INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTEER TRAINING

1. POLITICAL STRUCTURE

two political parties,

caucuses, signatures,

primaries, general elections,

early voting, vote by mail

2. CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

candidate races,

delegates to convention,

declaring to government level,

platform,

fundraisings,

targeted lists,

literature,

signs,

grassroots organizing,

GOTV

3. VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS -

A. DOOR-KNOCKING

B. SAMPLE SCRIPT

C. MEET N GREET

neighborhood lists, find a host, invite by phone, punch & cookies, sign-in list, candidates, donations

A. VOLUNTEER DOOR-KNOCKING

The Ultimate Guide: Successful Door-to-Door Campaigning - by Joe Garecht

When most people think of grassroots campaigning, they think of door to door.  Going door to door is the quintessential grassroots campaign activity. It allows you to meet voters face to face, which greatly increases the likelihood that they will remember your name and message.

In many smaller campaigns, candidates may be able to go door to door to every single registered voter’s home. In other larger campaigns, going door to door may be handled by volunteers, and the candidate may go to a few doors as a press event. No matter the size of your race, your grassroots efforts should include a door to door component.

**Going Door to Door vs. Doing a Lit Drop**

There are two types of door to door activity that campaigns may carry out. The first, which we are referring to simply as “door to door,” is where the candidate or volunteer actually goes up and knocks on the voters’ door and sees if they are home. The second type of door to door activity is the “lit drop.” This is where the candidate or volunteer goes to voters’ homes to leave a piece of campaign literature, but does not knock on the door.

Your decision on which type of activity to use is a function of the number or volunteers you have and the number of homes you need to cover. Classic door to door is more effective than a simple [lit drop](http://www.localvictory.com/strategy/how-to-plan-a-great-lit-drop.html), but lit drops can be done much faster than door to door because you don’t stop to talk to voters. Volunteers doing lit drops can hit 3-4 times as many homes in the same amount of time as if they are door to door. Of course, the candidate should almost never do a lit drop… if he or she is going door to door, they should be knocking. People *love* to meet the candidate.

One important caveat: many campaigns will decide that they don’t need to train volunteers who are doing lit drops as well as they would folks who were going door to door. Likewise, I have seen campaigns where “sloppy” volunteers are assigned to lit drops while “together” volunteers are assigned to door to door. I’ve found this to be a mistake.

All door to door activity (both knock and lit drop) involves voter contact. Generally, when supporters are going door to door, they are going to end up talking to voters, even if they are only doing lit drops. Whether people are sitting out on their porches, walking down the street, or just coming home from work, voters like to talk to campaign volunteers, even ones who are only leaving a brochure behind.

Make sure that every single volunteer and staff member who is doing door to door and lit drops is [*properly trained*](http://www.localvictory.com/organization/train-your-political-volunteers.html). If someone is not trustworthy enough to send out door to door, don’t send them out doing a lit drop either. Keep them at the campaign headquarters stuffing envelopes or folding pamphlets.

**What Doors Should We Knock At?**

Door to door campaigning should be a targeted activity. Your campaign should carefully choose which doors you are going to knock at (and which doors you are going to do lit drops to).

At the very least, you should only be going to registered voters’ homes. Unless your campaign has decided to run a targeted voter registration drive (see the section on such efforts below), why waste your time going to non-voters’ doors? You may end up talking with them for ten minutes, when you could have visited 5 registered voters in the same amount of time.

Don’t waste time. Make sure your door to door efforts are targeted!

In addition to targeting only registered voters, larger campaigns (where the candidate and/or volunteers will not be hitting every door) should choose which neighborhoods to knock in based on their campaign targeting. If you are targeting voters in a certain precinct, add that precinct to your walk list. Use the targeting rankings we did earlier to rank which precincts you are going to walk in.

Before walking, make sure you have an updated voter list from your local board of election or secretary of state’s office. Most election offices will be able to provide you with the registered voters’ list organized in “walk format.” Walk format lists (“walk lists” or “street lists”) list voters by address, with each side of the street listed separately and in numerical order, so that going door to door is easy.

