

# How to Run Your Own Canvass

---

## What is a Canvass?

---

A canvass is an organized effort to talk with community members face-to-face about the issues that matter to them. Having these face-to-face conversations is the most effective way to talk to voters - it is x5 more effective than any other form of voter contact! Canvassing allows us to build a list of supporters, clean the list of out of date addresses, and build public support for urgent issues and/or candidates.

---

## Why Do We Canvass?

---

Canvassing in local neighborhoods (both at the doors and in high traffic areas) is the most effective way to talk with community members about the issues that matter to them. For example, the success that the Obama campaign in 2008 depended upon the campaign's ability to share their message through face-to-face discussions with voters. Studies show canvassing to be 5x more effective than any other form of direct voter contact.

If we want change, we must reach out to our neighbors and involve them in being the change. When we need to mobilize volunteers in support of Democratic candidates, or issues such as health care, the environment, and quality public education, face to face conversations at their doors is our most effective tool.

---

## What Is Your Role as the Host?

---

The host's role is to organize a successful canvass. You should follow the steps for preparing a canvass listed below, including selecting a location, recruiting volunteers, and preparing materials. You will also provide guidance and support as the day goes on and should give volunteers your phone number in case issues arise.

---

## Where Do We Canvass?

---

Usually the goal of a canvass is to talk to as many people as possible. Therefore, we may want to focus on dense neighborhoods that are easily walkable so you can hit as many doors as possible—although some people in rural areas drive from door to door.

---

## What Do You Need in Order to Have a Successful Canvass?

---

Here's a short list of what you will need to make your neighborhood canvass work:

- **A central location** in your walk area for people to meet before and after their walk
- **Sign in sheets**

- **Turf packets** (areas that each canvasser will be responsible for). Also, maps of the larger area is sometimes a helpful resource for the canvasser to orient themselves.
- **Scripts**
- **Talking points and Literature** on the candidate(s) or issue(s)
- **Pens/Paper**
- **Clipboards**
- A **trainer** to orient people to the job, explain materials, answer questions, etc.
- If possible, a bottle of water and power food for each canvasser

---

## Preparing For Your Canvass

---

### 1. Secure a staging location

Once you know how many people you need to recruit to meet your goal, determine where your “staging location” will be. That is, where people will gather before and after the canvass. This can be a private home, park, school, or any other location that will accommodate your group and allow for a brief training.

### 2. Work hard to recruit as many volunteers as you can

The more people participate in your canvass, the more people you will be able to talk to. Your goal should be to recruit as many volunteers as possible.

#### **Who to Call?**

You should call anyone and everyone who might be interested! The more volunteers the merrier! In addition, your organizer will show you how to pull volunteer recruitment lists using our database. These lists will be full of people that have either volunteered in the past or have a high likelihood to volunteer in the future! Sending out an email will “soften” your audience to the idea of canvassing - but **those individual phone calls will make sure they show up!** Please talk with your organizer about best practices to recruit volunteers.

### 3. Get Turfs, scripts and supporting materials

The turf will be the guide each canvasser to which voters they should be talking to. The script will help guide your conversation about the candidate or issue you’re canvassing for. Your canvassers will see better results if they go into a conversation feeling confident about the subject and a basic guideline for the conversation. Other supporting materials include, talking points and literature (remember don’t leave literature in the mailboxes!).

### 4. Confirmation or Reminder Calls

Be sure to make reminder calls to volunteers in the days leading up to the canvass. Turn out will increase dramatically if you ask them for a firm commitment. Be sure that all attendees are confirmed, reconfirmed, and reconfirmed again – emailing a reminder isn't enough!

Reminder call should remind volunteers important details such as:

- The appropriate time and place of the canvass
- Wear comfortable shoes
- Dress for weather
- Bring bottle of water

### **5. Prepare sign-in sheets and set up a tight sign-in system**

Capture as much contact information as possible so we can reach out to these folks for future events and volunteer opportunities. Make sure there is space to volunteers sign up for our next event!

### **6. Keep track of your volunteers**

Before anyone walks out the door to canvass,

- Give a contact cell phone number to each canvasser. Tell them to call with any questions or needs.

### **7. Debrief & Reshift**

Meet back at the staging location at an assigned time.

Evaluate action. Ask those who did well what made the difference. Ask those who struggled what the challenges were that we need to prepare better for next time. Sign them up for the next canvass! Make sure we reshift all of our volunteers! Gather information on number of doors knocked on and the number of signatures collected (where applicable). Present information on the group's collective efforts.

Celebrate. If possible, organize a potluck or an optional social gathering afterwards. Talk about your success together!

---

## **What Do You Do After Your Canvass?**

---

Enter your data! If possible, we want you to enter all of our data. Talk with your orabout how to do data entry for any particular event.

Make a call or send a personal email thanking everyone who attended the canvass & stay connected with your fellow volunteers and get ready for the next action!