

How to Crowd Canvass

A guide to recruiting supporters at rallies, marches, and on the street

Crowd canvassing is a great way to talk to the folks in your communities about issues that matter to them, spread your message, and recruit new volunteers. It's an essential component of organizing.

The goal of any canvass is to talk to as many people as possible, recruit community members who support pro-reproductive policies to the movement, provide information to undecided voters, and provide opportunities for volunteer leadership development.

How is Crowd Canvassing Different Than Traditional Canvassing?

Canvassing typically means going door-to-door in a neighborhood to have conversations about important issues with community members. Crowd canvassing accomplishes many of the same goals as traditional canvassing, but it's implemented in a different method.

Unlike a door-to-door canvass — which takes place in a neighborhood with a list of specified targets — a crowd canvass takes place at a large event like a rally or a march. Every single person in attendance is a potential target. This tactic is best used when the intention is to engage with a large gathering of potential supporters in a public setting.

Why Crowd Canvass?

Crowd canvassing is a fun way to enjoy the rallies, festivals, and marches all while you build the movement for access to health care for all. It's a simple and effective concept. Organizers use this method to strategically leverage a rally or public event as an opportunity to connect with as many new supporters as possible.

The goal is to connect with and recruit as many potential supporters as possible. The most effective strategy depends on when and where you choose to canvass. Some examples of where to canvass could include a rally to stop the appointment of anti-abortion officials or judges like Brett Kavanaugh or a protest to fight the Title X Gag Rule.

Quick Tips for Organizing a Crowd Canvass

- **Timing is everything.**
If you are crowd canvassing at an event, it is best to begin canvassing folks an hour before the event starts. This will give you a better chance to catch folks as they are getting settled into the event. Chances are, many folks may be looking to connect with other activists; it will be better to talk with them before event organizers and guest speakers take the stage — that's your moment!
- **Set up in a high traffic area.**
High-traffic areas like downtown streets or outside busy grocery stores can be great places to start conversations with people. Sometimes, there will be a reason traffic in the area is so high — such as a rally or community meeting — but you can also crowd canvass in areas that are always busy. You can set up a small information table or just grab a clipboard and start talking to people.
- **Practice your pitch.**
You have less than 30 seconds to catch someone's interest, so it's critical that you're ready to make your "ask" quickly and succinctly. We recommend you practice starting conversations with a friend before you go out. This will help you be more concise, confident, and comfortable when you hit the streets.
- **Listen as much as you talk.**
When you're having a conversation with a potential supporter, ask lots of questions and listen actively to what they say. People want to be heard, and they're more likely to sign up or take action if they have a chance to talk about their feelings. That being said, use your discretion and remember not to argue with folks who have opposing views during any canvass.
- **Make a direct ask.**
"Will you join our action council?" By using a direct ask, people are more likely to say yes. An indirect ask — such as, "does this sound like something you might be interested in?" — makes it less clear what you're asking them to do, and they will be less likely to get involved.
- **We recommend canvassing in pairs, or with your crew.**
This is for safety reasons and because you'll be able to bond with your crew! Wear some

Planned Parenthood swag — a button or something else. If you don't already have some, you can [order some from our store](#).

What to Do Before Your Crowd Canvass

Assign roles for your canvass team

If you don't yet have a team, this is a great opportunity to identify members of your community who are ready to make a further commitment to our work. Ask someone who has volunteered with you before to step into an important role during the canvass. Here are some suggested roles.

- **Canvass Coordinator**
Coordinates the division of neighborhoods and makes maps of the canvassing area; helps to prepare, distribute and re-collect canvass materials
- **Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator**
Responsible for reaching out to volunteers, confirming volunteer canvass shift sign-ups, and managing volunteer registration on canvass day
- **Resources Coordinator**
Finds and secures a staging location; a place to meet before and after the canvass; This person may need to consider parking needs, restrooms, accessibility of the space, accommodations for folks with disabilities, etc. This person also helps to get donations of food and water to sustain canvassers.
- **Training Coordinator**
This should be your best canvasser. It is someone who can explain why this community and these people you're contacting matter; someone who can set and communicate a clear goal that will motivate and focus volunteers; and someone who can effectively answer volunteers' questions.

Organize a get-together

Host a huddle the night before the big crowd canvass so that you can prepare any final logistics and share contact info. You can have some fun with it, too! We suggest having a sign making party. Your team can use this time to iron out any last minute details involving logistics, materials, and messaging for your canvass. This also gives you one last chance to ask your volunteers to recruit a friend to join the canvass.

Post Your Event on the Action Councils Hub

Visit <https://act.plannedparenthoodaction.org/> and add your event to the action council near you. For more information on Action Councils and how to register your event, [check out our guide](#).

How to Run Your Crowd Canvass

You can use this example as a “Tick-Tock” for your event.

- **Welcome and introduction (10 min):** If possible, have each person introduce themselves by name. Have two people share their personal stories, addressing what’s personally at stake for them in the fight for reproductive rights and access to health care. Stories should give a human side to our organizing work and remind us of the real impact of our work. Also, be sure to explain why you’re using this moment as a movement- building effort. Also collect or exchange phone numbers or start a group text to make sure everyone has the point person’s contact information.
- **Set expectations (3 min):** Share your goal for the number of people you’re trying to reach. Try setting a goal of 5-10 conversations an hour. Put this number into perspective by reminding your volunteers that they’re part of a huge effort joined by thousands of volunteers across the country engaging in similar work.
- **Review the script and role play with a partner (5 min):** Have all your volunteers take some time to think of a one-minute explanation of why they are volunteering for Planned Parenthood. It can also be helpful to provide your volunteers with guidance on what to say if someone reacts negatively.
- **Explain logistics (3 min):** Address how people should organize in groups, give any necessary communication details and pass out materials.
- **Hit the streets! (Duration varies depending on the event.):** Check on your team during the action. As the event host, it’s your job to keep your team motivated. Text you group with updates as you reach your canvass goals! Example: “Alex got his first signature,” “Caroline’s out of pens because she’s had so many signups, etc!” Encourage your team to send you photos of themselves and their teammates canvassing the crowd and having a blast!
- **Regroup (15 min):** Make sure that your volunteers know exactly when and where to regroup after the canvass ends (more on total canvas wrap up below).

What to Do After Your Crowd Canvas

- **First, THANK your volunteers and supporters! That is key to continued engagements!**
- **Arrange time to tally up.** Gather information on the number of supporters signed up and the number of cards collected/petitions signed (where applicable). Make sure you make time for data entry.

- Share information on the group's collective efforts and evaluate the action.
 - Ask those who did well what made the difference.
 - Ask those who struggled what the challenges were and what we need be better prepared next time.
 - Ask volunteers how they felt about the day. For example, how did the conversations feel? What messages did voters respond to? Any feedback or suggestions on logistics?
- **Gain the next commitment.** Provide your volunteers with an upcoming events sign-up sheet to secure their next volunteer commitment, and bring them up the ladder of engagement. It is helpful to provide a two-fold sheet where one portion is turned in to the organizer and the other is a take-home reminder of the commitment for the volunteer.
 - **Celebrate.** If possible, organize an optional social gathering afterward. Talk about your success together!