

Tactics

Tactics are structure tests. We don't start at the highest level. We start small and assess our success, address our shortcomings, and plan for the next action.



TURN UP THE HEAT: ACTION THERMOMETER

Don't bring out your big guns right away. Start with an easy activity and get lots of people to participate. If that doesn't succeed, gradually increase the intensity of your actions, but make sure you don't leave people behind by escalating too quickly.

One way to visualize escalating tactics is to arrange them on a thermometer, with each action "hotter" than the last. For instance, here are the steps a group of New Haven teachers took to solve the mold problem at their school, beginning from the bottom of the thermometer:



14. Walked out of a meeting en masse
13. Spoke to the media
12. Pulled a publicity stunt
11. Called a meeting of supporters
10. Used the result to formulate specific demands, with deadlines
9. Filed an information request
8. Reached out to parents
7. Published a newsletter
6. Formed a grievance committee
5. Developed a communication network
4. Conducted a health survey
3. Gathered signatures on a grievance
2. Defined their issue: air quality
1. Met as a small group



Some Tactic Ideas:

Example Solidarity Tactics (shows togetherness-internal focused):

Same color t-shirts	→	Wear red every _____ day.
Make buttons & signs w/your message	→	Wear daily
Honk out	→	Have workers all leave at the same time and honk as they continuously leave.
Tailgate	→	Have a union cookout before a school board meeting (good place to wear those shirts)
One minute stand up on the job	→	At a staff meeting, everyone stands up at the same time for 60 sec without saying a word.

Example Escalation Tactics (designed to move decision makers-external focused):

Healthcare action days	→	Wear band-aids, bandages, eye patches to talk about health care benefits.
Return employer trinkets	→	Have workers return en masse anything w/the Employer's name on it.
Informational pickets	→	Outside of the main office or in a visible place
Mass Starts	→	Everyone waits outside workplace and walks in together
Work to Rule	→	Follow contract times and don't do anything after or before contract hours...no work done at home

Other Examples of Direct Actions (aka Tactics)

- Distribute flyers and literature in the community
- Hold press conferences after board meetings
- Circulate petitions
- Place ads in newspapers
- Mass meetings
- Pack school board meetings
- Shun all administrators after a tough board meeting
- Set up truth booths around the community
- Talk with parents
- Host car parade w/signs in community
- Mass attendance at a football game, sitting in a block, with signs or badges
- Mass calls to a local radio talk show
- Door to door leafletting in school board neighborhoods
- Erect large signs in highly visible areas



CHECKLIST: CHOOSE TACTICS THAT FIT

Your escalating campaign is made up of many tactics. A tactic could be mild, like a survey, or militant, like a work slowdown. It could be traditional, like a picket, or it could be a creative stunt a member just dreamed up. When your group is weighing what tactic to try next, here are some factors to consider:

- Does the action relate to your issue?
- Will it increase the pressure on the decision-maker?
- Is it simple?
- Is it visible?
- Is it timed for effect?
- Is it new and different—or tried and true?
- Are enough people ready to do it?
- How will others react?
- Will it unify people?
- How will management react?
- Could it backfire?
- Does it violate the law or the contract?
- If so, are you prepared for the consequences?
- Will it be fun?



MAKE SURE EVERY JOB GETS DONE

Even a tactic that sounds simple, like getting everyone to wear stickers on the same day, takes planning and follow-through.

Your group will need to identify all the tasks required, assign them to specific people, with deadlines, and follow up to make sure people do them. An easy way to think about it is, “*Who will do what by when?*”

To keep anything from falling through the cracks, make a chart like this one for every tactic that’s part of your campaign. Write down *all* the steps needed for this tactic, and assign one or more people to each task.

TACTIC: STICKER DAY

Task	Who?	By When?
Talk with co-workers about having a sticker day. Decide if we have enough buy-in to proceed.	All committee members	October 16
Come up with a catchy slogan.	Britney and Ben	October 20
Design the sticker.	Ben	October 22
Raise the money to buy the stickers.	Al, Calvin, Maria, Tonya	October 22
Print up the stickers at a union copy shop.	Freddie	October 23
Make a plan for handing out the stickers. Who will cover which areas?	Britney, Tonya, Maria, Millie	October 23
Inform people of their right to wear stickers, and prep them on how management might react.	All committee members	October 24
Hand out the stickers.	All committee members	October 25
Wear the stickers.	Everyone	October 25
Meet afterwards to debrief how it went.	All committee members	October 25

More sample tactics:

198 METHODS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION



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The Methods of Nonviolent Protest and Persuasion

Formal Statements

1. Public speeches
2. Letters of opposition or support
3. Declarations by organizations and institutions
4. Signed public statements
5. Declarations of indictment and intention
6. Group or mass petitions

Communications with a Wider Audience

7. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
8. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
9. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
10. Newspapers and journals
11. Records, radio, and television
12. Skywriting and earthwriting

Group Representations

13. Deputations
14. Mock awards
15. Group lobbying
16. Picketing
17. Mock elections

Symbolic Public Acts

18. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
19. Wearing of symbols
20. Prayer and worship
21. Delivering symbolic objects
22. Protest disrobings
23. Destruction of own property
24. Symbolic lights
25. Displays of portraits
26. Paint as protest
27. New signs and names
28. Symbolic sounds
29. Symbolic reclamations
30. Rude gestures

