



EVENTS & TACTICS

PART 1: PLANNING

Level 3: Advanced activist skills

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Get your concept boards ready, we've got a lot to think about.

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BEFORE WE BEGIN

If you haven't completed our modules on [fundamental activist skills](#), we recommend reading these first. In particular our module on Strategic Thinking.

If you have any questions please get in touch with us at communityorganising@amnesty.org.au.



Central Coast action group stall © Amnesty International

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to part one of our module on events & tactics, this one has a focus on the planning stage. In this module you'll gain a deeper understanding of what sorts of activities you can do as an activist. How you can use these to inspire support and build power in the community and online. Most important we'll go into how you can know which tactic is right for what you are trying to achieve.

What are tactics?

Tactics are the activities that we do to achieve a campaign's strategic goals and objectives. Tactics mobilise communities, raise awareness about issues and influence decision makers. They vary in size and scale as well. It could be something simple like asking someone to sign a petition or write a letter. It might also be holding a large community event or stunt. There are a huge range of tactics we can choose from, some of which we will cover below. With so many tactics it can be difficult to know which ones are right for each situation.

Here are some criteria of a successful tactic:

- 1 It forms part of a pathway that takes us from problem to solution. The tactic should either achieve a strategic goal or connect with other tactics that will together achieve it. A tactic that has little to no connection with the goals will be unlikely to have the success we need.
- 2 It brings in the people we need to show power at the right time, when people power is most needed. If it brings people in at the wrong time or too few people, then it will also not be successful.
- 3 It communicates in a clear way what success looks like. It shows people what we're asking for, what the solutions are and how we can change the world. If people look at your tactic and are unsure what you're trying to say or how it leads to change then it hasn't worked.

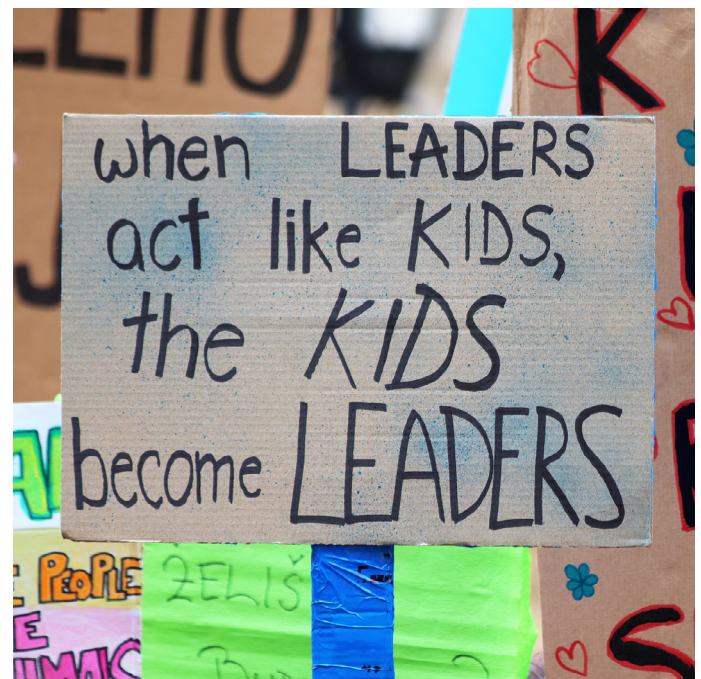
It's common for people to choose tactics without considering these things. There are a lot of reasons this happens. The main one is usually that not enough thinking and planning has happened. It might be that the broader campaign strategy isn't clear or there isn't one at all. There might be a rough idea about who the decision maker is and what the solution is, but it isn't fleshed out. People may think about an issue they care about and jump straight to choosing tactics.

For many of us activists the tactics are the fun part, it's where we actually get to be activists. So it's easy to see why this can happen. But it's vital we take the time and effort to get our plans right before we leap into activism mode.

For example: Large public rallies and protests are well known as an effective tactic. When successful they are a great way to show people power and support for an issue on a huge scale. If you can get all the people to turn up it definitely sends a message to the right people.

The reason it can be successful is because it engages a lot of people that don't often take part in activism. Everyday people who now have enough outrage and passion to take to the streets. Since they don't do regular activism they would need to have a lot of passion for the issue for them to make that decision. This concerns decision makers because it takes a lot to get the general public riled up in this way. Sustaining this level of pressure is one major way that leads to change.

Case study: To give you a successful example let's look at Schools Strike for Climate. This is a movement started by school students to campaign against climate inaction. They have held weekly protests to raise awareness and call for action on climate change. Over time it has grown into a massive global movement.



It has been effective for a few specific reasons. The participants do not present the usual image people have of activists. It is a movement led by young people that puts young people at the forefront. They have a compelling narrative of standing up for a future which they feel is being stolen from them. They lead by example, stepping into a leadership space that adults are not occupying. Their message is simple, it's for leaders to acknowledge the science and set targets. They don't claim to be experts, but urge world leaders to listen to the people who are.

The aim of their actions is to disrupt the usual operation of school life by skipping school to protest. They do this because this is one of the few avenues young people have to disrupt society in some form. Disruptive tactics tend to be a last resort for people feeling ignored by leaders. Usually they've tried everything else without much success. Politicians respond to disruptions because it's their job to keep society functioning. They are under pressure to end the disruptions as fast as possible. Sometimes it's effective, sometimes it isn't.

In this instance the students have received a lot of support from wider society. About once every 6 months the school strikes expand to international days of action. These large rallies, organised by young people, call on people to strike from study and work. They gather together in a public display of support for climate action. When you break it down it's actually a very simple strategy, but with an enormous goal. But, it's a good example of when a tactic is well thought out and done in the right way.



