



TIPS FOR ORGANIZING EVENTS

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Public events—from lectures to rallies to fundraisers—are a great way to introduce people to an idea, help activists and future activists collaborate, and attract press attention. Even after they end, a deliberate event can pave the way for future work and inspire people worldwide.

WHAT KIND OF EVENT SHOULD YOU HAVE?

The events you organize have a lot to do with who you are, your objectives, and your capacity to prepare. Regardless of the event, consider setting  [clear expectations](#) beforehand.

EVENT TYPE	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE GOALS	CONSIDERATIONS AND COSTS
Local Meetup	An informal public gathering to discuss a topic. Educational workshop, a reading group, or just a space to socialize with like-minded folks.	Building networks; Public education; Community engagement	Venue arrangements; Conflict resolution; Cost of supplies; Event consistency
Rally, Demonstration Protest	A large public gathering to make your message heard. Sometimes with speakers, signage, and flyers.	Community engagement; Media attention	Conflict resolution; Medical care; Cost of supplies; Legal observers; Permits; weather
Party	Gathering to create social ties, with little official programming.	Fundraising; Building networks	Cost of supplies; Venue arrangements; Entertainment
Vigil	Typically a solemn evening event to underline the gravity of an issue.	Community support; Media attention	Weather; Community outreach
Lecture, Debate, Panel	A small number of speakers deconstruct complex issues for a broader audience.	Public education; Community engagement	Venue limitations; Event promotion; Participant vetting
Concert, art installation, book reading	Engage art-lovers and local press by promoting artists addressing your issues.	Building networks; Public education; Community engagement; Media attention	Venue limitations; Event promotion; Cost of supplies; Participant vetting
Movie Screening & Discussion	Screen a film on your issues, followed by an interactive discussion or panel depending on the size of the gathering	Building networks; Public education; Community engagement	Venue limitations; Event promotion; Possibly a license for screening.
Joining events & conferences as an attendee	Often larger events welcome groups to join and promote their own work..	Building networks; Community engagement	Cost of supplies; Event host permission; Attendee interests

PUBLICIZE YOUR EVENT

The success of your event is tied to how well you promote it. Try these tactics to help ensure a successful event.

Online

- Email local organizations or journalists you think might want to attend.
- Regular promotion as part of your [social media strategy](#).
- Post the event to online calendars. Consider newspapers, social media sites, and event listing services that are most used in your area.
- Contact community mailing lists, send a note to the list about your event, asking others to participate and help promote the event. Include an invitation that can be circulated.

Offline

- Flyers can be a great way to spread the word, especially if you are in dense walkable areas like a college campus or a city's downtown or transit hub. They're also helpful for distributing at similar events.
- List in local community calendars. This can be in a local newspaper, or public bulletin boards in establishments such as coffee shops and bookstores.
- If it's a big rally, you might spend a few weeks visiting local organizations in person and asking them to get involved.
- For larger events it's also important to have a [media outreach](#) strategy ramping up to the event, consider contacting local TV and radio programs.
- A big-name speaker can use their platform to bring in lots of attendees.

EVENT PREPARATION

VENUE ARRANGEMENTS

Your event will be shaped by where you hold it, and introduce new logistics and hard limitations on your event. Event length, privacy, costs, accessibility, and size will all differ even when considering similar or public locations. For nonprofit and community events, many venues will consider more lax pricing if you ask, and some institutions like churches and libraries won't charge at all.

RSVPS AND TICKETS

Do you need to charge for access, get attendee info, send out reminders, and/or simply get a headcount? Be clear what your goal is when making plans and select an appropriate RSVP

platform. Be mindful that these platforms typically track users, so they may be inappropriate for sensitive events like a protest.

DATA PROTECTION

While settling on event logistics, review how attendee information is being shared. This can range from how you handle email addresses on a signup sheet, to your chosen venue requiring a government ID to enter. Whenever possible minimize the amount collected, and have a plan on how this information is secured or deleted. For tips, see [📺 Surveillance Self-Defense](#).

SCHEDULE

For larger events, having a clear schedule for organizers and participants is essential to keep the event moving. This may be different than the public agenda or schedule, especially if you need to schedule time for setting up or finalizing last minute details. Try to include extra buffer time in the event agenda so that if something takes longer than anticipated you can still end on time.

