



NOW-NYC Activist Guide: Planning a Protest

What Are You Protesting? Why Are You Protesting?

- Have a clear mission and end goal -
 - a boycott of a product? Protesting outside legislator's office to get a bill passed or denied? To demand they hold a town hall and respond to their constituents? Raising awareness?
 - Recent NOW examples: NYPD in Greenpoint, Brooklyn; Donald Trump p***y grabbing video; sexual harassment at McDonald's; TIME magazine - "feminist" is not a bad word.
 - Protests in support of something – Example: Resist Brooklyn group that marched in front of NY Times and journalist offices in support of the free press
- Write talking points
 - You need to be able to tell others in a short, clear way what you're doing and why it's important.

Set a Date, Time, and Place

- Once you've picked a date, time and location for your protest, notify the Community Affairs division of your local police precinct.
 - Find your precinct via the NYPD Precinct Finder tool on www.nyc.gov/NYPD
 - It's good to give them a heads-up about what you'll be doing, if you have a sound permit, give them an idea of how many people to expect. This will help if you are expecting a large crowd and need metal barricades.
- If you want to use amplified sound, you must apply for a sound permit from the NYPD.
 - Pick your protest location. This will determine to which precinct you need to submit your application.
 - Outside a Trump building, a corporation's headquarters if you're boycotting their product, a central spot like Union Square - depends on the mission of your protest but location is very important in getting crowds and press to attend!
 - Submit the application with a minimum 5-day notice before the protest
 - Check with the precinct about forms of payment they will accept for \$45 fee (cash, check, money order)
- If you want to hold the protest in a public park (Washington Square, Union Square), you'll need to apply separately to the Parks Department for a permit. <https://www.nycgovparks.org/rules/section-2-08>
 - You must submit application minimum of 21 days before the event!
 - \$25 fee
 - <https://nyceventpermits.nyc.gov/Parks/>

Organize Your Program

- Decide the format of your protest
 - A formal list of speakers?
 - Impromptu speak-out?
 - Sit-in?
 - Performance art activism?
 - Are you inviting elected officials?
 - Are you inviting organizations to co-sponsor?
- Create a run-of-show document

- You need to block off minute by minute what will happen. Always be prepared for your plans to change on the fly, but you should be as organized and detailed as possible in the planning.
- Brainstorm chants - Chants are perfect for energizing the crowd, breaking up speaking portions of the protest. Practice them with friends, say them aloud. Keep them short and focused.
 - Popular ones: call and repeat
 - "Tell Me What Democracy Looks Like. This is What Democracy Looks Like"
 - "Hey ho, XXX has got to go"
 - "What do we want? XXXXX When do we want it? NOW"

Build Your Team

- Recruit volunteers to assist with outreach and press in weeks/days leading to protest and volunteers for day-of assistance
- Ask your networks for connections - graphic designers and artists to make flyers and signs, communications professionals that can connect you to local press - don't be shy to ask for help

Market Your Movement

- Designing your signs
 - Catchy slogans - McDonald's sexual harassment example "one big mac, extra cheese, hold the sexual harassment"
 - Puns, clever phrases - think what would make the news
 - We recommend foam poster board - sturdy, easy-to-hold and photographs well.
 - Stick to a color scheme for the signs; a cohesive look (If you're hand coloring them - for example, all the Take Rape Seriously signs are black and red)
 - Clear messages. If someone just saw a photo of your signs at the protest, would they know what you were protesting?
 - Ex: "Don't Shackle Pregnant Women"
 - If you're going to get signs printed - see if you can find a volunteer graphic designer to help you pro bono.
- Pick a hashtag
 - Always check on Twitter first to see if it's already widely in use for a different cause, if there's anything inappropriate that's linked to it.
- Draft a press advisory and press release
- Create graphics - flyers, social media squares

Community Outreach - Who Are You Inviting?

