

A white flag is attached to a black pole. The flag is slightly wrinkled and features three lines of bold, red, sans-serif text. The background is solid black.

**MILLION STUDENT MARCH
ORGANIZING GUIDE
PART ONE**

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INTRODUCTION TO THE MILLION STUDENT MARCH GUIDE

Welcome to **#Million Student March**! What started out as an idea talked about among a small group of students and past students has quickly grown into a National Day of Action that is building awareness, raising consciousness and inspiring direct action at colleges, universities and high schools all across the country!

Even if you haven't yet started organizing an event you can still have a big impact!

Every action counts!
No action is too small!
This is only the beginning!

Five students holding a banner at a busy intersection near campus...

Fifteen students holding signs in the student cafeteria...

A couple hundred students marching through campus shouting chants...

All help raise consciousness!

The purpose of this guide is to help you plan your action by providing practical information on organizing an event and outlining the multiple and overlapping tasks that need to be done. Note that while the term "march" is used frequently in this manual, not all MSM actions will be marches. Rallies, speak-outs and other events are also planned for that day.

Whether you're just getting started on planning an action or you've been building your base for weeks, remember that the only "bad" action is *in*action. As Margaret Meade so aptly said, "Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has."

MSM STATEMENT OF AUTONOMY

Million Student March is an *independent* and *decentralized* Day of Action led by students in response to the rapidly growing education crisis. We are rising together as students, teachers, school-workers, and people overcome by school debt - struggling within a broken political and economic system structured to benefit the few at the expense of the many. No two actions will be alike because it is up to you, working with your core organizers, to decide what kind of an event to hold, how to promote it, what speeches to make, art to display, songs to sing, etc.

We oppose the corruption and corporatization of education and uphold the notion of education as a fundamental human right. We believe it is our obligation as students and workers to fight for social progress and equality and to join collectively against oppression in all forms.

While our participants may work within numerous groups, Million Student March is not affiliated or aligned with any established political party, candidate or organization.

We stand firmly against any institution, group, or individual that would seek to profit from our movement. Our only affiliation is with the students, teachers and workers around the world who are struggling against illegitimate authority, abuse and exploitation, and who are coming together to demand change.

WHO ARE WE AND WHAT MILLION STUDENT MARCH IS ALL ABOUT

We are high school, college, and graduate students, recent graduates, campus workers, former students, parents, and grandparents uniting in a **Day of Action** to demand tuition-free public college, cancellation of all student debt, and a \$15 minimum wage for all campus workers.

The United States is the richest country in the world yet students have to take on crippling debt in order to get a college education. This is clearly an urgent crisis, but politicians from both parties have failed to take action.

In fact, in 2013, Congress passed legislation that doubled the interest rates for federal student loans! Students continually face rising tuition costs, mounting debt, and a lack of good-paying jobs when they graduate. Further, while top administrators take home six and seven figure salaries, many campus workers are paid poverty wages and are forced to rely on federal and local assistance.

MillionStudentMarch is both a Day of Action and a rapidly growing student movement. We are people of all colors, genders, and sexual orientations, and we are united in the fight for education as a basic human right. Together, we are building an independent movement capable of winning tuition-free public college, a cancellation of all student debt, and a \$15/hr minimum wage for all campus workers!

TALKING POINTS:

- The average Class of '15 college graduate has over \$35,000 in debt.
- More than 40 million Americans share a total of \$1.2 trillion in student debt.
- Almost 71% of undergrad college students this year will graduate with a student loan.

MILLION STUDENT MARCH DEMANDS

We need change and change starts in the streets when the people demand it. With students, college graduates, and workers united we can build a movement capable of winning debt-free college for all and a \$15 minimum wage for all campus workers!



WE DEMAND:
TUITION-FREE PUBLIC COLLEGE
CANCELLATION OF ALL STUDENT DEBT
\$15/HOUR MINIMUM WAGE FOR ALL CAMPUS WORKERS

GETTING STARTED: INITIAL STEPS IN STARTING A NEW GROUP

Many MSM actions will be organized by existing groups who already work well together and have access to supplies, media contacts and other resources. Other actions will be organized by new groups or just a handful of individuals coming together for the first time. No matter what the size of your group is or where you are in the process, keep in mind the following meeting basics:

- Organize around principles - e.g. education is a human right.
- Practice clear, concise, and comprehensive communication.
- Remain open to constructive feedback.
- Listen more than you speak, confirm your understanding, and learn to reflect before you respond.
- Stay on course but be flexible. Craft a mission statement or set of guiding principles to give the group direction.
- Open the agenda to the group, invite others to add to it and obtain consent before finalizing it.
- Proceed through agenda items, noting proposals and votes (consensus or not) for each.
- Spend substantial effort on scheduling, making sure your next meeting does not conflict with other events your members may want to attend.
- Clarify next steps and obtain agreement on who will do what.
- Follow-through on everything and do not over-commit.
- Include social/hangout time at the beginning or the end of meetings and keep the meetings as short as possible.
- Practice self-care. Reach out for help before you hit a crisis point and encourage others to do the same.
- Have fun and be creative.
- Most importantly, be upbeat, persistent and keep trying. Your efforts will pay off!

A helpful tool for scheduling meetings is [Doodle](#). You may also want to check out [The Action Network](#), a comprehensive online toolset, created by organizers for organizers, to help with all aspects of digital organizing including creating petitions, planning events, sending mass emails, and the like.