On the other hand it's not always wise to choose protest as a tactic. You need to organise them at key moments when public outrage is at its peak. You should also try to hold them around moments when that pressure is most needed. Moments when decision makers are most vulnerable to it. Holding a large scale protest at the wrong time might mean using your power too early. You can lose momentum towards the issue and that pressure isn't there when you need it. Just because a tactic was successful one time, doesn't always mean it will work the next time. It's a combination of careful planning and being in the right place at the right time.

Protests are also useful for building power over a period of time, to increase the size of a movement. This is particularly around issues that aren't prominent in the public eye. You can start with a small group of people and have gradual growth of support around the issue. If decision makers have no intention of bringing about change, then this can create the pressure to do so. But if you can't get the people to turn up or keep them engaged, then your power levels drop. It can have the opposite effect on the decision makers that you were trying to achieve. They might now feel empowered not to do anything, confident that the public outrage isn't there.

And that's only one of many tactics to consider! You can start to see the level of thought that we need to do to make sure our activism is effective. As coordinators of tactics we have a lot of responsibility to get it right. We're not only putting our own energy into it, but also the energy of the people we're asking to take part. If they feel like they've wasted their time then they'll be less likely to take part again. We need to make sure that they feel they've had impact and can see that change is possible.



Activity: Think of a tactic you've been part of or seen that worked really well. Why do you think it was a success? Alternatively, what about a tactic that wasn't successful? What could have been different for it to have gone well?

Examples of events and tactics by category

Let's look at some other tactics now. We want to give you some inspiration for the different types of tactics you can use. These are only a few examples, but we hope it will help you to try some different things. We'll only give a basic description and some of the main things to know about them. It's worth learning about these in more detail, plus all the other tactics that aren't listed. If you know the pros and cons of each then it will make the planning process faster.

1 Events and tactics for engaging the public & raising awareness.

These have the aim of building power to use in pressure generating tactics later. The main focus is on bringing people into the campaign to mobilise them at a later date. Not everyone we engage with will get involved again, which is why we need to engage as many people as possible. These are also good tactics for movement growth, to inspire others to become regular activists within our movement. Some people you engage here may help support or lead the coordination of later tactics. These can also create some pressure on the target if they are aware these tactics are happening.

a) Traditional activism - These are some of the classic forms of building power. Anyone can do them with the right amount of time and capacity. This is why they are regular parts of our toolkits.

STALL

This is where you set up a table at a community event and raise awareness about a campaign. You can also use these to promote the movement. You encourage people passing by to come speak with you and ask them to get involved in some way.

These are usually quick to organise, you can contact a local market to ask for a space. Also keep an eye out for local events where there will be stalls so you can ask to attend. It's best to have a single ask that people can do fast, such as signing a petition. It's a good idea to move your stalls to different events so you can engage different people.

PETITION BLITZ

This is where you stand in a public place and ask people walking by to sign a petition. All you need is yourself, a busy street and a petition, so it's very easy to organise.

These are good for when you need to build up petition numbers. Try to get a few people to hit a few places at the same time. But, make sure you're in a space where you're allowed to stand. If you're not sure where these spaces are then give your local council a call. Pick a time and location when there will be a lot of people.

THEMED EVENT

These are public events based around an engaging activity. The idea being that people will come for the activity and then stay to hear about the campaign. It could be something like a concert, film screening, exhibition, trivia night etc. Social activities that people like to go to for fun or enrichment.

A lot of work goes into these, so it can be risky to do that work and not have many people turn up. Preference events that are more likely to get a bigger turn out. Always include a simple action and an opportunity to talk about the campaign. We want to turn attendees into advocates who will go and recruit more people to the campaign.

DISCUSSION PANEL / Q & A

This is an event where you bring together a few speakers to discuss a topic to an audience. They might be experts, people with lived experience, activist leaders etc. The point of these is to dive deeper into the issue and help people to better understand what is going on. There is usually a Q & A portion to it as well.

What works about this kind of event is very similar to the themed events, so follow the tips from that. Try to invite speakers that will bring more people in. Also try to have a diverse range of people on the panel. It's not a debate, so you don't need to invite speakers who oppose the issue.

COMMUNITY / TOWN HALL FORUM

This is where you invite your community to come together to discuss an issue. You might form a coalition with others to run it. The purpose is to show decision makers what the community cares about. So, you might also invite those decision makers to attend and listen. There are two main ways to run these, rehearsed or free range.

There are pros and cons to both. The latter is more authentic, but runs the risk of going off script. You don't know what audience members are going to say and it could backfire. The former approach is more streamlined, but you have to do a lot of choreographing beforehand. Election periods tend to be a time when candidates will hold events like these. A great opportunity to ask them questions.

DOOR KNOCKING / LEAFLETING

This is about going door to door to pass on information about something. Your choice is to either knock on each door for a conversation or to drop the materials in their mailbox.

The tips for this tactic are the same as phone banking, make sure to do this before peak moments. That is especially if you are going to do door knocking. You are encroaching on people's personal space, so you better have a good reason for it. No matter what some people will not appreciate it, so you can't win them all. Get a team of people together, pick a neighbourhood and split it up. Keep doing this until you have completed the entire area you're wanting to mobilise in some way.

WORKSHOP

This is about getting people together to take part in a learning activity. The purpose is that you want people to learn new skills for a particular reason. Or you are using an interesting learning activity to bring people in for another purpose.

Think about how this could tie in with your campaign work. Are you coordinating tactics or events where people will need certain skills? Then make sure to run a workshop beforehand so people will feel confident. The workshop could be on something unrelated to activism as well. But you use it as an opportunity to talk about an issue. Make sure it is clear in the workshop information that you'll be doing that though.

PHONE BANKING

This where you get a group of people together to phone people on a list about something. Usually it is to ask them to do an action of some kind.