- The communities that are at stake by the issue you are protesting should be leading the movement - i.e., rape survivors advocating for improved NYPD response to sexual assault, immigrants advocating about deportation and the ban, people of color advocating to end systemic racism
 - All voices are welcome to support the cause but we need those most impacted at the center of the table.
- Outreach
 - Social media (Facebook event, posts, Twitter) - make a schedule for promotions, countdowns, different features on speakers or causes, retweeting and tagging people in posts
 - Submit to online event calendars (Time Out NY, AM NY, Metro, Village Voice, neighborhood newspapers, etc.)
 - Post flyers in local community centers, businesses, schools, libraries, senior centers
 - Send to local elected officials (Council, State Assembly) and ask to be featured in their email newsletters, website calendars, or social media
 - Send to organizations (advocacy groups, Democratic clubs, professional associations, affinity groups)
 - Have a sign-making party a few days before with your volunteers, also a way to garner interest in the event

Get Press Coverage

- Create a press list - TV, radio, print, online
 - Contact Spanish language media and other foreign-language media if applicable
 - Make cold calls to news desks to find out which email address you can send your press advisory to
 - Have an elevator pitch ready for making calls. News desks are busy and they like short, to the point phone calls!
- Send press advisory multiple times and at strategic times
 - press advisory to announce event 1 week before, 3 days before, morning of - at 6am
- Send press release
 - Schedule press release to be sent out to press during protest (maybe 30 minutes into it)

Know the Protest Laws

- Stick to your route if marching
 - Know that police officers will lie or mislead protestors in order to obtain arrests. For example, hundreds of Occupy Wall Street protestors were arrested at a permitted march when police directed them to alter their route off the designated march route where they were subsequently waiting with arresting officers and NYPD buses
- Sound permits - see above in "**Set a Date, Time, & Place**"
- No sticks or poles on signs
 - You can use cardboard poster tubes instead
- Do not affix signs to city property (street signs, lampposts, hydrants, etc.)
- Sidewalk chalk is allowed
- Civil Disobedience – know you will be arrested if blocking traffic, damaging property, or protesting without permits; know contact information for Legal Aid Society or attorney & get names of anyone arrested to follow up with legal help and bail.
- <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/what-do-if-your-rights-are-violated-demonstration-or-protest>
 - Check out this Factsheet from the ACLU https://www.dropbox.com/s/5wfjsvdc0wlpqs/KnowYourRights_protests.pdf?dl=0

Get Your Supplies Ready

- Sidewalk chalk
- Signs
- Wireless mic and amplifier, or megaphone
- Makeshift podium - microphone stand with a sign, a crate to stand on to create a stage
- Cameras, tripods, extra batteries for equipment and smart phones
- Printed copies of run-of-show with lineup, key contact information
- Printed copies of volunteer assignments
- Printed copies of press you are expecting
- Clipboard and pens, scrap paper to write down names of new volunteers, press
- A bucket and drumsticks, whistles, tambourines - make some noise!
- Half sheets of paper printed with chants

At the Protest

- **Optics:** Be sure your group is positioned in a way to get the best photo. Be ready to move the crowd, politely rearrange people and tell them to hold signs up high!
- **Chants and noise:** Start off with chants, be ready to intersperse chants throughout program to break up speaking - use bucket, drumsticks, tambourines, whistles, etc.
- **Signs:** Have someone distribute signs to the crowd, collect email addresses of people in the crowd to follow up with them.
- **Press:** Have a volunteer dedicated to managing the press. Collecting their business cards, directing them to organizers and leaders, exchanging contact info.

After the Protest

- “Thank you” emails to volunteers
- Follow up call to action in an email, set up a next meeting of your group
- Follow up with press if they attended protest - email them the press release

Recap: Timeline for Planning a Protest

- 1-2 weeks before protest:
 - Decide mission, purpose, and talking points
 - Notify NYPD and apply for permits
 - (if you want to use a NYC Parks space, you need minimum of a 3 week notice)
 - Formulate outreach and press strategy
 - Recruit volunteer team
- 1-3 days before protest:
 - Make signs
 - Meet with volunteers to review roles
 - Last push of outreach
 - Finalize run-of-show
- Day of protest:
 - Press advisory
 - Mobilize crowd
 - Pass out signs and written materials, if any
 - Document action and event with photo, video, social media
 - Action
 - Engage with press and crowd
- Post-protest:
 - Follow up