ORGANIZING AN ACTION/MARCH

There is no single model for how to organize an action, however there are known factors and best practices that you will want to anticipate, plan around, or consider prior to the action. This checklist, geared towards marches of approximately 75-3000 people, includes the key aspects and decisions needed in order to have a strong protest march. If your march is on the smaller side, closer to 75 people, or is more of a last minute impromptu gathering, you can eliminate many of the roles and steps outlined here. A march of several hundred or more will need additional roles and steps.

Every march is different and has a life of its own, and it can be difficult to gauge how other students, the authorities and/or your administration will react. Some will join you, others may passively support you, still others may call the police to suppress your action. There is great diversity in the characteristics of every march, which is why marches are so exciting to organize and participate in. When well orchestrated they are a direct expression of the will of the people.

Below you will find concrete information, suggestions and tips which may be useful to you as you plan your Day of Action event. A possible sequence of steps is indicated, however every situation on the ground is different so feel free to take liberties and work with what, and who, you have to work with. You'll need to remain as flexible as possible, being attentive to, and realistic about, the evolving constraints that surround you.

STEP ONE: ESTABLISH A WORK GROUP & GAUGE ITS CAPACITY TO ORGANIZE AN EVENT

Groups require careful nurturing in order to grow. The dynamics of forming a group, especially one that lasts beyond planning a single action, can be as important as the action itself. To every extent possible, you will want to embody within the group the larger world you seek through your collective actions ([prefigurative politics](#)). In short, this means being aware of the power dynamics in the group and working hard to create a safe, non-oppressive and respectful space by fostering

democracy, participation, group consciousness and consensus. It also means keeping your ego in check, stepping back when you're getting too emotionally involved and understanding that you won't always get your way.

Before any planning begins, you will want to establish who the members of the working group are, what the overall capacity of the group is, and who can handle the main organizing roles. Planning beyond the capacity of your group is a serious problem and will result in burnout, infighting and a poorly organized action. This holds true regardless of whether your group is a sub-group within a larger organization or an ad-hoc group formed just to carry-out a MSM action. If time allows, it is preferable to first build up a strong and functioning working group of 4 to 20 people before you begin your external mobilization and organizing around the march, but this is not a requirement and many successful actions are pulled together by a small group of people in just few days.

Evaluate your group's capacity by holding an asset-mapping session to assess its tangible resources, such as megaphones, paint or paper, its intangible resources such as lists of skills (bilingual speakers, art and design, facilitation), its extended networks ("I have an email list with 50 activist groups on it!") and organizational affiliations ("I belong to both XXX and YYY organizations and I'm willing to reach out to the district leadership"). Asset mapping can also include surveying the group's mood and enthusiasm for an action, the availability of its members, the best meeting and work-session times, and the group culture. These steps are best carried out face-to-face, but in worst case scenarios you can hold Skype, phone, or Google Hangout sessions.

STEP TWO: CONSIDER YOUR POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO "THE SYSTEM"

Some questions you might ask at this point include: What is your relationship to "the powers that be"? Does your group identify with a particular political party or platform or do you believe an independent entity is needed to shake up "the establishment"? Is your constituency politically mixed? How will this orientation manifest itself within the planned march/action? Will your orientation inspire or drive away the various political factions who might potentially participate in the march? Is your action family friendly? Militant? Your political orientation will be broadcast in the decisions you make and the words and images you use. There are numerous political traditions and postures a group can adopt, but what's most important at this point is to consider who the primary constituencies are for your march, and especially who is most affected by the stated demands.

STEP THREE: DETERMINE THE GOALS AND TARGETS FOR THE MARCH

Little will be accomplished without having clear goals for the march. Goals for your march might include mobilizing your school or specific communities within your school; getting the main messages out to institutional targets and the general public; appealing to the media; bringing different communities, groups or organizers together around the issues; raising consciousness around issues such as debt or the [financialization of universities](#); and/or creating an opportunity for those affected to share personal stories about the impact of student debt and unfair campus wages on their, and their families' lives. It is rare for protest marches, in and of themselves, to alter policy, and they are sometimes criticised for creating false hopes for change within the establishment. However, marches can be highly effective at communicating messages to a targeted or mass audience and when carefully crafted to push specific narratives - especially those that are on a lot of people's minds - they can help propel your ideas far and wide, even if the number of participants is small. Select your political and social targets wisely and strive for achievable goals.

As for physical location, this depends on several factors such as: Where will you gain maximum visibility? Where is the most symbolic significance? Where have people traditionally protested in the past? The march does not necessarily need to begin, peak or end at your main target(s), but you will want to consider the issues of symbolism, logistics, and visibility when selecting the march type and creating your routes.

STEP FOUR: CRAFT YOUR THEME, PRIMARY MESSAGING AND SUPPORTING MESSAGING

At this point, you're ready to create a theme and messaging for the march. Theme and messaging relate directly to the goals and targets of your action so take some time to investigate the use of color, creativity, costuming, and playfulness that is a feature of the [global student movement](#).

Though our demands are serious we can still have fun getting our message out.

See a mass performance of [Michael Jackson's Thriller](#) staged by 3000 students in front of the Chilean presidential palace to project the message, "The system is rotten and dead!"

