

# A GUIDE TO CAMPUS ORGANIZING



# FIND A TEAM

Organizing takes a village and you cannot healthily organize protests or petitions on your own. This work affects your mental, physical, and emotional health, so find other individuals who share your passion for organizing and develop a core team.

We recommend having at least 4-5 people on your core team.

**You will also have to decide on a leadership structure.** Working in teams can be difficult, especially when doing work that involves so much emotional labor. That is why we suggest a flattened hierarchy. You must have mutual respect for your fellow organizers.

Divide up tasks and roles amongst peers that can be trusted. Hold each other accountable for each of your tasks to be completed.

## FOR EXAMPLE:

**Protest Lead:** The individual who will lead physical protests, create chants and keep the flow of the demonstration organized

**Resource Coordinator:** The individual who is able to obtain resources for protests or organized actions.

**Social Media Coordinator:** The individual who is comfortable creating social media graphics, sharing details, and getting engagement in anticipation of the protests/actions to come.

**Outreach/Media Coordinator:** The individual who reaches out to supportive students, professors, organizations and groups for support and/or contacts the media before an organized demonstration.



# CAMPUS PROTOCOLS

Many universities have guidelines in their student handbook on organizing protests, passing out flyers or promoting petitions. It is important to understand your university's procedures concerning student demonstrations.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** You may have to meet with administrators before your demonstration in order to avoid serious punishment.

If your university is generally supportive of demonstrations and will allow students to express their concerns, you might be able to collaborate with certain administrators to get resources or space for your demonstration.

However, if your university is not supportive, it would likely be safer to not collaborate closely with the administration. You may want to keep the information shared with them to a minimum because there is a chance they will try to shut down your demonstration before it happens.

Ultimately, it is best practice to follow any explicitly stated rules about protesting so that you do not put yourself or other students in danger. That being said, there may be ways for you to still accomplish your goals while working within the bounds of university policy. That is why it is important to understand the rules.

You should also debrief your core organizers on what to do in case of conflict with campus officials (or counterprotesters). Decide on what strategy feels the safest. If you do face conflict and feel comfortable doing so, film everything. The resistance that you face is part of your story.

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## PICK AN ACTION

Organizing on campus can take many different forms. **For example: protests, petitions, letter writing, unauthorized student club gatherings, email blasts, flyers, chalking, art installations, confronting administrators, sit-ins, etc.** You must decide what form of organizing will be most effective in helping you reach your goal, or what form of organizing is most attainable for your group in the context of your campus.

For issues on your campus that are ongoing, such as an anti-LGBTQ+ policy, sustained organizing is often necessary. Do not feel like you have to accomplish every goal with one demonstration. You can be effective by organizing multiple forms of protest throughout the year and keeping pressure on the university.

There will be different things to consider based on the demonstration.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

**If you are planning a physical protest**, you have to pick a location. You may want to pick a location where many people walk through or intersect. Your location should be accessible to those with disabilities. If you are on campus, consider choosing a central location that is near public property where news coverage or community members could join and not get kicked off campus. And if you cannot safely meet on campus, choose a location that is near enough to campus that people could walk or access using public transportation.

**If you are writing a petition**, consider how you are going to ensure that the target of your petition receives the information. After you have collected signatures, you may want to print out the petition and the list of signatures and hand-deliver it to someone in your administration. Or, if that is not possible, you can send the petition and signatures in an email. This may increase your chance of getting a response.

# 4 GATHER RESOURCES

If you are planning a physical demonstration, you likely need supplies. Unfortunately, some supplies you need cost money or may be hard to find.

**If your campus community is passionate about the issue you are protesting, you can try crowdfunding for supplies.** You can get in contact with student groups or trusted professors to help you spread the word. If you have an active alumni network, some alumni may have more resources and finances to donate to the cause, especially if they experienced similar harm at the university. If you do crowdfund money, please remain transparent with the campus community and make sure you only use the money on organizing. Also, think on a budget: dollar stores often have tons of supplies for very cheap.

One benefit of being on a college campus is that there are often supplies and resources that you can find around campus, too. **Utilize whatever you can from your university.** Again, there may be professors or student groups who will let you borrow things that they already have. Be resourceful and use your connections. Even if you do not have financial resources, you can still find ways to secure what you need by utilizing networks on campus. Do not let money be a barrier. And if it is, then you can plan a demonstration that does not require any additional supplies.

## **FOR EXAMPLE:**

If you are planning a protest, you may need things like: megaphones or microphones, a sound system, student speeches, a list of chants, chairs for individuals who cannot stand, transcripts for those who have trouble with auditory processing, and decorations like streamers, flags, poster boards, party squeakers, etc.

# 5 SPREAD THE WORD

**This might be the most important part of organizing, especially if you want to get other people involved in your protests.** You not only want people to know what actions you plan on taking, but also to know why you are taking them. Your activism is telling a story about what is happening on campus.

**Social media is the most effective way to reach students, supportive staff and faculty, and the broader campus community.** Even if you do not have a direct action planned, you can create a social media account that documents the issues that students at your school are protesting. This is especially important if your college has a long history of discriminating against marginalized students. A social media account like this can also help people feel seen, supported and connected to the cause. Additionally, most colleges and universities do not like negative attention, and publishing the injustices at your school holds them accountable in the public eye. If you fear individual retaliation from the university, this account can be managed completely anonymously.

If you keep an active social media account, then when you organize a demonstration, you can tap into your existing followers for support. Additionally, you can try leaving stacks of flyers around campus in public buildings or asking your professors for permission to announce a demonstration to the class.

**If you do plan a physical demonstration, reach out to media outlets in your city.** Many newspapers have tip lines and would love to run the story about a protest at a local university. It never hurts to reach out. You should have a few individuals prepared to talk to the press about your protest and why it is important. Among your core team, talk with one another about how to engage with the media and what narrative you tell them, especially if you attend an institution where you may face retaliation. If you do not feel comfortable having your protest on the news, then don't. Ultimately, your safety is the most important thing.

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# SUPPORT EACH OTHER

**The truth is that organizing is hard.**

Some people may look at student protestors and think it looks glamorous or exciting, but those who have been there know that it is emotionally, physically, and mentally draining. Student protestors have to balance fighting against injustices with the realities of being a student: you still have class, you still have work, and you still have other responsibilities.

It is crucial to support one another if you want to be an organizer. You should not, and cannot, organize alone. Neither should you organize with people who you do not trust to carry this heavy burden alongside you.

Be patient with one another. There may be moments where emotions will flare and things will get difficult. Especially if the injustice you are fighting against affects you and your peers personally. But always remember that you are working towards the same goal.

**YOU CANNOT SPARK A FIRE**  
**IF YOU BURN YOURSELF**  
**OUT FIRST.**