Only use this as a tactic at a critical point where you need to mobilise a lot of people at once. It should sound like an urgent ask so it is less annoying for the person you are calling. So they know you wouldn't be calling if you could avoid it. It could be close to your peak moment in the campaign to get that urgency across.

POSTERING

This is a simple one, it's all about putting up posters in public spaces.

It is one of the few ways you can make something go viral without the internet. Put up enough posters in many places and the message can get stuck in people's heads. You could use it to promote a tactic or event you are doing, inviting people to attend. Consider adding QR codes or links so people can find out more. Or it could be more creative around raising awareness for an issue. Make sure you're putting them up in places you're allowed to, look for areas where other posters are up. If you're taking the creative route and putting them anywhere, make them unidentifiable.



Amnesty activists doing flash mob in London. © Amnesty International

b) Creative activism - This involves a bit of imagination and thinking outside the box. But you don't have to be a great artist to do them. They're about sparking an emotional response. To snap people out of their regular lives for a moment and to contemplate the issue we care about. Also, any tactic can be made more creative. You're only limited by your imagination...and your resources.

How to brainstorm a creative tactic: Think about your issue and the message that you want to convey. Try to make that message as simple and easy-to-understand as possible. Then think about the kind of images or words that you could use to communicate this message. It should be something that gets the tactic some attention and paints you in a sympathetic light. Or at least your target's stance in a negative light.

Think big and be ambitious, but also think about what is realistic and achievable. Take into consideration the resources that you have available to you. The more clever or funny your stunt is, the more likely you are to catch people's attention. Also think about your stunt from an outsider's perspective. Would someone with little awareness of the issue understand the point you are trying to make? If not, how can you simplify the message while retaining its impact?

INVISIBLE THEATRE

This is where you perform something scripted or improvised in public. The whole point is that anyone watching you do it won't realise it is theatre.

An example could be two people on a bus having an audible discussion about an issue. The people around this pair may listen in and absorb the information. They might even get involved in the discussion themselves. You can do the same online on social media or any situation where people have a public conversation. You can even go bigger with it, taking over a public space. Once you've got everyone's attention you can choose to break character at the end and ask people to take action. But, you don't have to do that if you don't want to.

PUBLIC / STREET ART

This is about using any form of visual art to communicate an issue in a public place.

It could be through paint, sculpture, installation, there are many options. Some similar tips to posterage. If it's something more permanent like painting on a wall then you'll want to avoid anything identifiable. Communicate a clear message about the issue that people will understand. There are some locations where you can get permission to do this. So try that avenue first. But, you could also use temporary mediums like chalk to get your message across.

FLASH MOB

This is similar in a way to invisible theatre at first. Although it is not invisible at all, the audience will know immediately how staged it is. It's when a large group of people that seem like strangers come together to perform something. It's usually a kind of choreographed dance with accompanying music. But there are different styles of performance you could do.

This will be harder to connect the performance to a human rights issue. But, it is very useful for getting a lot of people to stop in their tracks to watch. So you could use signs with text to get a message across. You might get the whole group to then go around and ask people to take action.

BANNER / PLACARD MAKING

Now this something almost anyone can do. You will make a sign that conveys a simple message about the issue you care about. You'll use them most at protest type events, but there are other occasions for them. You could use them in a stunt, such as unraveling a large banner in a public place.

The funnier or more clever the sign, the more it tends to get attention. These are usually the images that the media picks up or shared wide on social media. There are many examples of these online, so do some browsing if you need inspiration.

2 Events and tactics for generating pressure for change.

These are about showing power and putting pressure on a target. We use these when a target has ignored us or have communicated they are against the solution we are calling for. A lot of these, but not all, are about mass mobilisation of people. We want to show that the community is behind this solution and that they should listen to the will of the people. If successful it will lead to the target showing support in some form. But it can, and often does, take many cycles of building and showing power before this might happen. It's useful to do a number of these over time, have that pressure coming from a number of different directions.

a) Distributed action - These are about asking a lot of people to show support for a campaign and to take action, but in a spread out way. We want to show breadth of community support through these tactics. The target should be aware that we have a sizable amount of supporters for change. It's not only spread out with the number of people taking action, but over time as well. We can keep these tactics going over a long period. That way we have a steady amount of pressure on the target over time.

MP MEETINGS

We have a whole guide on this tactic right [here](#). But, this is where we meet with politicians to discuss solutions to issues.

These can happen in combination with other tactics to put pressure on the politician. It depends on the politician, what their stance is and how willing they are to meet with us. As a sign of good faith we try to get these meetings first before any other action. We show that we are willing to meet to have a constructive conversation. But, if the politician refuses to support the issue and our talk doesn't sway them then we look to add more pressure. This is when we would start using other pressure based tactics, which we will now cover.

MASS CALLS / EMAILS / LETTERS TO TARGETS

This is where we encourage supporters of an issue to inundate a target's office with messages. It could be by phone, email, letters or any other form of communication.

This is particularly useful when made by local constituents. These are the opinions of which a politician cares most about. They might fear having a stance that is at odds with the majority of the electorate. Because this could harm their reelection attempts. It's also good to spread these out, we want a lot of messages over a long period of time. So get as many people in the community to take part as you can.

PETITION HANDOVER

This is where we take the petition signatures we've collected to hand them over to a target. Like many of these pressure building tactics it is important to have a media presence. The target most likely won't take the petitions themselves, which is fine. The important thing is being able to show that you have done it. That the target cannot deny there is support for the issue.

You'll want to make sure that you have an impressive number of signatures when you do this. You can combine your local numbers with the national total. But try to get as many local people as possible. Do not hand over people's contact details from the petitions. You only need the names, signatures and post codes.