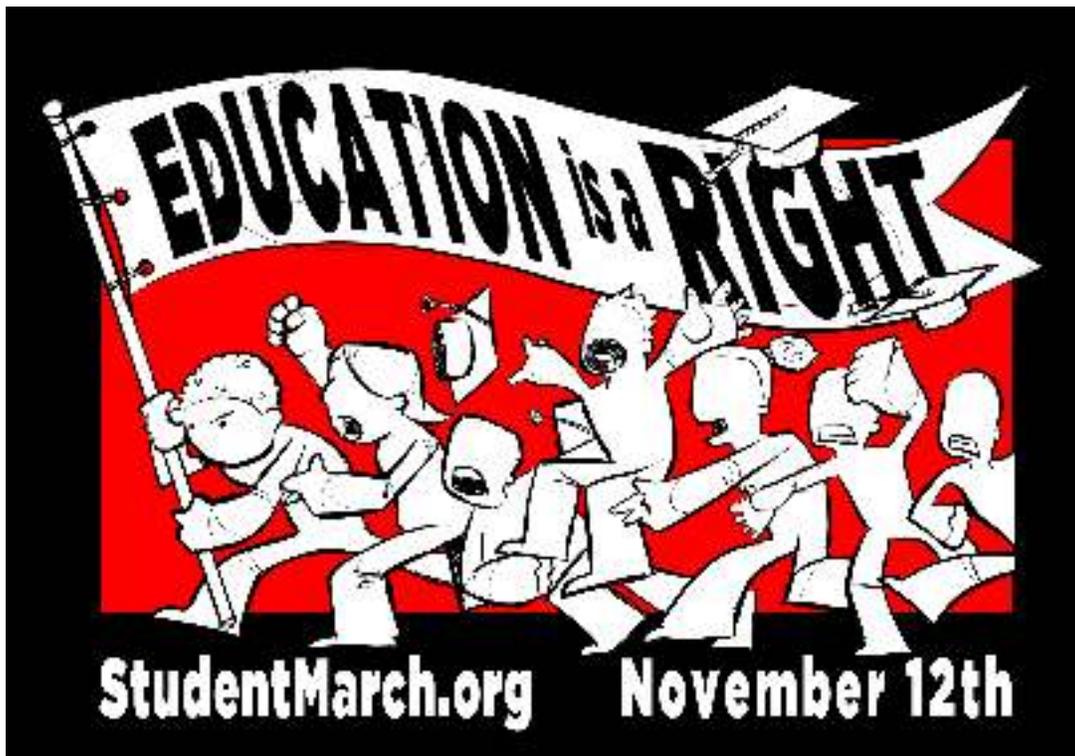
See "[Night of the Living Debt](#)," a march organized around New York University by All in the Red in 2012, in solidarity with the student movement in Quebec opposed to tuition hikes.

Your theme does not need to be extravagant or incur any costs. For example, based on the recent tradition within the student movement to work with a red color scheme associated with the Quebec student movement, your visuals might include white-on-red or red-on-white text, while participants might all wear something red. [The color red in this context symbolises debt](#), and frequently includes small red felt pins and [graphic depictions of the red square in various forms](#). Debt balls - which are fake balls and chains attached to graduation gowns - or other objects on which people write the amount of their debt are inexpensive, but powerful, visuals. Researching the traditions and themes of other countries such as [Mexico](#) and [Chile](#) that have a rich protest culture will help you feel connected to students all around the world who, like you, are fighting for educational access and social justice.

When considering your primary message, think about the three demands of the Million Student March Day of Action. How can you most prominently display your message to the public? To the media? What is your dream headline of a high profile article about your march? If you could send just one tweet to the world, what would it say? The primary message is the "take away" of your march, so it is critical that it be clear and on point. Keep in mind that images of your action will remain in circulation for many years so a primary message related to universal or human rights - "Education is a Right!" - as opposed to messaging around the fast changing winds of national politics, will ensure that your efforts do not expire after the next election cycle.

Your supporting messages are meant to illuminate the primary message and add depth, detail, and wider context. The main point here is that you need to convey clear and specific messages throughout the march or action, as well as the mediums (flyers, Facebook, newsletters, press releases, etc.) you use to describe, depict, promote and report on the march. Your theme should support your message, and your messages should support your theme, both visually and materially.

MESSAGING AND THE MEDIA



Actions are aimed not only at fellow students, faculty, and administrators, but also at local and national media. All three major demands - Tuition Free Public College, Cancellation of All Student Debt, and A \$15 Minimum Wage for All Campus Workers - need to be broadcast in visually compelling ways that are clear when portrayed via audio, video and still photography.

Social media is incredibly useful for amplifying your work and making it more visible. If it's not on the internet, it didn't happen!

Create a **Facebook** page for your local campaign. This will help you build an online base of supporters to invite to meetings, events, and actions. Recruit 2-3 people to manage your Facebook and keep it active by posting regularly. If you are trying to promote an event on Facebook create an event page as soon as possible. Be sure to feature the name of the campaign prominently and use hashtags associated with the national campaign. This will help local efforts to be seen as part of a large, unified campaign. When you host events or actions, make sure to TAKE PICTURES and post them on your facebook page!

Want to learn more? Check out [The Most Amazing Online Organizing Guide Ever](#), a free resource compiled by Green Memes in partnership with Salsa, 350.org, Rainforest Action Network and other fabulous organizations!

Twitter is excellent for covering events and getting your message out. Encourage your base to tweet during major events using hashtags connected to the campaign or specific hashtags for your event. You can also build support for the campaign by tweeting at organizations that share similar values and retweeting them.

Photo campaigns & photo petitions are a great way to boost activity and share narratives from your base. Come up with a simple prompt or hashtag and ask people to post their photos on Facebook or Twitter. (Example: How would free higher education change your life or impact your community? If my education was free I would major in...)

