

NCC Door-knocking Guide

WHY IS DOOR-KNOCKING USEFUL?

Door-knocking is a great way to connect with people in your local area, get an understanding of how they're feeling, share experiences, and persuade them to help. You can even make valuable friendships. Door-knocking makes a difference, and you can collect data from door-knocking to take to a candidate meeting or forum or share with the rest of the community.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

For most of us knocking on doors to talk to a stranger is confronting. For people opening the door, it can also be the same. So, the first thing you do is introduce yourself and explain why you're there. Here is an example:

"Hi I'm xxxx. I'm a volunteer with (your group name/NCC). We're a non-political network of people and groups in the xxxx electorate who want to see NSW take urgent, meaningful action on climate change and to protect nature.

If you have a few minutes, I'd really appreciate it if you could tell me what you think about climate change and nature protection and what we should be doing."

Most people are genuinely pleased that someone has taken the time to ask them their opinion.

They may also feel quite powerless, which is where you can prod them a little and direct them to simple actions where they can start making a difference, e.g.:

- Join a local community group
- Sign up to be a supporter
- Come to our xxxx event (if you're hosting a candidate forum/rally/bushwalking event etc.)
- You can also bring something with you for them to interact with or keep e.g. scorecard, petition to sign, bin stickers, yard signs

DOOR-KNOCKING FIRST AND FOREMOST IS ABOUT LISTENING

Once you have engaged someone in conversation, really listen to them. People can tell when you're focused on them and if nothing else, this will contribute to a positive experience.

1. Have open body language, make eye contact (not staring or eye-balling), nod, and show you are listening by summarising and checking for understanding, or asking follow up questions.
2. People are more likely to shift their position when they feel listened to and respected, not talked at.

RELATE THROUGH YOUR STORY

1. Listen and find common ground on things they care about. This is a chance to share an aspect of your personal life, something about you or someone you know that relates to their story and their concerns and builds a connection.
2. Sharing a little about yourself can be great for building rapport, making it a two-way conversation, and adding authenticity.
3. Don't give your life history or hog the conversation. It can be as simple as saying something like:

"This is the first time I've ever done door-knocking and you're my first door so I'm a bit nervous. But I wanted to do my bit to make sure that we get strong action on climate."

"My mum was evacuated in the bushfires. She was surrounded by fire. I was really scared for her as I couldn't get up to help as the roads were closed."

IDENTIFY AND AFFIRM VALUES

Bring the conversation to the values that you share on the issue – children's future, importance of protecting nature, cost to health, etc., connect that value to the person.

'Sounds like you care about ...

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Getting people to feel that what they do will make a difference. You can explain how the sum of each individual taking action builds a movement. You can also explain what you're planning to do with the data you collect from the door-knocking, so that they know that their responses are meaningful.

"For example, 70% of this electorate say that ending native forest logging is an important issue to them when voting. Then we take that information to a meeting with a candidate. That candidate now knows that if they want to win majority of the votes, they will need to have strong policies around ending native forest logging. That's pressure. That's grassroots power. That's making a difference."

It's very common for people to think, "I'm just one person, what difference will it make", but it's the sum of every small action that collectively makes a powerful movement.

SEEK THEIR SUPPORT

1. Offer them a yard sign/sticker/scorecard/postcard/any other resources you've brought to keep.
2. Be bold. Smile, suggest they could take a couple of resources for friends and family.
3. Leave them with information (if any) about your group/NCC and events.

PREPARE

1. Know the issue. You don't have to know all the technical details or what politician said what and when (although if you do that's great), you need to tell the story. You are a volunteer - this makes you credible and human just like the person you're talking to.
2. Wear something that shows where you're from – t-shirt, badge.
3. Don't soapbox. It's not about you it's about them - connecting and sharing.
4. Be clear what you want them to do: put up a yard sign, join the group, write to a candidate/MP, come to a candidate forum or a picnic.
5. If someone asks you a question you can't answer, don't panic. A useful response: *'That's a great question. To be honest I don't know the detail on that one. How about I take your contact details and we'll get back to you?'*
6. Practise with a friend.
7. Creating a survey with a series of questions focused around the issues you're campaigning on, and bringing it with you to collect people's responses is a very useful resource. It allows you to remain focused on the key issues when in conversation, makes it clear that you're there to listen to the person's perspective and concerns, and makes it easy for you to record data around each issue.

TEAMWORK

1. Have a map with the streets you plan to door-knock on marked so no-one doubles up. Mark for each group (with a pen/highlighter) which streets they will door-knock on.
2. The idea is to have two teams of two working each side of a street (it still works with one team going down a street).
3. One person of each pair can take down information: street and house number, ideally name, email & telephone.
4. Always ask if you can take a person's details.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Don't:

1. Argue
2. Be rude – even if someone is rude to you smile and leave.
3. Act superior
4. Never lie or make things up

Do:

1. Be friendly
2. Be respectful
3. Be yourself
4. End a conversation if it is dragging on and going no-where: *I guess we will just have to disagree*
5. Have fun

DOOR-KNOCKING CO-ORDINATORS

When door-knocking, it's important to have one or a few co-ordinators. They will be the main point of contact for other volunteers, will be responsible for providing resources and will provide a briefing at the start so everyone knows what they are doing.

1. Start the day together, brief everyone, hand out maps, go through how the day will go, take questions. Door-knock in pairs.
2. Have an experienced person with each group.
3. Have a time limit – 2 hours is usually enough – you have other days.

4. Debrief at the end of the day at a cafe or pub. Share the experiences - funny stories, the confronting stories, positives, negatives, what you'd do next time. Feedback on important issues for the campaign.

