find a middle ground between buyers being able to afford them and how much I want to be paid for my time. Right now I only have time to make about one pair of pants each week.

One of my goals for the upcoming year is to try to get my pants into a store. I'm also trying to get better at the less creative aspects of maintaining a business. I enjoy sewing the clothes way more than taking photos or updating my Instagram or website. But I know that stuff is important.



I'd love to keep making clothes in the future. I want to study other subjects in college, so I'm not necessarily planning to dedicate the rest of my life to my business. But I do want to continue for as long as I can.

Maybe I can get to the point where I could even hire a friend or two to help me with marketing.

AVA'S ADVICE:

Try your best to stay committed and follow through. Even if there are parts of your business that are difficult or not the most fun, you have to keep going.

Eli Hillier for Scholastic (Antonio Davis); Courtesy of Family (Ava Ronning and Her Designs)