

How to plan a protest

By Wikihow, adapted by Newsela staff on 05.18.18

Word Count 1,104

Level 800L



Image 1. High school students protest during a rally calling for anti-gun laws on Friday April 20, 2018, in Washington Square Park, New York. Protests were held across the country that day, on the 19th anniversary of the Columbine High School shooting. Photo by AP/Bebeto Matthews.

When you feel strongly about an issue and you just can't stay silent, protesting is a positive way to make your voice heard. A protest is when people gather together to speak out against a wrongdoing. Gathering with others this way is a basic right. It is also a powerful way to bring about change.

Part One: Organizing The Protest

Set A Goal

Protests can spread awareness about an issue and put pressure on people in power. Think about what you hope your protest will do and who your audience is. You're more likely to succeed if you set a goal.

For example, let's say you have learned that chickens are treated badly on a local farm. You want people to stop buying the farm's eggs. In this case, your audience is the public.

In other cases, you might be protesting a war or a law. Then, your audience is political leaders. Your goal is to show them that people are upset and are demanding change.

Choose A Location

Find a location that is practical, convenient or meaningful. It can be the sidewalk in front of a business, a street corner, a government building or a park. For your protest to be legal, the site must be a public place.



Choose A Time

You will want to choose the right time to stage your protest. The right time depends on who and what you are protesting. For example, if you're protesting a company, you'll want to have the protest when the director is there. Therefore, the protest should be during business hours. If your goal is to gather as many people as possible, you might want to protest on a weekend, because more people will be available to join.

Check with your city officials about whether you need permission to protest. This official permission is called a permit. Each city has its own laws about how many people can protest and where they can gather. Some permits also set limits. They may say how many people can gather, how much noise you can make and where protesters can go.

Plan The Order Of Events

It's important to have an agenda for the protest. Do some research on protests that have worked in the past and come up with a plan. You can have community leaders introduce the protest and make speeches about your issue. You may want someone to lead protest chants or have a band to play protest music. You can also plan a march from one place to another. Marching is a classic form of protesting.

Publicize The Protest

It is important to share the details of your protest to make sure it gets as much attention as possible. Post the details on social media. Make flyers about the protest and put them up around town.

You may also want to call local newspapers and radio stations. Ask them to publish information about the protest and promote it on the air. Many more people will learn about your protest that way.

Part Two: Getting Prepared To Protest

Bring Protest Materials

Make posters and fliers to help spread your message. You should put the name of your group and contact information on your protest materials. It will let people know how to find out more information when the protest is over.

Wear Practical Clothing

Dress comfortably, since you might be standing or walking for several hours. Wear layered clothing and comfortable shoes.

Bring Emergency Supplies

Pack a backpack with a few supplies you might need. Bottled water and food are good to have on hand if the protest is going to last a long time. If you have a protest permit, you should pack that as well. You may also want to bring a small first-aid kit.



Know The Rules And Your Rights

No matter what you are protesting, some people will always strongly disagree with you. There may even be another group of protesters on the opposite side of the issue. At larger protests, police may be there to make sure things don't get out of hand. Most protests are safe, but it is a good idea to stay alert just in case.

Make sure you know your rights as a protester. Follow the rules set by the protest permit and listen if the police provide any new instructions.

Part Three: Protesting Effectively And Safely

Be Respectful

A protest can be a very effective way to make your voice heard and bring about change. However, being disrespectful to those you are protesting against can actually hurt your cause. Be polite during your protest. Don't harm property and make sure to avoid any violence.

You may consider doing something that qualifies as civil disobedience during your protest. Civil disobedience is breaking a law peacefully for a cause. During the Civil Rights movement, for example, African-Americans sat at lunch counters that were only for white customers. They were arrested for doing so. This made a powerful statement about inequality.

Civil disobedience is a courageous way to make a point. But keep in mind that you can be arrested for this form of protest.

Evaluate Your Protest

After the protest is over, figure out if it was effective. Decide what worked and what didn't. Think about whether you reached your goal, and what you should do differently next time. No matter what, be proud that you stayed true to your beliefs and stood up for your right to be heard. Even if your protest didn't bring about change, speaking up is a step in the right direction.

One protest probably won't change everything. But there are many other things you can do to accomplish your goal. Start a letter-writing campaign, write a blog to voice your opinions or lead a boycott. A boycott is when a group of people protest by refusing to buy from a business.

There are many more actions you can take to spread awareness and accomplish your goal. Don't give up!

Quiz

1 Read the paragraph below from the section "Be Respectful."

You may consider doing something that qualifies as civil disobedience during your protest. Civil disobedience is breaking a law peacefully for a cause. During the Civil Rights movement, for example, African-Americans sat at lunch counters that were only for white customers. They were arrested for doing so. This made a powerful statement about inequality.

What inference can the reader make based on this paragraph?

- (A) People who do acts of civil disobedience are breaking the law and should be arrested and put in jail.
- (B) People who do acts of civil disobedience usually do not know that they are breaking an important law.
- (C) People who do acts of civil disobedience are not breaking the law because they are doing the right thing and helping people.
- (D) People who do acts of civil disobedience break the law peacefully to protest something they think is wrong.

2 Which detail MOST CLEARLY shows that you might run into problems during your protest?

- (A) Check with your city officials about whether you need permission to protest. This official permission is called a permit. Each city has its own laws about how many people can protest and where they can gather.
- (B) Some permits also set limits. It is important to share the details of your protest to make sure it gets as much attention as possible. Post the details on social media. Make flyers about the protest and put them up around town.
- (C) Make posters and fliers to help spread your message. You should put the name of your group and contact information on your protest materials. It will let people know how to find out more information when the protest is over.
- (D) No matter what you are protesting, some people will always strongly disagree with you. There may even be another group of protesters on the opposite side of the issue. At larger protests, police may be there to make sure things don't get out of hand.

3 Read the article's introduction [paragraph 1] and the final section "Evaluate Your Protest."

What is the connection between those two sections?

- (A) The introduction explains why protests are important, while the final section lists things to think about after you have a protest.
- (B) The introduction gives examples of goals people have for their protest, while the final section explains how to meet those goals.
- (C) The introduction summarizes the history of protests, while the final section discusses the future of protests.
- (D) The introduction highlights how to plan a protest, while the final section focuses on the most important step in planning a protest.

This article is organized around steps in a process.

Why do you think the author chose to organize the information this way?

- (A) to provide information about the governments' rules for planning protests, in order of importance
- (B) to demonstrate that the steps taken in protests are much more effective than the steps taken in letter-writing campaigns, blogs or boycotts
- (C) to help the reader plan a protest in a way that reaches the most people and has the best chance for success
- (D) to show the reader that protesting a law or a war involves different planning than protesting a wrongdoing