What information appears on your walk list varies by state. In most states, the names of all registered voters will appear, accompanied by address and party affiliation. Your state may also include phone numbers and other information.

**Take Notes to Enable Follow-Up**

Be sure to train your walkers to take notes: Who did they talk to? Did the person express support for you? For your opponent? Did the voter ask for more information on any issue or ask for anything else? All of this information can be taken in short hand, right on the walk list. Answering the above questions for a particular voter, your walker may write: Martha – Supports Us – Wants yard sign.

Insist that all walkers bring their walk sheets back to campaign HQ and turn them in to the walk coordinator, so that the campaign can track the progress of the effort. Also, enter information about supporters into your campaign database, and if any voter asked for more information, get it out to them right away.

**The Rules of Successful Knocking**

Knocking on doors – and meeting voters – is a tricky business. Make sure that the candidate, the staff, and the campaign volunteers all follow these knock rules:

**Don’t Argue with Voters** – Sometimes it will be tempting to really get into it with voters – arguing positions and telling them why they are wrong. Don’t do it.

If a voter asks about the candidate’s position on an issue, tell them truthfully and succinctly. If they want to argue the point, say, “I definitely understand where you’re coming from. I’ll send you some more information in the mail on our position on that issue, and hopefully we’ll have the chance to talk about it later.” Don’t stand on someone’s porch arguing with them. Acknowledge their position, then move on to another issue you may agree with them on.

**The 3 Minute Rule** – Your goal for each knock is to talk to the voter for no more than three minutes. Many first time candidates spend 20 or 25 minutes talking with a voter, then wonder why they can only fit in 20 homes a day. Get your presentation down pat… it should be no more than 1-2 minutes. After you give your spiel, hand the voter a piece of literature, and ask for their support. This leaves about 1 minute for you to quickly answer any questions they may have, and then move on.

If a voter pins you down for an extended amount of time, let them know you have to move on so that you can meet the other voters on the block, and ask if they would like you to call them to discuss the issue further. Most likely they will not, but if they do, either call them the next day or have someone from the campaign do so.

**Always Leave Something Behind** – Whenever you knock, hand the voter a piece of literature with your candidate name and message on it.       Brochures, palm cards, etc. all work. Make sure that the item you leave behind has campaign contact information and the URL for your campaign website on it.

**Always Ask for Their Support** – It sounds simple, but I’ve seen many candidates knock on a door, give their spiel, and walk away with out ever asking for the voter’s support. Big mistake! People value their vote, and want to make sure you do too. If you want someone to vote for you, ask them!

At the end of your presentation, either say something indirect like “I hope you’ll vote for me,” or “I hope I can count on your support,” or, even better, be direct… “Can I count on your support?” Not only is asking for the vote good form, it will allow you to identify supporters so that you can mark them down in the campaign database and include them as part of your get out the vote efforts.

**Go at the Right Time** – Focus your door to door efforts during times when voters will actually be home, but not asleep: 5-9:30 pm Monday – Thursday, and 10am-6pm on Saturdays. Lit drops can be done at any reasonable time of day.

**A Step by Step Guide to Successful Door to Door**

The best way to maximize your door to door efforts is through repetition. You can make your efforts memorable – really memorable – by using the following door to door strategy:

Turn one tactic into multiple “voter touches” through repetition…

STEP ONE – Prepare Your List. Decide where you will be going door to door based on your targeting. Train your team, and prepare walk packets for them, including walk lists, lapel stickers, maps of the area they will be walking in, etc.

STEP TWO – The Pre-Mail. Send out a postcard to the homes you will be visiting. Make sure it arrives at the homes a few days before you plan to walk there. The postcard should say something like: “Hi, my name is Nicholas Biddle, and I am running for State Representative. I wanted to let you know that I will be in your neighborhood this week to meet with voters and hear their concerns. I hope you’ll have a few moments to talk with me about my campaign.” If volunteers are walking, the card could be changed to say “…I wanted let you know that some volunteers from my campaign will be in your neighborhood next week…”

STEP THREE – Walk! Send your team out into the streets to meet the voters. Make sure they keep accurate notes, and make sure they leave behind a brochure or other piece of literature at each house they visit. If someone isn’t home, leave them a piece of literature with a hand-written note that says something like: “I’m sorry I missed you! Please call our campaign office if you’d like to talk more about our campaign. – Jessica” Have a group of volunteers write up these notes before hand, and have each walker take a stack of pre-written “sorry I missed you” brochures along with them.