MEDIA COVERAGE

This is where you are able to get some form of media coverage for your activism or the issue. They might turn up at a tactic you've organised and report on it. You could also get in touch with them for an interview or to write your own article. We have a guide on how to engage with the media [here](#).

Focus on local community based media. These are the people you will most want to influence, other than the target themselves. They too may try to keep up to date with local media. Build strong relationships with these journalists. They will likely pay more attention to you because of this.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

This falls somewhat into the category of media coverage as well. Many newspapers have a section where people can write in with their opinions.

It's another good way to get the attention of local people. It gives our message that local twist which some people relate more to. They might be more likely to listen to someone in the community than from someone far away. We also cover this in our [guide on engaging the media](#), so look there for more tips.

SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM

There's a lot of ways you can use social media for activism. Check out our guide on that topic [here](#). Some common ways include hashtags, changing profile images, virtual check-ins and viral challenges.

The key to success with these is the amount of pick up you get. If you don't get a mass of people taking part then the community and decision makers may not notice it at all. That's if you're using it to raise attention or add pressure. If it's about showing solidarity then it's okay if your efforts aren't widespread. As long as the people you are showing solidarity with can see the effort.

b) Direct action - These are physical displays of power where we take the campaign to the streets. We use these when we want to show how dedicated the community is towards this issue. That we are willing to take time out of our lives to come together for the sole purpose of achieving change. We want to remind those in charge who has the power. But, Amnesty will only support non-violent forms of direct action. Also if you are planning any form of action that has the potential to end in arrests you need to get in touch first. We need to approve these tactics and work out all the risks.

PROTEST / RALLY / MARCH

This is where people gather together en masse to express support for a solution to an issue. It's also to show outrage and frustration about the lack of action by decision makers.

We covered a lot on this at the beginning of the guide. Protests, rallies and marches are sometimes interchangeable these days. But, here's the difference between the terms. Rallies are about showing public support for something. Protests are a formal objection against something. Marches are when these move from one destination to another. The important thing is to have a lot of people.

VIGIL

A vigil is like protests, rallies and marches, as it involves bringing a large crowd together. But, these are more solemn and usually about showing solidarity during difficult times. Putting pressure on a target may be a purpose, but it is not the primary reason for holding them. It is so a community can come together and support one another. That should always be the main focus.

The people that attend these may want to take further action so make sure they know how to do so.



Activists hold vigil outside youth detention centre in VIC © Amnesty International

STRIKE

This is when a person or people stop performing a role they hold in society. It is a form of disrupting the usual flow of everyday life. Maintaining these roles is how society functions, so we get to show some of our power when we stop doing them. It might involve something like not turning up to work. Our example at the start of the guide was about students striking from school. But, there are many different types of roles in the world so there's many ways to strike.

These are more effective if many people take part in the strike. The disruption needs to be felt by many as that's where the pressure comes from. It also needs to be public that you are striking otherwise people won't know and it won't have effect.

HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVING

This is where we send human rights observers to an event or tactic to watch for human rights abuses. The role of these observers is to document what is happening by taking notes and recording video. We are particularly looking for situations where police are being aggressive towards activists. We want to capture any of this, including any arrests so we can report on it later.

It's important for us to remain impartial during the event or tactic. This is so no one can claim any of reporting shows any bias. We want to have a calming presence, that we deescalate the aggressiveness by being there. This requires a bit of training and approval for use, so get in touch with us if you want to do this.

SIT-IN / OCCUPATION

This is where people take over a space and refuse to move. It is also a form of disrupting society and can happen in a many ways. You could have large groups of people taking over spaces. For example it might be blocking roads so traffic can't get through. A smaller group could do something like occupying the office of a politician.

This tactic usually leads to arrests and should be more of a last resort. It's more effective when people sympathise with the people doing the disruption. We will almost always say no to doing this tactic, so please contact us first. It is a useful tactic to know about though.



Activity: What other tactics can you think of? Start developing your own collection of tactic ideas and inspiration from around the world. Each one of these could be a guide of their own, so get researching on how to do them in a more effective way.



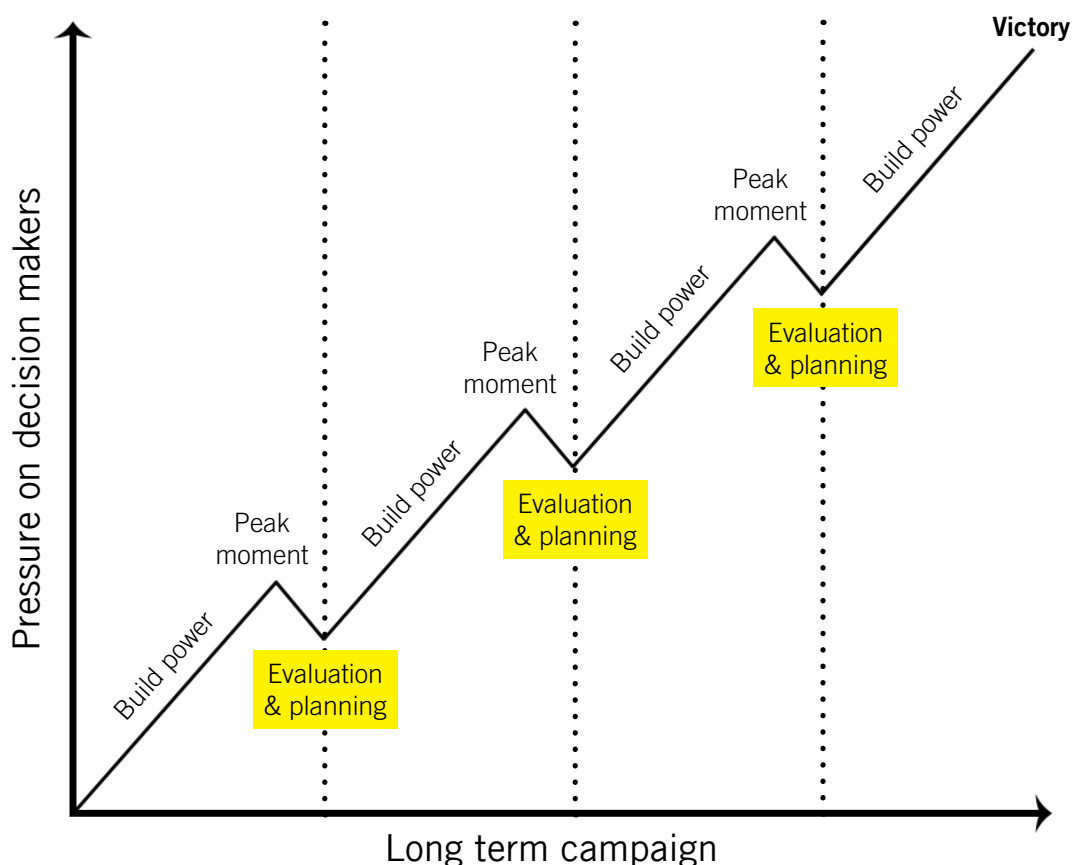
Human rights observers monitoring event in Sydney 2016. © Amnesty International