TIPS FOR PERSUASIVE CONVERSATIONS

1. Acknowledge and relate through story – this is about sharing personal stories and experiences to build connections.
2. Stay positive and polite – impressions and experiences count for everything.
3. Tune into emotions - the most effective persuasion conversations draw on the heart space rather than focus on the head space. Facts are helpful but don't always change people's minds – share what you know when you can, but bring it back to values.
4. Persuade but don't argue - this is not about arguing with people, convincing them you're right.
5. Do respectfully challenge any mistaken ideas about climate/nature or share information that you think will be persuasive. However, remember that these door-knocks are primarily about listening, understanding and connecting with people, getting them to take some action, and to think about nature/climate.
6. Be an active listener - people want to feel that they are sincerely heard (not that you are just going through the motions). Give the person positive prompts through the conversation ("uh-huh", "yes", "mmm", "absolutely").
7. Ask gentle follow up questions. This will give you more information and prompt the person to reflect more deeply on what they are telling you. (What made you feel like that?)
8. Reflect back on what you hear - periodically try to reflect back the essence of what the person is telling you (*"it sounds like you're really concerned about climate change. So many people in the community are telling me the same thing"*).
9. Focus on values – listen for what values (or heart-felt concerns) lie behind what someone is telling you – don't get drawn into a discussion about details.
10. Look for points to use their values to pivot back to the issue and ask "it sounds like climate/nature/the environment issues are having a really big impact on your family. That's something I can really relate to. That's why we are working so hard to get as many 'Climate Action Now' signs in everyone's yard/people to come to xxxx event/looking for more volunteers etc.

11. As you approach the close of the conversation, focus on identifying and readressing any barriers they may have to climate change/nature protection – you can be very direct about this, *“so it seems like you’re still undecided about climate change. Can I get someone to give you a call to give you more information?”*

STRATEGIC QUESTIONING

Following is an excerpt from Fran Peavey’s Strategic Questioning Manual. Fran Peavey was an activist, community development worker and writer who passed away in 2010. She developed strategic questioning through years of practice asking ‘the unaskable questions’.

She wrote, “Strategic questioning awakens the suppressed possibilities of change embedded in each person, in each institution and in each society; releases the blocks to change and new ideas; and generates energy to make changes happen.”

A strategic question creates motion, creates options, digs deeper, avoids ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answers; and is empowering. Strategic questions require a listener to focus attentively on the other person and make space for them to find their own answers.

LEVEL 1 STRATEGIC QUESTIONING

Focus Questions

These questions identify the situation and the key facts necessary to an understanding of the issues at stake. The key in framing the questions is to be open and non-partisan in the questions and in the tone of the questioner.

‘What are you most concerned about in your community?’

‘What do you think about the actions that are being taken on climate change?’

Observation Questions

These questions are concerned with what one sees and the information one has heard regarding the situation.

‘What do you see?’

‘What have you heard and read about this situation?’

‘Which sources do you trust and why?’

‘What effects of this situation have you noticed?’

Analysis Questions

These questions focus on the meaning given to events. Here the questioner is trying to ascertain how a person thinks about the situation and the relation of individuals and events.

'What do you think about ...?'

'What are the reasons for ...?'

Feeling Questions

Feelings often interfere with thinking, trust and imagination. You do not have to fix the feelings... you can't. Simply listen respectfully and when you sense the person is ready, move on.

'How do you feel about the situation?'

LEVEL 2 STRATEGIC QUESTIONING

Digging Deeper - Visioning Questions

These questions are concerned with identifying ideals, dreams, values. This helps us build a bridge from the current situation to how they could be.

'How would you like it to be?'

'Ideally, what would things be like?'

'If you ran the government what would be different?'

Change Questions

These questions are concerned with how to get from the present situation towards a more ideal situation.

'How could the situation be changed for it to be as you would like it?'

'If you could change one thing about this situation what would it be?'

'Who can make a difference?'

'How did those changes come about?'

(here you are trying to find the individual's change view which will greatly impact the strategies for change available to the person.)

Consider The Alternatives

These questions examine the alternatives that come from the vision and ways things need to change. Stay open to new ideas popping up throughout the process.

'What are all the ways you can think of that would accomplish these changes?'

'How could you reach that goal? What are other ways?'

Consider The Consequences

Explore the consequences of each alternative. Returning to feeling questions may be beneficial here.

'How would you feel doing X?'

'What would be the political effect if you did...?'

Consider The Obstacles

Acknowledging obstacles is an important first step in removing them. It is more useful to focus on what keeps a person from changing rather than pressuring them to change.

'What keeps you from doing...?'

'What prevents you from getting involved?'

Personal Inventory & Support Questions

These questions are concerned with identifying a person's interests, potential contribution and the support necessary to act. An important aspect of encouraging change is identifying the support needed to make the change.

'How can I support you?'

'What would it take for you to participate in the change?'

'What existing strengths, skills or capacities could support you to take this action?'

Personal Action Questions

These questions are those which get down to the specifics of what to do, and how and when to do it. Action questions can also focus on alternative plans in both the long and short term.

'Who do you need to talk to?'

'How can you get others together to work on this?'

'What's your next step?'

SUPPORT FROM NCC

If you have any further questions at all, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We also love to hear how your door-knocking event went!

If you need help in creating resources for the door-knocking event, please get in touch at ncc@nature.org.au or by calling (02) 9516 1488

You can also request to become an NCC Member Group, joining a community of organised people who are passionate about ensuring a healthy nature and stable climate. [Click here for more information and to find out about other benefits.](#)