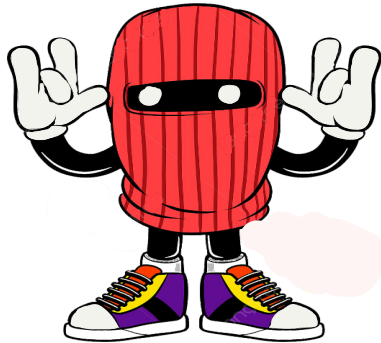


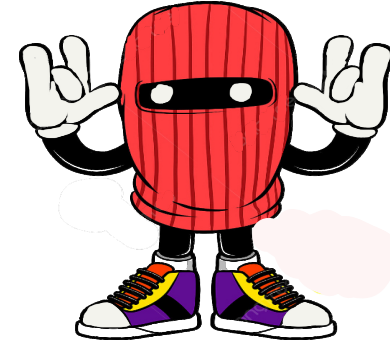
**"KEEP THE FOCUS ON THE ACTION NOT THE INSTITUTION; DON'T CONFUSE THE VEHICLE WITH THE OBJECTIVE; ALL COCOONS ARE TEMPORARY AND DISAPPEAR."**

**-TONI CADE BAMBARA**



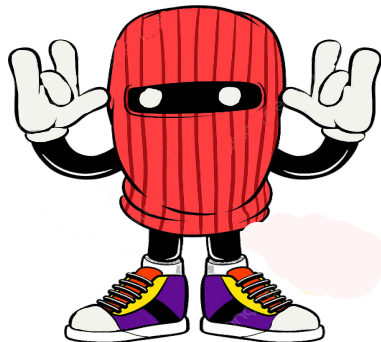
# **HOW TO GET READY FOR A DEMONSTRATION**

**TIPS AND TRICKS TO STAY SAFE AND DANGEROUS IN THE STREETS**



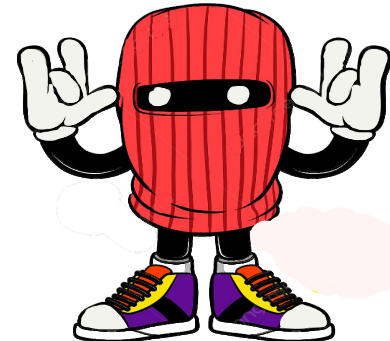
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So you're about to go to a demonstration. Maybe it's your first, and you're excited to finally have a chance to express your rage at the evil american death-machine of racial-capitalism and the colonial state. Fuck yeah! Or maybe you're a veteran of these kinds of things. Either way, these tips and reminders can be helpful.

A lot of protests and actions are organized with the view that participants should be passive attendees: that you're there to clap at the right time, march in the right direction, sign up for the email list, and go home.

**We disagree.** We think the best organized demonstration also enables the self-organization and initiative of its participants, rather than stifles it. And **we think our movements for liberation need this self-organization the way plants need sunlight.** With that in mind, these tips and tricks can help keep you and your friends both safer and more dangerous.

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[The Siege of the 3rd Precinct of Minneapolis, by Crimethinc](#)

[What Might Should be Done, by Idris Robinson](#)

[A Field Guide to Protests: The Protest Marshal](#)

## **DiSTROS**

Haters Cafe – [haters.noblogs.org](https://haters.noblogs.org)

Sprout Distro – [sproutdistro.com](https://sproutdistro.com)

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## **FURTHER READING**

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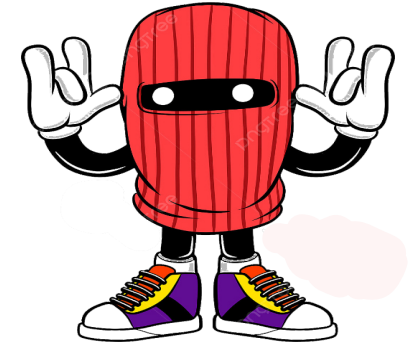
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1.  
FIND  
YOUR  
CREW

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The predominant way of organizing protests in the American Left uses rank-and-file participants as pawns, and views those participants with a great deal of suspicion as soon as they act in ways that non-profits or political parties find inconvenient or unpredictable. For them, a protest is a mere symbolic performance.

The organizing tools in this slideshow push back against this condescending (and, ultimately, racist and classist) framework. **We believe it is the self-organization of the oppressed that makes the path towards liberation.** This process is creative and experimental. It may even appear "chaotic" at times to those accustomed to non-profit rhetoric and seeking dialogue with structures of power.

The tools here extend far beyond protest marches, which are arguably the most performative and least meaningful way to apply self-organization. What other ways can you attack the systems that oppress you? What do our communities need to thrive, and how can we take back those resources? What forms of self-organization already exist among the most oppressed in your town, even if they don't appear "political," and how can you support and engage with those?

