

HOW TO ORGANIZE A RALLY

Step 1: Contact individuals and groups

Contact every person or group that is affiliated with your cause. You want to spread the word and enlist all the help you can. If your rally could be affiliated with an area group, contact their office and let them know your plans — they may offer to help organize.

Step 2: Hold an organizational meeting

Invite everyone to an organizational meeting (or a conference call). Brainstorm how to make your rally focused and successful. The organizing meeting should be inspiring and — hopefully — organized.

Find volunteers to spearhead tasks like cleanup, posters, media, crowd control, speakers, flyers, and anything else that needs to happen. Create subcommittees if needed. Delegate, delegate, delegate!

Step 3: Choose the best location and date

During the organizing meeting decide on an appropriate location. You want a place that is very visible and speaks to your cause.

Make sure there aren't similar rallies to yours or other major events happening around the same time. You don't want a small, diluted turnout. Weekdays tend to be better than weekends to get press attention.

Step 4: Logistics

Take care of logistics as soon as you can, such as directions, parking/carpooling, bathrooms, sound systems, food and water, shade tents, etc.

Step 5: Get a permit

Some rallies will require a permit and in certain situations you may want to have participants sign some kind of liability release form. There also might be rules about volume for the sound system or limits to the size of the rally. If you have concerns about permits and liability, contact your town or city clerk, policy station, parks and recreation office, or a local non-profit that has organized events in the past.

Step 6: List speakers

Create a list of people you'd like to speak at the rally. Make sure the people you choose are charismatic and articulate. Confirm your speakers the day before the rally — and put the best person last.

Step 7: Make posters and flyers

Prepare posters, banners, and flyers, including an email flyer. Make sure your flyers clearly state your cause, highlighting the key issues.

Avoid signage that is vague, too long, or offensive. Remember, the idea is to get the visuals into the media — you want a message that’s easy to understand and suitable for a mass audience.

Step 8: Make a press release

Prepare a press release for the media, stating the “who, what, when, where, and why” of your cause. Include contact information in case the press wants to interview someone. Send releases out at least a week ahead of time — then make follow-up calls the day before.

Step 9: Spread the word

Contact everyone you know to come to the rally. Even those people whom you don't think will be interested at first. This helps spread the action to more people by word of mouth--by far the most effective recruitment tool. Then ask them to contact everyone they know.

Back this up with email blasts, posters, phone calls, and notices on social networking sites. Nothing’s worse than a rally where no one shows up.

Other Ways to Get the Word Out:

- If your local paper features a story about the issue you’re organizing around, try writing a letter to the editor inviting people to participate in the rally.
- Place posters in local hangouts and be sure to include your contact information.
- Closer to the event, find some committed friends to hand out fliers with you at a local event.
- Are you a member of any listservs? Send out an announcement to these groups closer to the action.

Step 10: Hold your rally

If you’ve followed the steps above, you should be well prepared for a successful event. Check out the rally logistics list to help you stay organized the day of the rally.

Step 11: Report back

As soon as your rally is over, be sure to select your best photo and video footage and send them out to the groups you’ve been working with. You might want to ask a volunteer to help with this important last step.