Making memes is easy, fun, and everyone loves them! Since photos tend to get more likes and shares on Facebook, making memes will help you increase engagement online. [Picmonkey.com](#) is a free and easy-to-use tool you can use to make beautiful memes and graphics. You can use memes to quote people, shame politicians when they make terrible decisions, celebrate victories, promote call-ins to decisions makers, and much more!

STEP FIVE: PLAN YOUR STRATEGY AND SELECT YOUR TACTICS

KNOW YOUR CAMPUS

- Is your college a public or private institution?
- Is your campus in an urban area near other colleges or is it geographically isolated?
- Is there a history of radical activism to tap into and draw from?
- What formal policies exist that cover student conduct and events?
- How much experience do the organizers have with protest?
- Are there people or organizations that may lend valuable experience both on and off campus?

While this Day of Action is called the Million Student March, in fact there can be a number of different tactics used to get your message across. It's important to develop a strategy - or overall plan - to help you reach your desired goals. Employing a variety of tactics - or actions - will increase the participation of first-time activists as well as radical veterans and make them all feel that their time and energy is well used.

There is a lot of time to use on the Day of Action! Actions can take place from pre-dawn to long after sunset. Carefully craft the timing of the action: it should not be too short (under 60-90 minutes) or too long (more than 5-8 hours). There is space for marches, rallies, sit-ins, teach-ins, direct action, and/or any combination of these. Organizers, student groups, campus unions, and others can all contribute and help host events or direct actions. An inclusive day of action can gain wide participation.

You, as an organizer, have a deep knowledge of what your campus is like, including the culture of the student body and the attitude of the administration. This knowledge is key to helping you select what tactics to use.

Need some ideas for actions? Check out these links:

[Student debt rally at UMass/Amherst in April 2015](#)

[College students protest debt on Trillion Dollar Debt Day](#)

Tactics should take into account both space and visibility. Does your campus have certain places or structures that have great meaning? High-profile locations can be the scene of political theater or they can be occupied during sit-ins. Entrances to campus can be blocked and administrators barred from entering. Administrative buildings can be taken over.

Also consider off-campus spaces. Universities can be very insular and isolated from the surrounding community. The Million Student March is national in scale and requires engaging with the public for serious change. There is power in rallying outside a bank, for example, that is involved in student loans, as well as on streets, bridges, and other highly visible landmarks. Media outlets love a good show and most are not based on campus.

If your university is located in an urban area with several other nearby institutions, brainstorm what you could do with pooled effort and resources. Combined action means more potential participants, voices, protest signs and the like, and creates a powerful sense of students as a unified, passionate group that is part of, not distinct from, the wider community.

The remainder of this Guide will focus on helping you organize a march, as that is one of the more typical and easier actions to organize, especially in a short period of time.

STEP SIX: SELECT THE TYPE OF MARCH

If the action your group decides to do is a march, you will next need to decide what type of march to hold and whether or not you will want to, or need to, obtain permits from campus administration/police, and/or local municipal police. Below is a summary of the various types of marches and routes.

The larger your march the more volunteers you will need on the Day of Action to help make it successful. See Step 12 for a list of different job roles.

Non-Permitted (aka “wildcat”) marches have no set plans or routes other than a starting place and time. Spontaneous or unplanned marches are determined in real-time and use mic-checks*, text messages or other signaling systems to communicate how the march will proceed.

**A human, or people’s, microphone is a way to deliver a speech to a large group of people by repeating what a speaker says in order to amplify the sound without the use of equipment. The speaker begins by saying “mic check” and when others reply “mic check” the speaker continues by saying a short phrase, which is then repeated by the crowd, so those in the distance can hear what’s been said. The speaker then continues, and the phrases are repeated, until the speaker is done.*

Routed (mapped) marches/rally sites are the most traditional, conservative and accessible form of protest march. People in the march generally know where to go and what to expect. March organizers should determine if, and how, to share march routes with anyone outside of the march or march organizing group.

Semi-routed marches/rally sites have routes that are either partially planned and partially spontaneous, or different route options based on conditions encountered during the march.

Flexible or contingent routes involves having several possible routes that are activated based on if/then scenarios. For example, if it rains, then the march will go through the park instead of around it. If there’s an aggressive police presence then the march will follow Route B instead of Route A. In all cases, the march remains whole and together. Flexible routes can be specified in your maps via color-coded dotted lines as opposed to the fixed lines of fixed route segments.

Multiples routes can be used for various reasons and in various ways, such as to confuse the authorities or the march’s targets, or to keep things exciting for participants. They also allow for crowds that do not fit within a physical space along the route. Feeder marches involve smaller marches (e.g. dorm clusters) that amass at various staging areas such as parks, plazas or hubs throughout a city, town or campus, and then feed into the larger march as it winds its way towards the city/campus center. Feeder marches have to be carefully timed by their pacers so that they successfully intersect with the larger, or main, march. In all cases the messaging, character, organization and political orientation of the marches are consistent and coordinated so that it is considered to be a single action.

STEP SEVEN: CONSIDER THE SIZE OF YOUR EVENT

The scale of a march or rally affects its reception and orchestration. Obviously you will want your action to be as large as possible, however a lot can be accomplished with smaller actions. Work with what you have and plan realistically, not via wishful thinking.

Small marches/actions with 20-75 people

A smaller action is much more easily controlled and nimble and can go places and navigate problems in a way that larger actions cannot. Take advantage of this! Focus on your messaging and the symbolic aspects of the action. Document everything, create interviews with participants and observers and share a press release with the media.