How to choose the right tactics and events

“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.” - Sun Tzu

With so many options how do we know which tactic is going to be best for the situation? We’re not going to go into detail about how to develop a whole strategy here. You can find some of the basics on this in our guide on [Strategic Thinking](#). This module is for people who already have the first part of the strategy and are coming up with a plan for tactics.

Think about how your activism connects with what the wider movement is doing. In every campaign we have key moments we’re working towards. These are the moments when we need the pressure on our targets to be at its peak. We can’t always keep this level of pressure up at all times, so we have to be more strategic with it. We need to spend time building power and then have the movement unite when it is most effective. We will let you know when these peak moments are, this is when to plan for tactics around public mass mobilisation. This mobilisation can take many different forms. It might be a large-scale protest or stunt. It could be more individual, like asking each of them to call and email your target at the same time. It could be all the above, so keep an open mind and think about what is most effective. Here’s a way to visualise it.



Between these peak moments is a good time to grow the movement and build community support. This is when we do the organising work. You could focus on tactics that will help with the recruitment of new team members. At the same time you can raise awareness about the campaign gaining supporters to call on at a later date. You can build partnerships with community leaders and organisations to join the campaign. Think long term about the power and capacity you will need so you can bring your plan to fruition.

Here are some good questions to ask yourself when planning tactics:

- Have you read the campaign strategy? Do you understand the theory of change? Is it clear what we're trying to achieve? Who we want to influence? When we need to do it?
- What is the most pressure you'll be able to generate on the campaign target at that peak moment? How likely will you be able to create this pressure?
- How many people in the community do you need to take part in your tactics for them to be successful? What will you ask them to do? Is it something they are likely to do?
- What relationships do you need to make your plan happen? Do you need media support? Do you need community leaders and organisations to get involved? Who else in the community has influence over the campaign target?
- Do you have the capacity to make this plan happen? Do you have the resources and financial support? Could the plan lead to burnout if you proceed without the necessary capacity and resources?
- What risks are there if you're not successful? Are there reputational risks? Is it worth the effort?

That last question is very important to consider. If the effort put into the tactic is greater than the impact you achieve, then you might need to rethink your plans. If you think about this beforehand then you can adapt your plan to be ready in case. To help with this, here is a tactics analysis tool you can use. When you're brainstorming tactics use the table and analyse its effectiveness. You don't have to be precise with it, just give an estimate rating.

TACTICS ANALYSIS TOOL				
Power it shows:		Power it creates:		
How much pressure can it put on the campaign target? How many people can it mobilise?		How well does it help you to build power? Does it bring many new people to the cause?		
Energy it takes:		Energy it makes:		
How difficult is it to organise? How much time and resources does it use?		How well does it revitalise the people involved? Does it inspire deeper engagement?		
TACTIC <i>(If done perfect)</i>	ANALYSIS OF TACTIC <i>(On a scale of 1 - 10 the amount of...)</i>			
	Power it SHOWS	Power it CREATES	Energy it TAKES	Energy it MAKES
Stall	1	3	2	3
Petition handover	5	6	5	6
Protest	10	10	7	10

Source: Adapted by Daniel Hunter, [Training for Change](#) from a design by Shari Silverstein, Quixote Centre.

Based on that analysis we get some useful info. The stall does not build or show as much power as a petition handover. But, it also doesn't take very much energy to coordinate. So there is potential to run several stalls for the same energy that it takes to run one petition handover. This would be great for building power, but not for showing it. The protest tops the scale in most areas, but isn't much harder to organise than a petition handover. That is if it works out as planned. If few people turn up to the handover then it still works. If few turn up to the protest then it won't have impact.

So let's look at another tool you can use, known as SWOT analysis. It stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This tool is not limited to analysing tactics, you can use it for any project or decision. You can use it before, during and following the project as well.

Let's look at an example of how to use the tool. A team of activists have found out that in less than two weeks there will be an important vote in parliament. It will relate to a campaign they have been working on for a while. Their local MP has refused to meet with them to discuss it. So they're deciding whether to hold a protest before the vote happens to add some pressure on the MP. Here is their SWOT analysis of the situation.