STEP FOUR – The Follow-Up Mailing. Send an “it was nice meeting you” post card to each home you visited. For houses where people weren’t home, send “sorry we missed you” postcards. Also, be sure to send voters any additional information they requested.

Do you see what we did there? We provided three hits for each targeted voter through one door to door program: one before the knock, the knock, and one after the knock. (Lit drops should not use the pre-walk and post-walk postcards… lit drops provide only one hit).

Remember – repetition is key. You have to keep putting your name and message in front of the voters if you want them to remember on Election Day. If you have the time and money to do a pre-walk and post-walk card, in addition to your door to door walk, you will gain a ton of additional name recognition awareness for your campaign.

B. SAMPLE SCRIPT

SAMPLE VOTER ID SCRIPT

Hello, may I please speak with (name of the voter on the list)? My name is (name of volunteer), and I’m a volunteer walking/calling on behalf of (Candidate Name/ Party Name/Campaign Name).

We’re surveying voters tonight about the issues that they want candidates to address this election. [If they hesitate or say they are busy – remind them that you have only two questions and it will take less than a minute.] What are two issues you are basing your decision on this election? [Take down the answer/issues for future contacts]

If the election for [X] were held today, who would you vote for? ♣ John Doe ♣ Jane Miller ♣ George Brown

If not supporting your candidate: Thank you very much for your time, have a good day.

If undecided: Well I hope you’ll consider [Candidate] – she’s a working mom who understands what it’s like to juggle family and work. Like a lot of folks, she thinks the folks in charge don’t seem to get it and have dropped the ball – and she’s running to make sure the city listens and that our town is the best that it can be for our families and neighbors. We hope to earn your support. [Pause to see if there is a response – engage in a conversation if the person is willing.

If not…] Thanks for your time today and we’ll be in touch to follow up!

If supporting your candidate strongly: (they give some indication they are enthusiastically voting) That’s wonderful – can we count on you to volunteer for us as well? If yes, take their information, and ask them if they will volunteer and make sure the campaign gets back to them quickly. If no, Thanks so much for your support and your time. Don’t forget to vote for [Candidate/Campaign] on [Election Day]. Have a good day.

SAMPLE VOTER ID-PERSUASION SCRIPT

Hi, this is \_\_\_(your first name)\_\_\_\_, is \_\_\_\_(first name)\_\_\_ available? Hi, I'm a volunteer with (Candidate Name/ Party Name/Campaign Name). We’re talking to our neighbors about (Candidate/Campaign). Are you familiar with her? If yes they familiar, Are you planning on voting for the (Candidate) in November? ♣

If yes, ask them to volunteer and thank them and say goodbye. ♣

If no, ask them what their concerns are and try to address them. If still “no” thank them for their time.

If no, they aren’t familiar, Well, I’m volunteering for [Candidate] because [insert your reason for supporting the candidate]. It’s one of the small, but for me important ways [Candidate] listens to our concerns and can make our town better. What are some thing that you wish could be changed here in town? [Allow time for the person to respond. Engage them in a conversation if possible. If there is little response, ask the next question.] Well, (Candidate) has been out working hard, talking and listening to folks. And what she’s been hearing is that a lot of people think the current city leadership has dropped the ball. (Candidate) thinks so, too, and thinks that it’s time to try something new. So do I … How about you? Can (Candidate) count on your vote for mayor in November?

If yes, Great! Can we get your email address to keep you informed on the campaign and ask you to volunteer? Thank you again for your time and have a great day/night!

If no, What are your concerns about [Candidate]? [Try to address them if applicable -- if still no, thank them for their time and hang up.]

If still undecided, Thanks for your time. [Candidate] hopes to earn your support. Have a great night!