

Choosing your tactic

CAMPAIGN BOOTCAMP

Choosing the right tactic is crucial. A good tactic not only can help influence our target, but can also help us make new allies, get new members, get a higher profile and bond as a group.

At this point the danger is we get carried away with excitement or anger and don't think through which tactics we should use and why. This resource sheet gives you some things to think about when deciding which tactic or tactics to use and how. Remember, small groups of people can organise some very successful actions even with very few resources.

There are two things to think about when planning a tactic; the impact on the group and the impact on the target and the other audiences.



The Focus E15 campaign was started by a group of young mothers who were evicted by East Thames Housing Association after Newham Council cut its funding for the Focus E15 hostel for young homeless people. Here, members demonstrate outside the Housing Office of the local Council. Credit: Focus E15

The right tactic for us

When planning your tactic you'll want to consider how the tactic might affect your group.

Your skills and resources

Have a think about what skills you need to successfully pull off the tactic. Do you have them within the group? If you don't, think about how you can get those skills or maybe team up with another group that does. It may be helpful to use the Everyday Activism skills audit. If you decide you don't have all the skills you need but are going to step out of your comfort zone and give it a go anyway (good for you!), talk about what the risks are and what you can do as a group to support each other to make it a success.

Tip

The American activist training organisation the Midwest Academy suggests you ask yourself the following questions:

1. Can you really do it? Do you have the needed people, time and resources?
2. Is it within the experience of your own members and are they comfortable with it?
3. Do you have enough leaders experienced enough to do it?
4. Will people enjoy participating in it?

Ideas for tactics

Making an announcement: public speech, letter in the paper, public declaration, launch a report

Processions: marches, parades

Reaching the wider public: slogan, banner, poster, leaflet (through everyone's door), newspapers, radio, TV, human banner, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, blog, street stall, on line petition, paper petition, face to face conversations (knocking on doors)

Reaching decision makers: meet them, phone them, email them, tweet them, write, hustings, letter writing campaign

Drama and music: funny skits or pranks, performing plays and music, singing, street theatre, film screening/film night

Public gatherings: public meeting, teach-in, rally, information workshop, exhibition

Not co-operating: walk out, silence, turn your back, strike, stay at home, consumer boycott, refuse to pay fees or debts, refuse to take government money, resign, boycott elections, picket, boycott government department, remove signs, non-violent direct action

Others: mock funeral, sit in, stand in, blockade, flash mob, occupation, projecting an image/message, vigils, make a submission, graffiti, spoof website, launch a day of action, take legal action, get a celebrity on your side, mock awards and so many many more.

This list is drawn from '198 Methods of non-violent action' by Gene Sharp, the website Beautiful Trouble and lots of our own experiences

Try role playing what you think might happen so everyone is clear how to respond to different scenarios and who should do what. If you're not happy think about choosing a different tactic.



Members of Apna Haq, a group that provides support to BME women and girl survivors of domestic violence in Rotherham, design their own banner to take to a protest outside parliament, demanding the end to the Government's 'No recourse to public funds' policy.

The 'No recourse to public funds' policy did not allow women with insecure immigration status to access support from public services, even if they had experienced abuse meaning that women were forced to stay with abusive partners or face destitution.

Some in your group will love some of the ideas for tactics in the box on the previous page, some in your group will not. It's important to talk these through with each other before deciding which one/s you are going to choose to reach your target. Here are some questions to think about when making your decision:

Target

Will our tactic send the right message to our target and encourage or pressure them to take action? If it is successful will it help us to reach our campaign goal?

Relationships

Will our tactic be a positive thing for our relationships with other groups that are not our target? (Will our allies welcome it and what about those groups we think are neutral?)

Timing

is this the right time for this tactic? (Are there certain events taking place that our tactic fits well with? Some tactics are best for when your campaign is just starting, and some are best for later, for example if you have not reached your target or need to recruit more supporters)

Us

Do we have the skills, knowledge and energy to organise this tactic? Is everyone in the group comfortable with it?

Tip

It's important to try and get group agreement on which tactic to use. One way to do this is to: 1) take a piece of flip chart and write all the tactics the group think could work on one side, probably no more than five 2) as a group score each tactic out of 10 according to how they answer the 4 questions opposite. The totals should give you a better idea of which tactic might be best for you.

Taking care of each other

Campaign tactics can be stressful. Make sure everyone has the space to talk honestly about how they feel about taking part in the tactic. For a tactic to be successful lots of tasks need completing, some are behind the scenes jobs and others are more high profile. This means there's a job for everyone.



Tip Using humour

In some situations, humour is appropriate, in others it is not. Examples include the student who pushed a peanut with his nose to Downing Street to protest about student debt. Have a look at the you tube video - The Peanut Protest or the school boys who dressed in skirts in a school uniform protest

Other resources

You can find out more by looking at the Everyday Activism 'Tactic Star' resource sheet and the 'Organising your tactic' resource sheet or

198 methods <https://www.aeinsteinst.org/nonviolentaction/198-methods-of-nonviolent-action/>

Beautiful trouble <http://beautifultrouble.org/tactic/>

Peanut protest <https://youtu.be/GYiOFC6e0Oo>