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# SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

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Demos can be intense, chaotic spaces, and you want to have someone you trust to watch your back. This is often called an affinity group.

More than just a buddy system, an affinity group is a small group of usually 3–5 people who share similar goals for an action. They can act in coordination with hundreds of other such groups or on their own outside of the context of a mass protest. An affinity group is the smallest unit of self-organization in a demonstration, like a single atom that can help make up a complicated molecule.

Some important questions to consider when deciding on who is in your affinity group:

Do I know and trust them under stress?

Do we have similar levels of arrestability?

Do we have similar tactical goals for the protest?

Do we share a similar basic understanding of the movement we're a part of?

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## 2. STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Congratulations! You did the thing!

After the demo or action, it's important to talk with your comrades about how things went. This is sometimes called a debrief.

Assemble others from the demo, and think through what went well and what didn't. How are people feeling about what happened? If there were arrests, what is going on with legal support and how can you support that process?

This can also be a space to think through strategic questions the movement is facing, how our immediate actions play into those questions, and what could be some next steps.

If you have lessons to share with the larger movement, you can write a reportback of the action.

Like the spokescouncil, the debrief is a way to shift power in the movement out of the hands of a small group of official or professional 'Organizers' and into broader networks of people. There can be more than one debrief—decentering any one network of people makes our movement stronger and more resilient to repression.

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## 2. STRATEGY AND TACTICS

# 6. DEBILITATE

What are your goals for this demonstration?

A lot of this will depend on what kind of demo or action it is: defending a family from eviction at their house will be different from a solidarity march; a demo seeking to stop a fascist rally will be different from a nighttime act of sabotage.

What kind of tactics in these different situations grow our capacity to confront the powerful? What kinds of actions will resonate with others in the crowd, while growing our sense of what is possible?

Are there businesses along the march that make money off the injustice you're protesting? Are there walls worth painting? Are there corporate stores full of resources that our communities need? Will there be highways or bridges that could be blocked? What will you block them with?

Your goal might also be to play a certain role, like a medic or bike scout. Try to approach these as unspecialized whenever possible—someone with medic skills may also be needed to punch a nazi or hold a banner.

Be creative! Be ambitious! Courage is contagious.

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Be creative! Be ambitious! Courage is contagious.

# 6. DEBILITATE

### 3. COORDINATE

When packing your bag, think about what you'll be wearing at the demo, and what changes of clothes you might want to have on you.

Do you want to be anonymous? If you're doing anything illegal, this is important. This can also be important if you are at higher risk of arrest or police violence, which is often the case for people of color, trans people, and those with criminal records. Anonymity can also help avoid losing your job or getting doxxed by fascists.

It's ideal to have at least two changes of clothes, normal streetwear to show up to the demo, and something anonymous to change into and mask with. Use a t-shirt or ski mask to cover your entire head, NOT just a covid mask. Keep in mind: people have also been identified by distinctive logos on bags or shoes.

Black bloc is a highly effective tactic where the crowd does this en masse, as a form of solidarity with those taking direct action and/or at higher risk of repression. One does not need to be in all black to wear a mask and stay anonymous, but it can help if the entire crowd is doing it.

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### 3. COORDINATE

5.  
DRESS FOR  
SUCCESS

Your affinity group is not alone! Whether or not it was you who called for the demo, you can meet up with people from other affinity groups and talk about your plans beforehand as a larger body. This is sometimes called a spokescouncil.

This meeting can be a way to share information, concerns, and ideas for action. It may be that your affinity group is looking to do something similar to others, and you can coordinate for larger effect. Or it may be that you have different interests, in which case the spokescouncil can serve to make those goals mutually beneficial or reduce conflict.

If you are discussing illegal actions, do so only with people you know and trust, and never do so on phones or online.

Far beyond protests, the spokescouncil is a horizontal way to coordinate rapid, efficient, and large-scale activity, that has been used for community defense, mutual aid efforts, propaganda, strikes, blockades, and more. The more we practice it now, the more ready we will be to use it in times of crisis and revolution.

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# 4. SUPPLIES

What supplies do you and your affinity group need to accomplish your goals?

If you're planning to offer medic skills, decide on how extensive you want your first aid kit to be. If you're a scout, what kind of radio or comms will you be using to coordinate with others?

Will you want spray paint or stickers to decorate the town? A hammer? Road flares to help keep the crowd visible on busy streets? A respirator in case of tear gas? Water bottle to flush eyes from pepper spray? (And no, milk does not work any better!) Handbills to invite people to an event you're organizing? Is there a likelihood of fascist confrontation, in which shields, flagpoles, or reinforced banners could be useful? Do you have a safe way to transport these things to the demo itself? What kind of bag will you need?

How long will you be out in the streets, and will you need to bring food and water? Some of these things may be available along the march, but its always best to come prepared.

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