SWOT ANALYSIS TOOL	
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: yellow;">STRENGTHS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Positive characteristics & advantages)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the capacity and resources to organise a protest. Have organised successful protests in the past. • Have a large mailing list and social media presence. • Have strong partnerships who will also mobilise their bases. • Will put a lot of pressure on our target, it is the perfect time for it. 	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: yellow;">WEAKNESSES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Limiting characteristics & disadvantages)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only have one week to organise the protest. • Haven't got permission from the local council yet. • Haven't confirmed with partners whether they will participate yet. • Issue not prominent in the media or amongst the community.
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: yellow;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Possible positive outcomes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will lead to our target supporting the campaign or agreeing to meet with us. • Will strengthen our relationships with partners. • Will lead to more people joining our team / movement. • Will lead to more people taking action on the campaign. 	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: yellow;">THREATS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Possible negative outcomes & barriers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not be enough time to organise, which could mean low attendance and partners not turning up. • May not have enough time to get approval from the council. • Overwhelming stress on the team with the short time-frame. • Low turnout would put little to no pressure on the target.
<p>DECISION: High risk that protest will not go as planned despite our strengths. We will look at other tactics that have a higher chance of success that also building pressure.</p>	

Based on this info the team decides to go in a different direction. But, imagine if this team had only focused on their strengths and the positive outcomes. They most likely would have gone ahead with it and there would have been a medium to high chance of failure. But they used the tools well, did some risk analysis and came to a safe conclusion. All right, let's look at how we can turn all this information into a solid plan.



Activity: Think about a decision you have made or might make in the future. It could be activism related or personal. Use this SWOT analysis tool to help you make an informed decision about it.

How to make a long term plan

These are all important things to think about during the planning stage. So never jump straight into it, take some time to work out what is the most effective use of your time and energy. As with all plans we start by setting some SMART goals. If you need a refresher on SMART goals check out our guide on [Strategic Thinking](#).

Setting a SMART goal for your plans will give you some important details. Most important of which is what you're trying to achieve and how you think you can do it. It also gives you a timeline, how much time you have to do it. Plus a way to measure progress along the way.

For the rest of this guide we're going to use a single example to go through the planning process. In this case activists around the country are going to put pressure on their local MPs to support an issue. There will be a peak moment in roughly five months when this pressure needs to happen. One team of activists have set a SMART goal around this.

SMART GOAL:

*We want to meet with **(MP Name)** by **(Date)** to show them that many people in the community support **(Issue)**. We will achieve this by collecting **(Number)** of local signatures on a petition. If **(MP Name)** refuses to meet with us by **(Date)** we will hold a media stunt outside their office. We want at least **(Number)** media outlets to report on the stunt and to interview us. We will also encourage **(Number)** of these people to phone or email **(MP Name's)** office.*

We will consider this plan a success if any of the following outcomes happen. a) The MP comes out in support of the campaign. b) We are able to secure a meeting with the MP. c) There is broader talk of support for the campaign in the MP's party because of this national pressure.

This goal mentions the specifics of what they want to achieve and what success looks like. They know which date it needs to happen, what the tactics are and who the target is. They know how many people they want to mobilise, to sign the petition and how many media outlets. So the goal is also measurable. They know how much time they have to do this and what their current capacity is. So they believe this should be achievable. It's relevant because it aims to show community support and it will be happening around the country at a peak time. There is a specific date so it is all time-bound as well. So they have definitely made a SMART goal here.



It's much less daunting when you know exactly how many steps there are and how long it should take you to do them.

From here they can map out the period between the present and the peak moment of the campaign. By working backwards from the final moment, they can figure out all the things they need to do.

They will send a request for the meeting, but they want a backup plan in place in case the request fails. If the MP accepts their request then they won't follow through with the rest of the plan. But, if the MP declines or ignores them then they will organise a media stunt outside the MP's office.

Here's the outline of the plan they have come up with. You'll notice it doesn't have much detail yet.

Activism plan (tactics and events)					End goal
Planning	Building power			Peak moment	Influence local MP on a particular issue by showing there is strong community support for the issue.
Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	
Develop plan, work out logistics, assign people to roles.	Stall to collect 200 local petition signatures	Stall to collect 200 local petition signatures	Petition blitz to collect remaining signatures	100 petition signatories to phone & email MP close to the time of the stunt	
	If possible: try to find an event the MP will be attending to introduce ourselves and express interest in meeting.	Request MP meeting for month 5. If declined proceed with media stunt.	Building relationships with local media to be used for stunt or for after a successful MP meeting.	MP meeting OR If declined: Media stunt for petition handover (20 people supporting, at least two media outlets present)	

The tactics for building power happen early on and all of the pressure based tactics are at the end. They also know there are some relationships they need to build during this time. So they've given themselves plenty of time to do it. They have also set some loose targets based on what they think they need. See how each tactic and event connects with the next. None of them are isolated activities, they all contribute towards the overall goal. There are multiple options depending on different outcomes, so if something doesn't go to plan there's a back-up in place. They also have set goals for each tactic as well, we'll go into more about this in part two.

Following all this they will request another meeting with the MP. That's assuming the MP declined the first one of course. They will continue this cycle using other tactics until they achieve their goal. The next cycle will be stronger because they have started to build community support. They have inspired people to care about the issue, so they have a good foundation to build on. If these people remain engaged then they will be able to put more pressure on the MP next time. Look at the graph on page 11 again to see this in effect.



Activity: Choose a current Amnesty campaign and use this process to map out the next several months. You can do this as a mock exercise for practice or for real if you're currently in planning mode.

So these activists know what they're trying to achieve and they've worked out what should be an effective way to do it. But how achievable is it? Let's find out.

How to be sure a plan is achievable

So your basic plan is in place and you have an idea which tactics and events you need to do to make the plan a success. So where do we go from here? Well it's time to make sure that you've made the right choices. Are they actually the most strategic tactics or events you could coordinate? Are you being realistic with your capacity and resources to do it all? Is it possible to achieve all your plans? We need to put it all under a microscope and make sure.