AUDIO/VISUAL SETUP

You'll want to make sure that the more complex your audio or video setup is, the more time you reserve for setup and resolving issues. Reserve some additional time to test with the presenter as well so that they are prepared to use everything. Ideally, have one organizer in charge of this setup, and create an emergency backup plan in case these tools become wholly unavailable—which may include canceling the event.

HANDOUTS

Make one or two-page handouts you can give to attendees that provide an overview of the issue, a clear statement of your position, and information about how people can connect with organizers and join the fight. Use brief language and compelling graphics to provide an overview of the issue, and a link to more in depth resources.

SWAG/MERCH

If you have the budget, stickers, pins, and other small but useful handouts are great ways to let attendees show their support after the event, and possibly direct a wider audience to your cause.

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

For larger events, and events more likely to draw conflict, you'll want to make sure you have basic medical supplies and even an on-site medic.

MEDIA LICENSING

Consider whether you need to license the use of audio, video, or photographs for your event, or whether it might be covered by [fair use](#).

DOCUMENTING THE EVENT

One of the most important things you can do is document your event. Identify one organizer to focus on doing so during the event, as it can easily be forgotten when caught up in the work.

RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION POLICY

A useful precaution before documenting your work is to establish a written policy on how long certain information is preserved. Even if your group wants a robust archive, be deliberate about what is kept and for how long. Holding excessive documentation or footage makes it harder to use later on, and may come with privacy risks. Faced with a legal demand for this unpublished and possibly sensitive information, a clearly documented destruction process can limit accusations that you are evading compliance.

DOCUMENTATION TIPS

Photos

Before the event, possibly in your [community agreement](#) establish clear and realistic expectations around photography.

- Private events may have a dedicated photographer, and offer participants ways to indicate their consent to photos with a badge or sticker.
- Larger public events should make it clear if you intend to take photos and how they will be used.
- Photos help your organization's [social media strategy](#) by celebrating your work and clearly signaling that you are active. They can also help your [media strategy](#) since reporters can use your publicly-available photos when covering your work.
- A [Creative Commons](#) license makes it clear to everyone what permissions they have for using these photos. You can pick a license from their site and apply it to your photos—EFF uses the most permissive, CC BY, for almost everything.

Video

Videos have similar benefits to photos, but will often require more time to prepare before sharing.

- Talks and panels should be edited down to their speaking portion, and watched through once for any issues. If there are issues, you may try to fix or simply cut those segments.
- This quality check is even more important for dynamic recordings, like at a rally or a protest. In addition to these issues you'll want to be more careful about what's captured in frame, even in the background. Making the effort to blur faces or edit out potentially sensitive content is essential.
- Most viewers decide whether they'll finish watching a video within a few seconds, so try to include a compelling introduction.
- Accessible video requires a little more work, but makes it more useful to everyone. Take the time to ensure you have accurate captions, and consider if adding voice-over could make it easier to listen to.

Audio

Audio has similar considerations as video, but may be more comfortable for participants. Quality audio recordings could be shared as a podcast, a video with related images, or later transcribed as a written piece.

Livestream

Livestreaming events can dramatically increase the reach and accessibility of your work. However, unlike a video recording, you cannot rely on editing to make it accessible and preserve privacy. Therefore you should dedicate more time to testing the livestream before the event, and make it very clear when and where the stream is recording.

- Consider using a light or sign to indicate if recording is in progress. You can also use visual indicators, even if it's just tape, to mark what is in and out of frame.

Written

One of the easiest ways to document your work is to provide a written record. Depending on what other records you keep and your  [social media strategy](#) you can:

- Document a timeline of events. This is particularly important for public rallies and protests, in which case you may want to have a trained [legal observer](#). But for any event, a simple timeline will make it easier to write about later.
- Write down compelling quotes and summaries of opinions expressed. These are helpful to cite later, or can be shared on social media immediately by "live tweeting" events. Just be sure to check with speakers before citing them publicly.
- A short blog or social media post debriefing after an event, especially when paired with other recordings, gives your work a clear narrative and makes it easier to share with supporters and media outlets. You also have an excuse to once again promote your issue by sharing on social media.