Pressures on Individuals

31. "Haunting" officials
32. Taunting officials
33. Fraternalization
34. Vigils

Drama and Music

35. Humorous skits and pranks
36. Performances of plays and music
37. Singing

Processions

38. Marches
39. Parades
40. Religious processions
41. Pilgrimages
42. Motorcades

Honoring the Dead

43. Political mourning
44. Mock funerals
45. Demonstrative funerals
46. Homage at burial places

Public Assemblies

47. Assemblies of protest or support
48. Protest meetings
49. Camouflaged meetings of protest
50. Teach-ins

Withdrawal and Renunciation

51. Walk-outs
52. Silence
53. Renouncing honors
54. Turning one's back

The Methods of Social Noncooperation

Ostracism of Persons

55. Social boycott
56. Selective social boycott
57. Lysistratic nonaction
58. Excommunication
59. Interdict

Noncooperation with Social Events, Customs, and Institutions

60. Suspension of social and sports activities
61. Boycott of social affairs
62. Student strike
63. Social disobedience
64. Withdrawal from social institutions

Withdrawal from the Social System

65. Stay-at-home
66. Total personal noncooperation
67. "Flight" of workers
68. Sanctuary
69. Collective disappearance
70. Protest emigration (hijrat)

The Methods of Economic Noncooperation: Economic Boycotts

Actions by Consumers

71. Consumers' boycott
72. Nonconsumption of boycotted goods
73. Policy of austerity
74. Rent withholding
75. Refusal to rent
76. National consumers' boycott
77. International consumers' boycott

Action by Workers and Producers

78. Workmen's boycott
79. Producers' boycott

Action by Middlemen

80. Suppliers' and handlers' boycott

Action by Owners and Management

81. Traders' boycott
82. Refusal to let or sell property
83. Lockout
84. Refusal of industrial assistance
85. Merchants' "general strike"

Action by Holders of Financial Resources

86. Withdrawal of bank deposits
87. Refusal to pay fees, dues, and assessments
88. Refusal to pay debts or interest
89. Severance of funds and credit
90. Revenue refusal
91. Refusal of a government's money

Action by Governments

92. Domestic embargo
93. Blacklisting of traders
94. International sellers' embargo
95. International buyers' embargo
96. International trade embargo

The Methods of Economic Noncooperation: The Strike

Symbolic Strikes

97. Protest strike
98. Quickie walkout (lightning strike)

Agricultural Strikes

99. Peasant strike
100. Farm Workers' strike

Strikes by Special Groups

101. Refusal of impressed labor
102. Prisoners' strike
103. Craft strike
104. Professional strike

Ordinary Industrial Strikes

105. Establishment strike
106. Industry strike
107. Sympathetic strike

Restricted Strikes

108. Detailed Strike
109. Bumper strike
110. Slowdown strike
111. Working-to-rule strike
112. Reporting "sick" (sick-in)
113. Strike by resignation
114. Limited strike
115. Selective strike

Multi-Industry Strikes

116. Generalized strike
117. General strike

Combination of Strikes and Economic Closures

118. Hartal
119. Economic shutdown

The Methods of Political Noncooperation

Rejection of Authority

120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
121. Refusal of public support
122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance

Citizens' Noncooperation with Government

123. Boycott of legislative bodies
124. Boycott of elections
125. Boycott of government employment and positions
126. Boycott of government depts., agencies, and other bodies
127. Withdrawal from government educational institutions
128. Boycott of government-supported organizations
129. Refusal of assistance to enforcement agents
130. Removal of own signs and placemarks
131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
132. Refusal to dissolve existing institutions

Citizens' Alternatives to Obedience

133. Reluctant and slow compliance
134. Nonobedience in absence of direct supervision
135. Popular nonobedience
136. Disguised disobedience
137. Refusal of an assemblage or meeting to disperse
138. Sit-down
139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation
140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws

Action by Government Personnel

142. Selective refusal of assistance by government aides
143. Blocking of lines of command and information
144. Stalling and obstruction
145. General administrative noncooperation
146. Judicial noncooperation
147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents
148. Mutiny

Domestic Governmental Action

149. Quasi-legal evasions and delays
150. Noncooperation by constituent governmental units

International Governmental Action

151. Changes in diplomatic and other representations
152. Delay and cancellation of diplomatic events
153. Withholding of diplomatic recognition
154. Severance of diplomatic relations
155. Withdrawal from international organizations
156. Refusal of membership in international bodies
157. Expulsion from international organizations

The Methods of Nonviolent Intervention

Psychological Intervention

158. Self-exposure to the elements
159. The fast
 - a. Fast of moral pressure
 - b. Hunger strike
 - c. Satyagrahic fast
160. Reverse trial
161. Nonviolent harassment

Physical Intervention

162. Sit-in
163. Stand-in
164. Ride-in
165. Wade-in
166. Mill-in
167. Pray-in
168. Nonviolent raids
169. Nonviolent air raids
170. Nonviolent invasion
171. Nonviolent interjection
172. Nonviolent obstruction
173. Nonviolent occupation

Social Intervention

174. Establishing new social patterns
175. Overloading of facilities
176. Stall-in
177. Speak-in
178. Guerrilla theater
179. Alternative social institutions
180. Alternative communication system

Economic Intervention

181. Reverse Strike
182. Stay-in Strike
183. Nonviolent land seizure
184. Defiance of Blockades
185. Politically Motivated Counterfeiting
186. Preclusive Purchasing
187. Seizure of assets
188. Dumping
189. Selective patronage
190. Alternative markets
191. Alternative transportation systems
192. Alternative economic institutions

Political Intervention

193. Overloading of administrative systems
194. Disclosing identities of secret agents
195. Seeking imprisonment
196. Civil disobedience of "neutral" laws
197. Work-on without collaboration
198. Dual sovereignty and parallel government

Far too often people struggling for democratic rights and justice are not aware of the full range of methods of nonviolent action. Wise strategy, attention to the dynamics of nonviolent struggle, and careful selection of methods can increase a group's chances of success.

Gene Sharp's researched and catalogued these 198 methods and provided a rich selection of historical examples in his seminal work, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (3 Vols.) Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973.