Remember you are not organising each event and tactic as isolated activities. They each have a greater purpose and should connect with the broader plan. So a simple question is: why are you doing it? Will your peak event or tactic actually generate the pressure you need? Do your events and tactics in the lead up to that peak contribute to building power in a meaningful way?

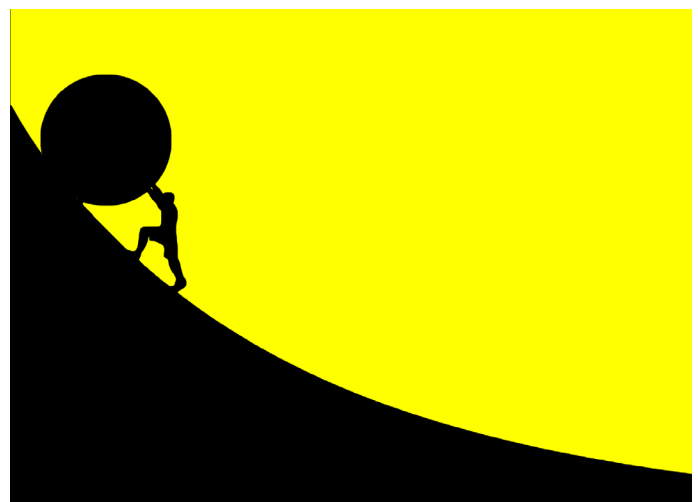
Don't be too quick to answer "yes" to that question either. There's no way to be 100% sure right now even as an experienced activist. This tends to be the point where we can get too attached to ideas. We all have moments like that, where we get very excited for an idea and start racing ahead. Then later we find out there were many things we hadn't considered because it got lost in the excitement. So be sure to take it slow and think about a range of alternatives even if you're not as excited by those. If another tactic better fits the strategy then you need to give it consideration.

Let's take another look at that example plan from the previous page. It looks good in theory, but what about in practice? In this example the campaign asks us to put pressure on an MP around a particular date. This will be in the form of a media stunt petition handover and mass calls from the community. It will have more impact if many of these stunts are being held around the country at the same time. Choosing a different tactic or doing it on another date will reduce that impact. But there's not much point proceeding with this tactic if there are barriers to doing it. What do you need to make it successful?

It's important to keep in mind a few things about this. If it turns out that you don't have what you need or you do but it could lead to burnout then don't proceed with the plan. Your self care and that of those working with you comes first. Also if there's only the smallest possibility of pulling it off then it's not worth the risk. Don't waste time and resources on something that most likely won't work. Based on this it's fine to readjust your plans to something that is within your capacity.

You can definitely still contribute to that pressure in other ways. For example, you could remove the media stunt from this plan but keep the rest of it. The mass calling program would still put pressure on your target and it might be easier to achieve on its own. Or you could still do a stunt, but reduce the size of it to something manageable. You could choose a different tactic, but make sure you run it by us first. As long as you are still taking part in the strategy and generating pressure at the right time it's all good.

But we should also look at it from another perspective. Do you have capacity to achieve more? Is the only barrier finding the confidence to do something larger than usual? It's important to keep pushing ourselves to grow and try bigger things if we're able to. Our goal as a movement is to have the most impact for human rights that we can. You can of course do this in a gradual way, try new tactics you haven't done before. If it doesn't go well, don't let that dissuade you from trying again. Learning from mistakes and striving to grow is how we become stronger activists.



There will always be days like this, but less often with good planning.

Here are some questions you can ask to work out what capacity you have.

- How many people do you have on your team? Do you need more? How soon could you get them?
- How much time do you all have to work on this plan? How much time capacity do you need?
- Are your team members reliable enough to follow through with tasks set for them? Or is it likely that most of the work will fall to a few people later on?
- Do you all have the skills needed to achieve this plan? If not, what skills do you need and do you have time to learn them?
- Do you have the campaign materials and other resources to achieve your plan? If not, how long would it take to get them and how difficult would it be?
- If you weren't able to get all these how much would it hinder your plans? Would it be detrimental for you and others to follow through in its current form?

If you answer these questions in a truthful way and with confidence you'll know your capacity. If you don't know the specifics of what capacity you'll need then speak with staff and other activists. Find out who else has done these tactics before and get some advice from them. If it's clear you don't have the capacity then look at reducing your plans. Vice versa if you can achieve it with ease then try out some bigger plans.

So, let's summarise all that. Here's some criteria you should consider so you can proceed with your plan.

1. The plan is achievable based on current capacity, resourcing and time restraints. It pushes us to coordinate the most impactful activities within that capacity.
2. It takes self care into consideration. The plan will not exhaust or overwhelm anyone involved in an unreasonable way.
3. It has a peak moment that is in line with the strategy. It will generate the most pressure on the target at the right time that is within capacity.
4. It also take into account the power building aspect. Enough activities to achieve this are in the plan.



A team makes it easier, but there's still hard work ahead.



Activity: Look through your plan and think about how many people you would need to do it. How difficult would it be to get the resourcing? Is there a reasonable time-frame? What would best practice look like?

Here are some alternative versions of that earlier plan based on reduced capacity.

Activism plan (tactics and events) [Medium capacity]					End goals
Planning	Building power			Peak moment	Influence local MP on a particular issue.
Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	
Develop plan, work out logistics, assign people to roles.	If possible: try to find an event the MP will be attending to introduce ourselves and express interest in meeting.	Request MP meeting for month 5. If declined proceed with media stunt.	25 local supporters to phone & email MP	MP meeting OR If declined: Media stunt for petition handover (10 people supporting, at least one media outlet present)	

In this version the team of activists will still proceed with the stunt idea. But, they don't have enough capacity to also build power in the community. So they won't do the stalls or petition blitzing. Instead they will only do an activity each month aimed at putting pressure on the MP. This plan requires a lot less capacity, but should still generate a good amount of pressure. They will focus almost their whole time on making the stunt successful. They will also aim to build their capacity during this plan. So, that during the next cycle they are able to achieve more.