This is an example of a small, but highly visible, protest: [an action](#) with [15 people](#) by Grand Central Crew, NYC Shut it Down, a BlackLivesMatter direct action group. Every Monday night since December 2014 they have been protesting against the murders of people of color by U.S. police forces. Their persistence, solid organization and tight messaging has gained them national attention and coverage by media outlets around the world, and they have earned serious respect within the movement.

Mid-sized marches/actions with 75-500 people

Many protest marches fall within this window, which is probably a good goal for your march if you are just starting out as an organizer or group and do not yet have a broad base of followers. You will have enough people to create a big scene, especially if you are combining visual elements with lots of sound - music, chants, singing, [pots and pans](#), mic checks, and [whistles](#). Never underestimate how important sound is for a successful march.

Large marches/actions with 500-3000 people

Once you have more than 500 people you have a serious street action that will probably take on a life of its own. You will need to rely heavily on smart planning, tactical communication, and good logistics to stay on message and avoid obstacles. You will have the undivided attention of your local officials and there will likely be media interest, even without trying to appeal to the press. Word gets around fast when there's a big protest! Ideally you will have most of the roles outlined in Step 11 filled and good coordination to make the march a success. Remember to have the main organizing group fully engaged in the march as pacers, marshals and mic-checkers to be sure that the march is not manipulated by those who seek to undermine it. Good communication between pacers at the front, middle and rear of the march will ensure that it is not going too fast or too slow *and that the march stays together*, at all costs.

STEP EIGHT: OBTAIN PERMITS AND SELECT LIAISONS (OR NOT!)

Permitting and permissions can pertain to different elements of a march, for example marching in the streets, using amplified sound, having more than a specified number of participants, or using oversized props. Reasons that march planners may want to obtain permits include reducing the risk of arrests and/or interruptions by campus administration or other authority figures and, especially for larger actions, ensuring public safety (e.g. closing roads) and making accommodations for anyone with mobility issues. If you determine they are necessary, allow ample time to obtain permits from campus or municipal authorities.

Some grassroots organizers avoid asking for permits as they believe that requesting permission neuters the impact of an action and transforms a march into a parade. Using partial permits or permissions is a compromise. For example a group could obtain a permit to march on the sidewalk but then end up in the streets organically as numbers increase. It's also worth noting that the authorities may deny protest permits for political reasons, and use the permitting process as a way of controlling, containing and manipulating the potential impact of the action. Some police departments might even use this process to compel meetings at which they try to obtain information on a group's membership, process and future plans. As with everything else, these decisions are ultimately yours to make, keeping the goals of the march, its culture and your next steps in mind.

Regardless of permits or permissions, you may very likely have to deal with the police or school/city/town officials in some capacity. Many groups choose to have a dedicated liaison to work with authority figures to ensure that critical negotiations or communications go smoothly. On the other hand, some groups do not want to deal with this process and believe that the U.S. Constitution, the First Amendment, various [humans rights statutes](#), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are all the permission they need in order to take action.

STEP NINE: ESTABLISH A STRONG VISUAL PRESENTATION FOR YOUR EVENT

Your visual presentation, or theme, is the glue that pulls together all your modes of communication including social media, graphics, protest signs and banners, props and anything else about your action that people can read or see. Strive for cohesion in your visuals via commonality in color (e.g., red + white, red + black) and mood (e.g., angry, defiant, positive), but with enough flexibility and playfulness so that people can express individual creativity.

Your visuals should shout out the three Million Student March demands as well as related messages such as: “We are students, not customers!” “Education is a human right!” “Solidarity with debtors!” “Student & Worker Unity!”

A handmade non-corporate look is best to emphasize the human element. Stencils and computer graphics are nice but so are hand-written signs and drawings. Banners can be created outdoors as long as you have enough time for their paint to dry before having to move them. Try to use lightweight but strong materials for your banners and signs with hollow tubes for poles as opposed to solid wood. Seek out artists and designers to help create visuals, writers and poets to help with specific phrasing, and architecture, engineering and physics students to help build props and other constructions. Don't overlook high school and undergraduate art teachers who have access to supplies, students, and spaces for objects to dry.

Don't be afraid to take creative liberties with your visuals to reflect local culture and the most impacted constituencies within the march. Creative twists could include a heavy metal or rap theme, class war, pop culture references or the use of locally charged icons, symbols or narratives that will help illuminate the primary and secondary messages. Have fun with it! This Tumblr was made to help spark ideas for making exciting protest banners and related visuals: [Banner Action](#). And these are some images from the [Quebec student strike and solidarity actions around 2012](#).

STEP TEN: ENGAGE IN OUTREACH ACTIVITIES TO AMASS VOLUNTEERS AND ADVERTISE YOUR EVENT

In addition to social media (see section on Messaging and the Media) there are lots of other ways to do outreach both for events and for building a strong base. The methods below emphasize person-to-person ways of communicating your campaign's vision and values, and facilitate concrete asks to encourage the involvement of potential participants.

Host a Volunteer Kick-Off Meeting to talk about the Million Student March. Use this as an opportunity to orient and train new volunteers and get them committed to helping out. Keep in mind that free food helps bring people out.

Clipboarding involves going somewhere in pairs with a clipboard and talking to anyone and everyone about the action. You can use clipboarding to advertise an action and get people's contact information so you can send them information/reminders. Clipboarding is also a good way to get people to sign petitions. You don't need to reserve a table to clipboard, just go where you want (student center, dining hall, high-traffic footpaths on campus) and start talking to people.

