

Escalation Guide

Why?

- To increase pressure on targets where other tactics have failed
- Keeps campaign fun and exciting for supporters and team members
- Physical demonstration of power
- Demonstrates a refusal to back down

What?

Escalation takes place all throughout your campaign and can be anything from a petition delivery to a sit-in. Your group should be constantly finding escalation points and ways to build power. Forms of escalation become louder and bolder as the campaign continues without results. At some point, we win. Non-violent direct action (NVDA) is the term used to describe these points of escalation.

Non-Violent Direct Action

Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA) is a broad concept that occurs when a group of people take action to reveal and bring attention to an issue while directly pressuring decision makers to act.

A core principle of NVDA is that of non-violence, this principle stems from the idea that to create change in society we must act in a way that represents our vision of the society we want to create. It is also acknowledged that violence has rarely achieved positive social change. Examples of NVDA used throughout history include Gandhi's passive resistance movement and the US civil rights movement.

Planning for Success

Action Coordinator. Having an Action Coordinator, either on a continuous or an action-by-action basis, is crucial for ensuring escalation tactics run smoothly and meet their objections.

The person in this role would be responsible for:

- Organising logistics and materials for actions and events
- Briefing participants
- Liaising with media coordinator
- Organising volunteers for the roles of the day

- Coordinating promotion of events

Training. It is important that before your group undertakes the louder, bolder forms of non-violent direct action, volunteers undergo NVDA training. This will allow participants to feel comfortable and confident about the process, as well as reducing the risk of trauma and arrest. Even if an action is not arrestable, NVDA can be challenging for participants.

Objectives. When planning for an action, make sure your group defines exactly what your objectives are, whether it be to build awareness, gain media, to put pressure on individual decision-makers or all of the above. This will determine what sort of action you choose, how you execute the action and your messaging. All actions must have an objective to ensure effectiveness and avoid wasting time and resources.

Roles. There are a broad variety of roles within actions that should be delegated in advance of the action. Some of these may already be filled within your campaign group. Some roles include:

- Media liaison
- Media Spokesperson
- Photographer/ videographer
- Student/public liaison outreach volunteers
- Resources/arts/banner organiser
- First aid and welfare
- Police and security liaison
- Observers

Important Things to Consider. As well as your overall objective, there are a number of things to consider when organising an action. These include:

- Logistics: when, where, who and how
- How will the action be perceived by the public and the media
- Training requirements
- Participant briefing and debriefing sessions
- Messaging for banners, chants and media
- Saul Alinsky's Rules for Radicals:
 - "Never go outside the expertise of your people." It results in confusion, fear and retreat. Feeling secure adds to the backbone of anyone.
 - "Whenever possible, go outside the expertise of the enemy."

Types of Actions

NVDA can be divided into three main categories, listed below. with examples.

Nonviolent protest and persuasion actions are considered low level confrontation and can be used early in a campaign to gain community awareness and media attention, these include:

- Rallies, marches, parades
- Vigils
- Petition/open letter deliveries
- Guerilla theatre
- Public meetings
- Mock awards
- Banner drops
- Photo actions
- Creative stunts
- Public Speeches
- Picketing
- Posters
- “Haunting” officials

Non Cooperation action could be considered more confrontational and could be the next step to take after nonviolent protest and persuasion has proven to be unsuccessful, including:

- Boycotts
- Strikes
- Walk-outs
- Refusing to pay
- Refusing to obey rules
- Turning one’s back
- Renouncing honors

Nonviolent intervention is the strongest variety of NVDA and is the most confrontational. Examples include:

- Blockades
- Walk-ins
- Hunger strikes
- Creative intervention: open alternative fund for alumni donations
- Sit-ins stand-ins, ride-ins
- Lock-ons
- Obstruction
- Hunger strike
- Overloading of administrative systems

It is advisable to move from the milder forms of persuasion and protest through to more confrontational forms of NVDA. If your group jumps straight to the confrontational end, you risk losing the support of your supporter base and the media. You need to show

that you have exhausted the more accepted forms of protest before advancing to a confrontational space.

Examples of Actions

There are a variety of escalation actions which campus divestment groups across the world have used to build awareness and pressure for their campaign.

A Mining Site at the University of Sydney Greenpeace staged a mock mining site on campus to raise awareness of the University's investments in Whitehaven Coal. This is a form of nonviolent persuasion and protest, aimed at building awareness on campus.



Silent Demonstration for Divest Tulane (New Orleans) Students of Divest Tulane in the US chose to stand silently outside a divestment meeting with board members. Standing silently lining the walls of the entrance way into the meeting they dressed in business attire, held signs and taped their mouths shut while board members and their fellow divestment campaigners trailed in. This is also a form of protest and persuasion, with the goal of putting direct pressure on decision-makers.

Fossil Free UCL Die-In Fossil Free University College London staged a die-in in the entranceway to their University Council Meeting. This forced council members to have to step over students to enter the building. This is a form of non-violent intervention, chosen to escalate the campaign to a more confrontational footing after the university refused any further direct communication with them.



Divest Harvard Hunger Fast Fossil Free Harvard chose a non-violent intervention tactic of a hunger fast for 3 days to bring attention to divestment. The fast for 72 hours represents the 72% of students who voted for divestment. They also encouraged others from around the world to join in solidarity.



Action Planning Template and Checklist

1. What is the action? What type of NVDA is it?
2. What are the objectives of the action?
3. Where and when are you holding the action?
4. Who is your target and audience?
5. How does it fit into your strategy?
6. Logistics
 - a. What resources do you need?
 - b. What is the time frame for the action?
 - c. Where is the meeting place?
7. Safety and Legals
 - a. What are the security and legal implications of this action?
 - b. Are there any safety risks and how will they be managed?
 - c. Do you have security and police procedures in place?
 - d. Has a police and security liaison been assigned?
8. Media
 - a. Do you have a media strategy in place? What is it?
 - b. What media are you inviting?
 - c. What is your main message?
 - d. Has a media liaison and spokesperson been assigned?
9. Roles
 - a. What roles and responsibility need to be assigned leading up to the action?
 - b. What roles and responsibility need to be assigned during the action and who will take on these roles.
eg. employee liaison, media liaison, police liaison, first aid officer, legal advisor, observers, photography videography, general action participants, public engagement
10. Contingency planning
 - a. What could go wrong?
 - b. How will this be managed?
11. Brief and Debriefing
 - a. What is the plan for briefing and debriefing volunteers and attendees?