

Checklist for nonviolent direct action trainings

Often there is so much to cover in a short amount of time during trainings that we inevitably miss things. Particularly this can be easy to do when facilitation is shared amongst a number of people, and at large convergences.

Here is a checklist of some of the basic principles, and pieces of information that we think you might not want to forget. This has been crowd-sourced from NVDA trainers and CounterAct training.

Acknowledgement and history	<p>Know where you stand, acknowledge on whose country. Think about what stories you don't know about this place and what you should. Be aware of the additional challenges first nations people can have, both with accessibility to trainings and participation in direct action, and the particular interest and different treatment they might experience from 'authorities'</p> <p>Understand people have different experiences of police and system violence, and that as a result we may communicate with those systems differently.</p>
Housekeeping	<p>Make sure people are physically comfortable.</p> <p>Check in on a participant's agreement or some basic guidelines and respect, and what folks need for safe and effective training.</p> <p>Deal with practical issues such as accessibility, health care, toilets, food, allergies.</p> <p>Consider issues around confidentiality, media and photos.</p> <p>Introduce the concept of "security culture" and give people some basic guidelines about how to minimise the risk of actions being derailed, or unwittingly sharing information with opponents.</p>
Introductions	<p>If it's a group where it's the cultural norm, ask if people want to identify which gender pro-noun they prefer. It may not always be necessary, eg: in a group of farmers it will be more alienating to them, than useful.</p> <p>Most importantly get people talking to one another, and make sure there is time in breaks for this too.</p>
Process	<p>Make sure you mix it up.</p> <p>Small groups, big groups.</p> <p>Personal writing reflection, sharing stories, case studies and videos.</p> <p>Exercises that physically move people around.</p>
Philosophy	<p>Why do we do what we do? This piece is often hard for new facilitators. If in doubt, go with your gut. You don't have to have a deep understanding of nonviolence theory to understand that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The system is flawed b) Authority is presumed to be in hierarchical institutions, such as government c) People are the ones with real power, and how we build and use it can transform our communities d) You have probably felt the power of direct action if you are facilitating so just try and put it in your own words <p>Talk about how and why it feels right to challenge institutions that threaten our water, air, climate & social justice. Talk about how the majority of social change that moves towards greater justice has come</p>

	<p>from diverse campaigns that started out appearing to be radical, but ended up mainstream.</p> <p>Share stories of actions that resonate with you, and ask people for theirs.</p> <p>Try and find a mix between normalising NVDA, ie – giving people the sense that it is something they can do; with also giving them a sense of history and gravity – that they are participating in something with a beautiful, proud history.</p>	
Strategy	<p>Explain the role of NVDA in a broader campaign, ie: to delay, to provide dramatic visual representation of opposition, to make the moral case for action. Talk about when it can be useful, and when it can't be. Be open to critique.</p> <p>Also, encourage people to have clear goals for individual actions and an end point – what do you want to have achieved for the day? What was the intent of the action – to build the groups capacity? To delay work? To get media? Different objectives could result in different ways for the action to play out.</p>	
Look and feel	<p>Be mindful of how media will perceive your action, as well as the broader community. Ensure you have someone to wrangle media, and be aware of ways your action could misconstrued.</p> <p>Think about the “tone” – is it somber, or cheerful? What is the “action logic” ie – does it make sense? Can a photo give a clear understanding of why you are there, and what you are doing.</p>	
Practical	<p>What roles do you need to pull off an action?</p> <p>A – lots – and only a few of them are “arrestable”</p> <p>Everyone has a place, and all skills are useful.</p> <p>This section is simple but very important to give new people a sense that things are organised.</p> <p>Explain the necessity of key roles that can help de-escalate and keep people safer – ie: worker and police liaison</p> <p>Demonstrate tools/tactics and introduce the idea of “strategic arrest” ie: people don't lock on to be hard core but to hold the space longer...it's not as scary as you think etc. Gear if possible, photos and video very useful here.</p>	
Personal	<p>Make sure what you have what you need to be comfortable during an action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunscreen, hat or rain weather gear • Something to sit on if in cold weather, or on hot or cold machinery • Water, don't get dehydrated *gastrolyte can help to drink less so you need to wee less (talk frankly about toilet stuff) • Snacks • Phone, radio or method of communication • Medication and ensure your buddy or police liaison knows about any medical conditions • ID 	
Emotional	<p>Think about how people respond to conflict, stress and fear.</p> <p>It is vital for people to feel safe talking about fears and barriers to action. Participants will often get a sense of relief simply from realising</p>	

	<p>many fears are shared. Many fears can be addressed; however it is important that no one is ever told their fear is unreasonable or not taken seriously.</p> <p>Talk about external indicators, if people have them, with an affinity group, and how they feel and act when under stress.</p> <p>Let people know how to support you if they see you acting in a certain way. Give trusted people permission to intervene if you are going to act in a way you might later regret. Talk about how to keep calm and de-escalate situations, and the role of liaisons, peacekeepers, clowns or knitting nanas to assist this.</p>
Legals	<p>In Australia the laws differ from state to state, but here are some universal points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just because you participate in an arrestable action doesn't mean you get arrested • Just because you get arrested doesn't mean you get charged • Just because you get charged doesn't mean you have a criminal record • Just because you have a criminal record doesn't mean you can't get a job, or travel, or work with children <p>The short version: for nonviolent offences such as trespass the sanctions are often very minor and can result in no conviction recorded. REMEMBER: to write the number of a lawyer or legal support/cop shop pick up on your arm, and carry ID if you want to be processed quickly (or not, if you specifically don't)</p> <p>There are slight differences state to state but you generally only need to give your name and address (and sometimes DOB) if questioned... and there generally needs to be a good reason (ie they suspect you of committing an offence)... so don't give more than that, and exercise your right to NO COMMENT.</p> <p>Encourage the group philosophy of support for actions continuing until the last person goes through court.</p> <p>Ensure legal support is set up, and hopefully a lawyer's number on peoples arms (or cop shop pick up person)</p>
Facilitator tips	<p>Be brave and be honest.</p> <p>Encourage people to share the space.</p> <p>Where possible try and get the participants to find their own way to the answers – rather than telling them what to think...design any exercises to draw out their own learning.</p> <p>Be mindful of exclusive language and acronyms.</p> <p>Admitting failure is useful for learning for everyone, and disarming for the group.</p> <p>But also – projecting confidence is vital, especially to brand newcomers... so try and find a balance.</p> <p>Invite challengers in... if people are defiant and have huge issues and disagreements, rather than relegate them to the side, if you can hold the space it is better to invite them in – use their challenges to allow the group to debate the thorny issues.</p> <p>Have fun!</p>