Class Raps involve going in front of a classroom before class starts and talking about the Million Student March (or other issues) for 2-4 minutes, and then passing around one or more clipboards, as above, to get people to share their contact information and hopefully sign up to help. Start with your own classes and then move on to other classes. This works best in rooms of 10- 60 students; beyond that, you'll need volunteers to help pass out and collect clipboards.

Canvassing/Dormstorming involves going door-to-door in residence halls and student neighborhoods to talk to people about your campaign. This technique is labor-intensive but can lead to deeper conversations and new potential recruits.

Phone banking is a way to follow up on contacts garnered from petitions and sign-up sheets. Phonebanks are the systematic calling-through of a list for a specific purpose. If you're having a Volunteer Kick-off Meeting, call the people who checked "I Want to Get Involved" and invite them. If you're having a rally, call everyone and remind them to come. Phonebanks need at least three people to be fun and are best served with pizza and beverages.

One-on-one meetings are focused one to two hour in-person conversations to recruit, assess, and get to know potential campaign or movement participants. They are a great way to find out what motivates them to make change and what they're able and willing to do. While you may not have time to conduct these prior to the Day of Action, one-on-one meetings are a great way to deepen the ties you made while organizing the event.

STEP ELEVEN: ORGANIZE WORK GROUP SESSIONS

Not everyone will have the time or desire to attend large group meetings. Working groups are a way to engage lots of different people in concrete tasks that are key to the overall action. Working groups will need to meet separately from the larger organizing group so they can focus on specific tasks that fall within their area(s) of interest or responsibility. As with everything else, communication is key. Be sure to have clear agendas and notes and follow-up in all areas. Don't assume that people get the message: take responsibility for knowing if anything is unclear and address problems as they come up, quickly and directly.

Whenever possible it helps to gather people together even when doing work that could be accomplished remotely. The casual conversations, social interactions and Q&As that take place when coloring in posters, preparing press packets, phone banking, or the like can build unity and help solve problems that may arise. In addition, such sessions are fun, especially for potentially labor intensive tasks such as contacting other organizations and writing collective statements.

STEP TWELVE: ROLES DURING A LARGE MARCH

Some roles can be filled by one person whereas others may need multiple people to fill the role or to trade off during the march. As mentioned earlier, a lot will depend on the size of your march. Some basic roles include the following:

A. Marshalls and pacers are usually identified with armbands or t-shirts. Their role is to keep the march together as a whole and moving at the right speed (pacers especially). They also deal with any problems that might arise, shuttle messages and feedback to and from participants and organizers, address logistics issues, and help create safe passage for the march through, and around, any obstacles.

B. Sign, props and banner holders (including the lead banner) are critical to your visual presentation. Note that it can be harder than you might think to get enough people to hold all of your signs and banners, keep track of them, and return them back at the end of the action. It can be a challenge to get banner holders to hold the banners so that they are visible, with some open space in front, and as uniform and taut as possible, but this task is vital, especially for the lead banner. If it's windy, use a scissors to create wind-slits in the banners, if needed, before heading out. Large banners are difficult to carry and will most likely need new people to carry them every 30-60 minutes. After the march, display the banners on the ground during rallies for additional exposure.

C. Speakers and mic-checkers should be organized and prepped ahead of time with scripts and prompts. Use the human-mic if amplification is not possible. This is also known as mic-checking. To mic-check, a speaker yells “mic-check!!” until people repeat the phrase at sufficient volume. This may take a few tries. Then, using no more than 6 words in a row, the speaker “mic-checks” what they want to say, with the surrounding crowd repeating the short phrases. Larger gatherings might have 2, 3 or even 4 concentric rings of people repeating the mic-checker’s words, transforming even a soft frail voice into a great [communicative spectacle](#). Occupy Wall Street in NYC was able to hold general assemblies with over 10,000 people using this technique.

D. Chant leaders are people who pre-plan chants for the march either by starting chants themselves or by passing scripts among the marchers.

E. Musicians, drummers and other sound makers help make things fun! The perception of a march can be exponentially increased with effective sound, music, and noise-making techniques. The participation of marching bands or percussionists, horn players, singers, whistle blowers, and people clanging pots and pans with metal utensils ([casserole marches](#)) can raise the energy level and pacing of a march and should be encouraged.

F. A/V techs/tech stations operators will be needed if you are using amplified sound, staging, special effects or technical equipment. They can also help provide the various cords, plugs, charging packs, digital media storage and light emergency repairs that may be needed.

G. Scouts trace out march routes in advance and help create the final route or routes. It’s common for multiple people to take on this role as a part of a collective process.

H. Flyer squads pass out flyers to people who are within, and observing, the march, popping into shops and cafes along the way, and having brief conversations with the recipients. This is among the most important roles within a march and much thought should go into the production of materials to distribute on march day.

I. Liaisons with the Press are generally press or marketing people themselves or people with experience working with the press. Their goal is to represent the interests of the march to journalists and reporters.

J. Liaison to the authorities (police, officials, property owners, etc.) is best left to one or two people who have the relevant experience and who don’t mind taking on this role.

K. Live-streamers, photographers, videographers and live-tweeters, are integral to the messaging capacity of the march. It is usually the case that the mainstream corporate press will malign and misrepresent marches that have anti-establishment or unpopular views, so movements have a tradition of producing their own media.