Activism plan (tactics and events) [Lower capacity]					End goals
Planning	Building power			Peak moment	Influence local MP on a particular issue.
Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	
Develop plan, work out logistics, assign people to roles.	Stall to collect 150 local petition signatures	Stall to collect 150 local petition signatures	Keeping signatories and other locals engaged to take part in the next stage	40 petition signatories to phone & email MP close to the time of the stunt	

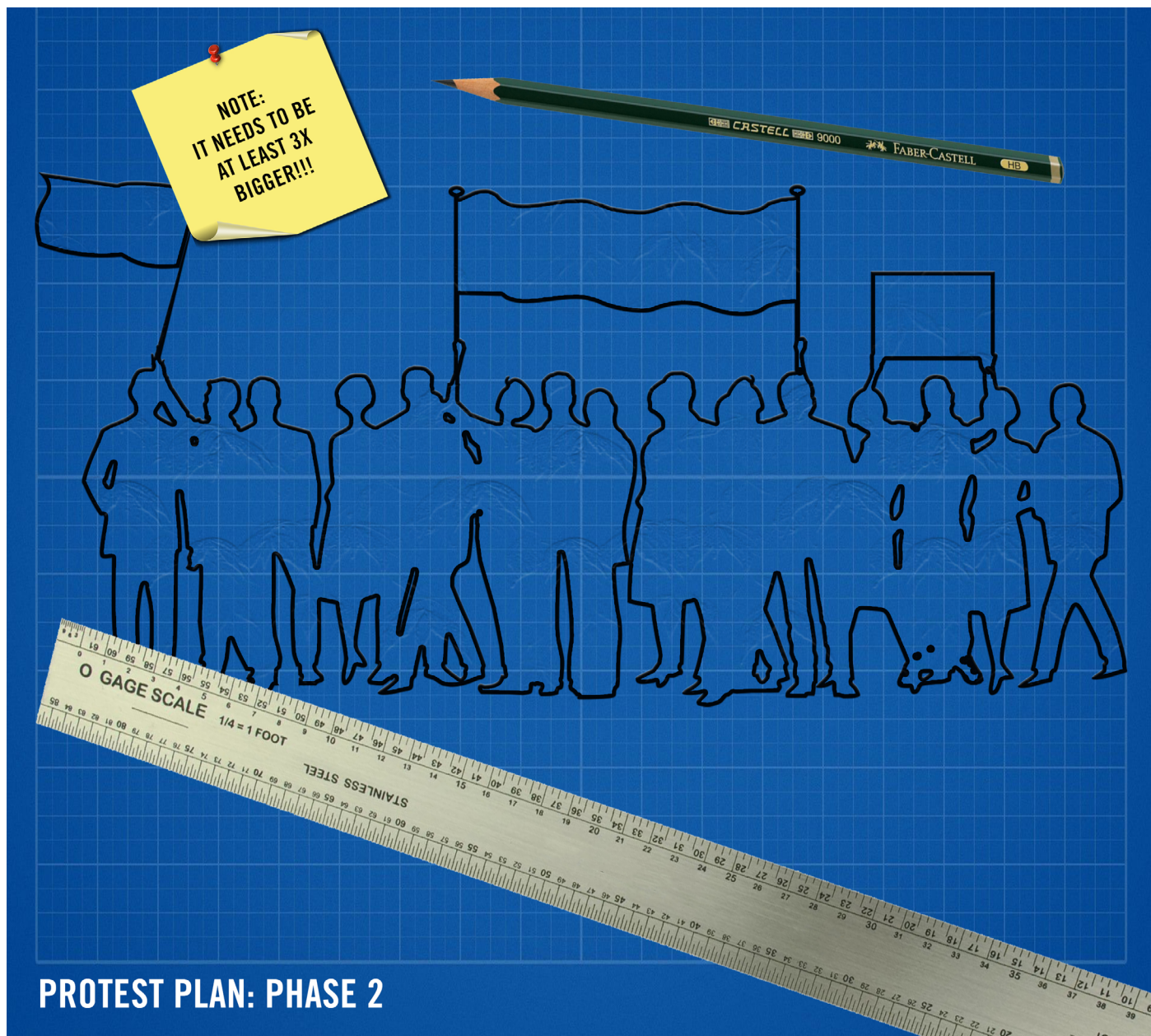
In this version the team of activists do not have the capacity or experience to meet with the MP. So they will not request a meeting or do a stunt. Instead they will look at building some power through market stalls. Then they will encourage the people that signed the petitions to contact the MP. They will also use this time to build more capacity for the next cycle.

In the end all three teams have contributed to putting pressure on MPs at the critical time. They've all done it in a way that is achievable for them. Activism is a process of persistence and determination. We keep building power and generating pressure for as long as it takes. Be practical and patient when planning. Focus on building your capacity, take it step by step. In time if you have followed this process you will be able to achieve almost anything.

What's next?

That brings us to an end of part one of our module on events and tactics. We have covered what tactics are and how to choose the right ones. We've looked at several tools and processes to make sure we're strategic when we pick tactics. We've also covered a wide range of different tactics and what they are useful for. We recommend that you next check out [part two](#) of this module. In it we will cover all the steps to take when moving from planning to coordinating tactics and events.

If you have any questions you can get in touch with us at communityorganising@amnesty.org.au. Thank you for your time!



Visit the Skill Up page for more activist development resources.

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