Shop actions are an engaging way of highlighting issues and solutions.

Organising a group demonstration outside a store or event is an efficient way to bring your campaign to a public space, and attracts the attention of customers and the brand itself.

Taking action in a public space enables you to inform customers about your campaign, motivate others to fight for the cause and raise awareness about brands’ practices. But public campaigning can be challenging, especially if shop staff react to it. Below, we have pulled together some top tips for organising a safe and impactful public demonstration.
Research
Identify the brand that you are targeting, by researching the issue that you intend to campaign on. Gather any statistics, quotes, pictures and key facts that will help you to articulate your message. If you follow a campaign group like Labour Behind the Label on social media or are subscribed to a newsletter, you will get useful information on which brands are currently targeted for a specific issue.

Messaging
Make sure you know the reason why you are campaigning. Carefully design your message and your aims: what are you demanding of this brand? Plan how you will communicate this message to a staff member or a customer if they approach you.

Creating
Prepare some banners, signs and visuals to bring with you to the demonstration. Think about whether you want to bring props, a megaphone or music. You might even want to plan street theatre to engage with people. Be creative, and use the information that have researched to create DIY banners or signs using pictures, stats, quotes, etc... Have a think about how you could use the visual style of the brand, so that it is instantly recognisable.

Get others on board
If you are a member of a campaign group, inform your co-campaigners what you are planning to do, so they can join the gathering too. Invite your friends and communicate your message and plans. Be aware of the different rules applying to public gatherings in private spaces, such as shopping centres and car parks. Gathering on the street is legal and you have the right to a peaceful protest, as long as you don’t break any laws and remain non-aggressive and non-abusive.

Media
Tell your local media that you are planning a public action in front of a store, so they can amplify it.
Inform
Make the first move to talk to passers-by and customers, as few of them would approach you first. Smile and invite them to talk with you. Be prepared to communicate clearly why you’re there, and if you can, have some leaflets to distribute. If you don’t have an answer to a question, don’t be afraid of replying that you don’t know, and direct them to a website where they can get more information.

Be polite to staff
Actions are carried out to support those working for the brand. Shop staff are workers too. They are not responsible for the company’s actions and may have little knowledge about the issue. You can inform the staff about your campaign, and tell them how long you will be staying.

Respect customers
Make sure you gather somewhere where you are not preventing access to the shop, and don’t discourage customers from going in. Customers should not feel intimidated by your demonstration. Try to talk to them, but respect their choice if they don’t wish to engage.

Build support
Encourage customers to take actions, by asking them to either sign a petition, or to send a letter to the brand, subscribe to the newsletter of a campaign group, or to talk to the brand on social media etc... Your campaign will be more effective if you get customers to do something in support of your action.

Remain calm
If shop staff ask you to leave or threaten to call the police, stay polite and firm. You have the right to peacefully protest, as long as you don’t break the law and remain non-aggressive. If the police come, stay calm and explain why you are there and how long you intend to stay. Make it clear that you know your rights and reiterate your intention of having a peaceful protest without disturbing customers.
REFLECT & IMPROVE:

Take your campaign to a new level

1. **Review**
   In order to be as effective as possible, it is important to frequently review your campaign and reflect on what went well and what could be improved. Is there any information that you were missing when people asked you questions? Is there anything you wish you had to hand when standing in front of the shop (website details, social media details, a petition, etc.)?

2. **Feedback**
   Collect feedback from your co-campaigners and friends who joined your action. What did they learn from the experience and do they have any tips for next time? If you belong to a wider campaign group, inform them how the demonstration went, and communicate any useful information that may help to plan a follow-up action: has the store manager told you that they will inform the brand about your campaign, for example?

3. **Adapt**
   Make any adaptations that you might need for the next time. It can be about the message, or gathering facts or testimony. Think about how the campaign is evolving and whether you need to escalate your actions, or change tactics.

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USEFUL RESOURCES

- Depending on the scale of your store demonstration, or if you are planning anything large-scale, you may want to check out these practical tips from Liberty on attending a protest.
- If you are looking for creative tips to plan something a little different for your protest, get some inspiration from the Beautiful Trouble toolbox.

SAFETY & PRIVACY TIPS

Only engage with people if you are comfortable to do so
When talking to passers-by, stay safe and don’t feel obliged to communicate any personal details that you are not willing to share. If someone does becomes aggressive, stay calm and don’t get drawn into arguments on the street.

Know your rights
We all have the right to peaceful protest and as long as you are not being aggressive, violent or abusive, you are not breaking any laws. Gathering on the street in front of a store is legal, and you have the right to protest peacefully. The shop manager may ask you to leave claiming you are breaking the law and losing them business, and may call the police, but if you follow this guidance you are within the law. As the rules regarding public gatherings might change due to COVID-19, make sure to check in advance if your action is legal.

Public v private land
This advice works for those shops on public streets, not for shopping centres or private car parks. On private land security can ask you to leave. If you refuse you can be seen as trespassing. This doesn’t mean you cannot do it – just be more imaginative and discreet.

Do I need permission?
Unless your protest includes marching, or stopping traffic, you do not need to inform the police first. If you want to make sure, contact the local council or local police well in advance.

- If you are looking for megaphones or props to use for your protest, try and find out if can hire equipment locally, like from the Resource Centre in Brighton.
Labour Behind the Label campaigns for garment workers’ rights worldwide. We support garment workers' efforts to improve their working conditions and change the fashion industry for the better. We raise awareness, provide information and promote international solidarity between workers and consumers.

We represent the Clean Clothes Campaign in the UK.