L. Logistics workers are the backbone of a march (along with the rank-and-file marchers) and take care of anything that cannot be carried by an individual or that requires attention or planning. They are frequently overlooked and underappreciated!

M. Tactical communication volunteers assure smooth, well-orchestrated communications that facilitate the agility and fluidity of a march. They assist with the use of [text loops](#), email chains, code systems, and other forms of communicating tactical information among march organizers, support crews, logistics teams, street medic teams and media makers.

N. Cop-watch/security volunteers keep watch on police/participant interactions. This is an important role as there are all too many examples of times when the police ignore constitutional

protections of free speech and assembly when demonstrators upset elites or government officials.

O. Legal observers from groups such as the [National Lawyers Guild](#) (NLG) and Mutant Legal offer a free legal observer service for social justice and direct action groups.

P. Street medics ([off-duty EMTs, doctors, nurses](#)) are typically only needed for large militant marches where injuries from police are likely.

Q. Action squads are autonomous, independent actors who carry out protest actions apart from the march and isolated from the march's organizing spaces.

STEP THIRTEEN: PLAN YOUR LOGISTICS

Don't overlook the basic logistical needs of the march such as access to bathrooms, water, food, shade, shelter, storage spaces, transportation, petty cash needs, material concerns (e.g. plastic tarps, as needed, to protect the PA system from rain), basic security measures, and so forth. The larger the action the more reliant you will be on having dedicated people to handle logistical matters and materials, especially moving and caring for props, banners and signs. In a pinch you can use things like shopping carts, cargo bikes, and garbage bags.

STEP FOURTEEN: ENGAGE THE PRESS BEFORE AND AFTER THE EVENT

Getting the press to cover your action or event requires preparation and relationships. See the following "Best Practices" section for suggestions to maximize the likelihood you will get press coverage.

If you have any relationships with campus or local press, that's great. Make sure to use those relationships in getting press out to your event. If you have a press list, go through it to highlight which press outlets you want to get to your event. You might get statewide press for a 300-person rally, but not for a 20-person action. In getting press to a small action, it is more effective to target specific press outlets than to blast your whole list.

A press list is an invaluable tool. If you don't have one, it's time to start building it and putting it in a spreadsheet. Find the website for local and campus newspapers, news websites/blogs, television, and radio. Look for contact information for the Higher Education reporter or, failing that, the News Editor or similar individual. If that doesn't exist, find a general editor or reporter contact. For newspapers, you should also get a contact for the Opinions Editor. Finally, try to find contact information for a local Associated Press reporter. Building a press list may be tedious at first but having a comprehensive list will help save time and increase your exposure as you are planning this, and future, actions and events.

BEST PRACTICES FOR WORKING WITH THE PRESS

One Week to Five Days Before the Event:

Reach out to your press contacts to let them know that in a few days you will be sending out a Media Advisory for the event. Verbally describe the event and let them know you will follow-up once the Advisory is sent.

Four Business Days Before the Event:

Email the Media Advisory to your Press List (here's an example from People's Power Assemblies) sending it only to those contacts who you think will cover the event. If sending your email to multiple contacts at one time, **be sure to use the bcc field to type in the addresses**. Your document should begin with the words "MEDIA ADVISORY," and should be written into the body of the email, as well as included as an attachment. If you haven't spoken to these individuals before,

give them a follow up call the same day. If you get them on the phone, make the hard ask: “Will you or someone from your agency be coming to cover our action?” They might tell you that they haven’t seen the release yet and that they’ll get back to you. Try to get a cell number to reach them. You should make sure to give them your number and e-mail as well.

One Business Day Before the Event:

Call your contacts to confirm that they received your advisory and again make the hard ask: “Will you or someone from your agency be coming to cover our action?” If they don’t confirm by then, don’t count on them to be there. Give them your cell phone number and be polite even if they refuse to confirm. They may still come to the current or future events.

The Day of the Event:

Keep your phone charged in case reporters try to call you. Send out a press release to the same contacts you sent your advisory to, either a few hours before or within an hour after the event. Some reporters will just use your press release as their story, so it’s important that they have a well-written one to work from, especially if they don’t come to the event.

At the Event:

The Press Coordinator for the event should have printed copies of the press release to hand out to reporters. If there are other things you want to distribute, like fact sheets, consider having a press packet - a folder containing the press release and the other materials you want to give the press. Assign one or more people to flag down reporters and guide them to the Press Coordinator and selected student speakers. While Press Coordinators may also be interviewed, their main role, especially at larger events, is to coordinate the media.

Selecting and **preparing** student speakers is an important part of any action preparation and should be done **several days before the event**. Identify at least one or two students who can speak knowledgeably about the action, the demands, and the wider student movement that the action is part of. Identify additional student speakers who are willing to talk about how the high cost of education has impacted them.

Follow-Up:

Call or e-mail (individually) all reporters who came to the event and thank them for doing so. Also thank the person who sent them, e.g., the News Editor. E-mail and thank any reporter that wrote a favorable article and let them know that you will follow up with them for any further actions or events in this campaign. Maintain your press list and keep it up to date. Add new names of reporters who came to your event and mark down which people and agencies wrote articles.

Opinion Editorials (Op-Eds):

Opinion editorials are a great way to get your organization’s messages into the media. They often appear near the news editorial section written by the publication’s own editors. More effective than a press release or a letter to the editor, opinion editorials essentially let you write your own articles.

