

## How-to: Collect Petitions

### Goal

Collect petition signatures to build grassroots support for your campaign, influence your target, identify new potential volunteers, and educate your community.

### Best Practices

- Set petitioning goals
  - Set a total petition goal for your campaign, and for each petitioning event.
  - Goals help your team stay on track and motivated.
- Spend time with the people who agree with you
  - Don't waste time trying to convince someone who isn't with you.
    - While it may be tempting, remember that the goal is to identify people who support your campaign and give them an opportunity to take action.
- Use strong, concise language
  - Keep your message simple and to the point
  - Make your ask strong and confident
    - e.g. “*Will you sign a petition to ban fracking?*” (vs. “*Would you mind signing a petition to ban fracking?*”)

### How-to

- 1) Set goals
  - For your campaign
    - Decide how many signatures you'll need to build enough grassroots pressure to influence your target.
      - The more petitions you have, the more grassroots support you'll be able to show, but make sure it's a realistic goal.
    - Also consider how many petitions you'll need to recruit the number of people you want in your group or at your next event (see “How-to: Plan a Recruitment Drive”).
  - For each event
    - Depending on where you're petitioning, you can usually collect about 10 petitions an hour (more if you're at a high-traffic event)
    - Figure out how many hours you'll be petitioning, and set individual and team goals (if you'll have more than one person there).

2) Get your petitioning materials ready

- The petition:
  - The first line should be addressed to your target
  - It should have a clear ask for what you want
  - Include these fields for contact info: name, email, address (at least zip code), phone, and a volunteer checkbox

**Let Me Decide: Make GE Labeling the Law**

Dear Elected Official,

I urge you to pass legislation that would require genetically engineered (GE) foods to be labeled.

GE foods have become pervasive, are largely untested and are potentially unsafe. I deserve the right to know whether or not the food I buy is genetically engineered. Just as labels list fat, sodium and sugar, labels should tell the buyer whether or not the product includes GE ingredients. Anything less is misleading and leaves consumers in the dark about the food they're eating.

Thank you for your consideration,



Name	Email	City, State, Zip	Phone	Volunteer?

- The “rap” (or script):
  - Having a rap is helpful to make sure you and your volunteers stay on message and are giving every person the most compelling pitch to sign your petition every time.
  - Rap structure:
    1. The “hook”
      - “Can you sign a petition to protect our water?”
    2. Introduction
      - “Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_, and I’m a volunteer with Food & Water Watch. Thanks for stopping!”
    3. Context: briefly explain the problem, solution, and why we need their signature
      - “Fracking threatens our water because....”
      - “We’re fighting back by...”
      - “We need your signature to show \_\_(target)\_\_\_ that he/she should \_\_(your campaign goal)\_\_\_.
    4. Strong ask
      - “Will you sign the petition?”
    5. Thanks! Collect info, and make a plug to volunteer
      - “Thanks for signing! Definitely put down all your contact information and check the volunteer box to get more involved!”



- 3) Find people in your community
  - Most people are overwhelmingly in support of safe, healthy food and water. Your job is to turn that support into action.
    - Brainstorm where you can find people in your community:
      - Farmers markets
      - Community group meetings
      - Churches
      - On a street with high foot-traffic
      - Tabling events (e.g. fairs and festivals)
  
- 4) Make the ask
  - Ask your personal network to sign
    - Think of co-workers, family, friends, etc. who would support your campaign.
  - Present your petition to community groups
    - Find groups that meet regularly in your community and ask for permission to make a short pitch at the beginning or end and pass your petition around.
  - Set up a table or stand with a clipboard
    - Find a high-traffic area and ask passersby to sign. You can find a public area (any sidewalk), or ask a local co-op, farmers market, or coffee shop for permission to set up near their entrance.
  - Go door-to-door
    - Ask your neighbors to show their support. This is particularly helpful if you want to show an elected official that you have grassroots support from a specific geographic area.
  
- 5) Database your petitions
  - Once you've started collecting signatures, database them into an excel file right away so you can start contacting signers.
    - Use a new column for each piece of information

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	First Name	Last Name	Address	City	State	Zip	Email	Phone	Volunteer (1=yes)
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									

- 6) Follow up with signers
  - Once someone has signed your petition, they've taken the first action to indicate that they support your campaign
    - These signers are potential volunteers and leaders on your campaign – it's your job to give them the next action.



- Follow up with a phone call (or email if they didn't give you their number)
- Plug them in to the next action right away
  - Ask them to collect petitions with you
  - Invite them to the next group meeting
  - Brainstorm a list of all the other actions that can help support your efforts (See "Building a Group" and "Leadership Development" sections for more ideas).