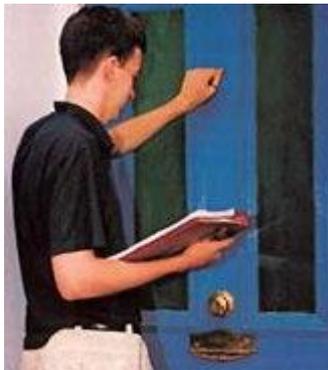


Community organising



Information, guides and tips on organising around issues which affect you and other people living in your local area.

Door knocking guide



Tips for effectively carrying out door-knocking visits and talking to people in your local area.

In community politics, door knocking plays an essential role. From just getting to know your neighbours better, to carrying out a local survey or trying to sign people up to a local campaign or petition talking to people at home is a valuable exercise, due to its face-to-face nature,

However, it can be a daunting task, so we put together a set of tips to help you on your way, with pre-planning and then how to act on people's doorsteps.

Before you go

- ☑ Never go out on a rainy day, people are put off if you look like a drowned rat or are covered with a hood, hat or umbrella
- ☑ Similarly, avoid going out if you are ill.
- ☑ Dress smartly; not necessarily suited but ironed and clean. Don't look like a burglar or bailiff - people are less likely to answer the door to someone wandering up their drive with a big hood or black hat and scarf...
- ☑ It's best to start organising with your closer neighbours, so you have a basic trust already

☐ The best time to go knocking is during daylight hours. It is best not to go around dinner time. Yes people will be home, but they won't be happy to talk. Similarly, don't go just after work, people need at least half an hour to relax before doing anything like talking to strangers.

☐ It's always good to have a clip board in you hand - even if you don't really need it, take one with some leaflets on.

☐ The resident's first point of eye contact is either your face or the clipboard so always make sure that your group or campaign's header is present and clearly visible on the board.

☐ Depending what sort of thing you're doing it could be useful to have two sets of leaflets, one for people who are out or answer the door and tell you they've got no time and a separate one for people who are more interested.

☐ If you have enough time it is worth calling back to houses that didn't answer the first time. Just make sure that you keep an accurate record of which houses you spoke to people in or else you'll end up calling on the same person several times and they'll get pissed off.....

☐ Bring a sheet to note down the contact details of particularly interested people.

☐ Some people have put a card through the doors of the areas to be visited announcing the time they'll be along - if people don't want to talk they can just put the card in the window to indicate they're not interested. While time-consuming this can be worthwhile.

☐ If you're leafleting for a 'controversial' issue (e.g. anti-fascist) then start at the top of a tower block, otherwise you may have to walk down past hostile people who might have been alerted by your leaflets.

At the door

☐ Say the most important thing first. Avoid apologising for bothering them in the first sentence – people prefer you get to the point of why you're calling.

☐ The person opening the door won't want to hear too much complicated stuff in the first minute or so leave aside complicated explanations in favour of making a good first impression

☐ If you seem confident and relaxed, so will they - if you're nervous and tense then they will also tend to react defensively.

☐ Use inclusive gestures, open stance - never cross arms while you speak, or stand like you are about to leave for example.

☐ Don't be intimidating, and don't approach people's doors in groups.

☐ Remember to smile; don't go if you're in a bad mood. People always pick up on it.

☐ Look people in the eye, use a strong handshake – it makes you seem more trustworthy.

☐ Always be honest about what you know and don't know - don't flannel to sound more informed.

☒ Know your script, and answers to frequently asked questions, so you don't fumble your words when asked.

☒ It sounds silly, but your knocking style is important. If you sound too official, people may not come to the door.

☒ Behave from the moment you touch the gate - people often hear it and will check you through the curtains. Close the gate behind you, and don't walk on the grass. Close the gate behind you when you leave as well.

Finally...

You shouldn't be nervous about knocking on people's doors. Most people are very nice even if they're not interested in what you have to say. It helps if you have a leaflet to give people because then you can refer to it, point out the date and venue of a meeting etc. Also if what you're trying to organise is local and for the good of the community then you have an immediate advantage over most people who are door-knocking for other reasons.

Once you've knocked on a few doors and got some feedback it's plain sailing usually, although don't be disappointed if all the people who seemed enthusiastic don't actually turn up to a meeting or event.

Last of all, enjoy it! It's a great buzz when you get into it, and a great way to get to know people in your community.

libcom.org

With tips from the users of libcom.org/forums and the Festival of Dissent, 2005

Key ideas for community organising



Some very broad basic ideas for getting started at organising in your local area.

Firstly, remember: If you are going to do community organising, do it in your own area! Don't be a missionary!

Research and preparation

Look around your local area and determine what issues it faces. Talk to your neighbours, what issues do they think are important regarding the area. Determine what kinds of projects you can develop or direct action you can take that meet the area's needs or address the community's issues.

Find out if others are already working on the problems in their area and if they've been effective and what you can learn from them. Determine what kinds of resources you have available and who in your area might be useful allies in accomplishing your goals.

Volunteering or starting your own group

If there is a group doing work in your area and they are effective, it would be a good idea to volunteer with them to gain experience. If there is no group doing work on the issues you are concerned about or existing groups are not effective, start your own group but try to remain on friendly terms with existing groups.

Planning

Set a goal. Devise objectives (or strategies) to achieve the goal. Devise actions to achieve the objectives.

Community-building projects

Plan everything you do in your area with an effort to bring people in the community together and get them involved. Make a special effort to get people in the area who are not politically conscious to work on projects and become active.

In short, gear your work towards not just helping the community but towards actually strengthening a sense of community.

Fight prejudice as you organise

Make a special effort to ensure that your organisation and its projects reflect the racial, ethnic and gender diversity in the community and make sexual equality and anti-racism explicit parts of your organisation's politics and policies.

Get attention

Be visible in your area, make every effort to let people nearby know you exist. Seek press attention when you do an action, gain a victory, or establish a project.