Here’s a quick checklist of things to keep in mind before you send off your OpEd:

- OpEds should be 500-800 words in length, though some news outlets have smaller word count limits. Make sure you find out the specifics for each news outlet you are submitting to.
- Be concise – use short sentences and try to keep paragraphs to a 3-sentence maximum.
- Capture the audience’s attention. Think of the two opening sentences as your “hook.”
- Make it personal. Highlight individual testimonials as they tie into the larger issue.
- Choose the appropriate spokesperson to write the OpEd. If possible, opt for someone who is directly affected by the issue.
- Use the OpEd to move your larger campaign message. Repeat the messages throughout the piece. Summarize them again at the end.

- Submit the OpEd in a timely manner so it is published around the time of a scheduled event. Use the OpEd to draw attention to your issue and excite people to action.
- Make sure to include your contact information.

Letters-to-the-Editor (LTEs):

Letters to the Editor are short responses to already published article and are used to personalize and move your messages. With LTEs, you are reframing the debate.

LTE's are similar to Op/Eds, with a few different pieces to keep in mind:

- LTEs are short – 150 to 200 words are usually the maximum.
- State your side of the issue and what people can do to create change.
- Include a short paragraph on how the issue affects you directly.
- Repeat your key messaging points.
- Make sure you include your contact information.
- Keep the letters flowing – the more you can engage the paper's readership in the debate, the longer your issue stays in the spotlight. This shows elected officials people care about the issue.

STEP FIFTEEN: CREATE A “RUN-OF-SHOW” (ROS) DOCUMENT

A couple of days before the action, create a run-of-show document that specifies, *in detail*, all the final steps that need to occur leading up to, and on the day of the event, in order for the action to be a success. Include details as to time, place, the order in which things need to happen, and who is responsible for each task. When drafting the ROS it is best to get input from a variety of people, including your work group leaders and key organizers, as they will be most knowledgeable about all the large and small tasks that must be done. In the event that a key person suddenly becomes unavailable or is pulled into dealing with an action-related emergency, the ROS helps others fulfill that person's responsibilities. The ROS is sent to all main organizers a day or two before the action and includes the following details:

- Contact information for all key organizers, participants and point people
- Addresses, codes, passwords, and any other needed information
- All the large and small logistical details and who is taking care of them
- Any and all detailed information people need to do their final tasks

STEP SIXTEEN: THE DAY OF ACTION IS HERE.... MARCH!

By now you will have done all you can to make the march/rally/event a success. If you've gotten this far you're doing great! Keep in mind that everything left to do on this day will take longer than you've planned for, so start way earlier than you think you need to and you will be fine. Check in with all the volunteers and make sure everyone who needs it has a copy of the Run-of-Show document, as well as all the materials and supplies they'll need to get their job done. This Day of Action is part of a growing student movement across the country so let's go forward and fight for a free public education, the cancellation of student debt, and a \$15 minimum wage for all campus workers!

STEP SEVENTEEN: POST MARCH FOLLOW-UP

If any developments within the march were newsworthy, you might consider issuing a press release or holding a press conference, as well as writing Letters to the Editor, as described above, to keep your event in the news.

As soon as possible after the march, gather together the key volunteers and march organizers and hold a debriefing session to talk about what went well, what lessons were learned, what modifications should be made for future events, and where to go from here. Try to keep enthusiasm high and make plans for your next meeting to discuss how to take the fight for free education forward. Update your local Facebook event page and share photos and stories with the main Million Student March page. And should it happen that anyone was arrested, see [Mutant Legal's jail support guide](#) for how to provide support and follow up.

APPENDIX A: READINGS AND REFERENCES

[198 Methods of Nonviolent Resistance, links to examples of each method & contemporary guide with the most used tactics described in detail](#)

[ACLU: Rights of protestors](#)

Additional Protest Guides, including tips for rallies & other kinds of actions: [Hollaback](#), [ToolsforChange](#), [VeteransforPeace](#), [GlobalExchange](#), [Rabble](#), [Sprout Collective](#)

[Black Panther Party for Self Defense, Teaching with the Black Panthers' Ten Point Program](#)

[Circulation and the New University](#)

[College Tuition Is Destroying Lives And Ruining The Economy](#)

Films about mass protests: [Berlusconi's Mousetrap](#) (Genoa 2001), [This is What Democracy Looks Like](#) (Seattle 1999)

[First Amendment to the United States Constitution](#)

[#FloodTheSystem Organizing Booklet](#)

[The General Assembly \(and you\), GSA, Concordia University](#)

[\(General Assembly\) ASSE, Procedures Code of deliberative assemblies: The Véronneau Code](#)

[Is the International Student Movement the Future of Global Organizing?](#)

[Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing](#)

[Million Student March Materials](#)

[No class today, no ruling class tomorrow. Lessons of the student strike - Root & Branch](#)

[Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#)

[Ruckus Action Strategy: A How to Guide](#)

[Saul Alinsky, Rules for Radicals](#)

[Schooling the World \(film\)](#)

[Some Tools for Radical Pedagogy](#)

[Strike Debt, The Debt Resister's Operations Manual](#)

[Direct Democracy, Grassroots Mobilization and the Quebec Student Movement](#)

[Unchain Our Schools: Chilean Student Movement, Quebec Student Strike resources, 2015 & 2012, Notes on corporate power, neoliberalism, austerity, & the education crisis, Free University Education](#)

[Wikipedia: Combative Syndicalism](#)

[Wikipedia: Right to Protest](#)

[Wikipedia: Student Activism](#)