

# Blockade, Occupy, Strike Back

a collection of tactical knowledge for students and others

## THE FORMATION OF CREWS: A Tactic in Expanding Our Strength and Autonomy

INSTEAD OF HOPING FOR A BUREAUCRATIC organization to do something for us, we can take our lives into our own hands by self-organizing. The formation of a crew is a step in this direction. A crew is a collection of close friends that trusts one another enough to organize together. This means having shared intentions, ideas, and practices, having each other's backs, and never talking to police. In other words, this means sharing affinity. Some people refer to crews as affinity groups. While who is in your crew can be somewhat flexible depending on what you're trying to do, it does imply having people with whom to consistently participate in social struggles and develop a more long-term strategy. It often involves sharing your day-to-day life and knowing people well. This means knowing what is shared, but even more importantly, knowing where real political differences exist.

A crew is a small group of people who organize without hierarchy – there are no leaders or followers, and everyone chooses how to take part in the activity. Crews can form anywhere: in school, on the street, and on the job. This is an effective way of organizing because, in a small group, you are making decisions and setting goals with people that you already share affinity with, without needing to vote or use formal processes. Doing so sidesteps the alienation and stagnation that happens as a result of the bureaucratization of the student movement – however, self-organization requires a lot more initiative and creativity, since nobody will put your ideas into action for you. Another benefit is that the decentralization of action planning renders repression of social movements more difficult.

Larger endeavours that are beyond the organizational capacity of a given crew, such as occupations or demonstra-

**Crews can organize to disrupt the functioning of the economy, both on campus and off, through blockades, sabotage, occupations, and other forms of action.**

tions, may require assemblies or other means to coordinate with others. This larger coordination structure based on autonomy stands in contrast to the standard idea of general assemblies, which require voting or consensus, whose ultimate function is to control and limit the struggle.

As people realize their own power as individuals and com-

munities, the power of those in authority (i.e. the administration, the politicians, the police, and the bosses) weakens. This is what happens in any community garden, any occupation, and any riot. Individuals see that they can grow their own food and help others do the same; they see what they can do with just a few others. They see that they can take and hold space, and make entirely new ways of interacting together possible, while fighting off the institutions that stand in their way. When space is liberated, when we fight authority, we see that capitalism is not absolute. We realize that most of the things around us that we value are of our own creation. Contrary to the widespread myths, authority is in fact unnecessary and harmful.

When more people realize their actual capacity to determine their own lives, they, along with others, become a material force. One of a physical nature, unlike the voting polls that only act as a means to confuse where our true power lies – in our own hands. Those who wish to play puppet master know this. The people who fancy themselves our rulers and keepers – politicians, bosses, police, judges, and many others – long ago organized themselves into a force that can in actuality change things, move things, and control things. Crews act as a counterforce to those whose goal is to profit by dominating us.

Crews, then, serve a role in protecting ourselves from those who would like to exploit us for the sake of the economy, from those who would like us to continue working for scraps and piling up huge debts. Crews can come to demonstrations prepared and with clearly formulated ideas and plans about what they want to see happen, opening up interesting possibilities in otherwise ritualized processions from point A to point B. Crews can organize to disrupt the functioning of the economy, both on campus and off, through blockades, sabotage, occupations, and other forms of action. Crews can get together and articulate their ideas on the walls of the campuses and city streets with graffiti and posters. They can make sure that advertisements never stay up for long, and that police stations, banks, and gentrifying apartments or restaurants are never safe. Crews can steal from big businesses, such as by expropriating groceries to pass out for free in their neighbourhoods. They can take money from capitalism and give it to social projects autonomous from the state, or initiate those projects themselves. Crews form to act as a force against those who would rather see us subservient or behind bars.

Crews can form to approach the police when they are hassling someone on the street or in the métro. They can attack the immigration machine that deports and imprisons. They can stop the landlord trying to evict their neighbours. They can de-arrest someone at a demonstration without

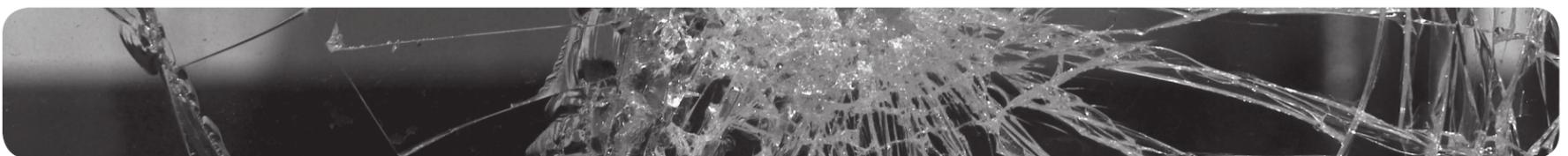


hesitation, even if they don't know them. They can smash banks and other spaces which exist to reproduce capitalism. They can build up their communities through solidarity, so that the police hesitate before following someone into a neighbourhood or a campus.

On campus, crews can extend the reach of the strike. Open up the universities as social spaces for students and non-students alike to come in and use freely. Appropriate the copy machines and spread news of the revolt to other sectors of society. Take over the cafeterias and bars and begin preparing the communal feast. Burn the debt records. In short, create not an 'alternative' that can easily be accommodated within capitalist society, but rather liberated space in which power is built to *destroy* capitalist society.

The point of acting is to gain control over our lives and to further our own power, as well as the power of those who have always been dispossessed in this society.

*Crews strike back.*



## OCCUPATION: a do-it-yourself guide

*This is a modified version of a text which originally appeared in After the Fall, a publication that came out after the wave of student rebellion in California in 2009.*

### Preface: Why Occupy?

WE IN NORTH AMERICA have been too timid for too long. We are afraid of the cops. We are afraid of losing our jobs or getting expelled from school. No one wants to take risks; no one wants anyone else to take risks. Protests are boring, poorly attended, and ineffective. Peaceful marches or rallies reduce us to passive observers of what is supposed to be our own activity. We are told to express our anger and frustration by shouting or chanting, but otherwise, we are asked to exercise restraint.

At the general assembly, participants are asked: "what do you want to do next?" But they are never asked the obvious question – "what do you want to do right now?" Why not decide on an immediate course of action and do it? Organizers complain they are losing members with each successive meeting; they seem to believe that meeting is an end in itself!

This wall of passivity can only be dismantled through action. But equally, we have to avoid the temptation of becoming "activists". Sacrificial actions are disruptive – but only momentarily. They depend on the media to publicize their grievances, but to gain this attention, activists must provoke the administration into an embarrassing confrontation. Administrators are not so stupid. They know how to neutralize these actions: they simply avoid confrontation.



These are the problems we face: not only the cuts – not only the crisis which caused the cuts – but the ineffectiveness of our means of fighting them. We need to build a movement, but we find that we cannot. People will only join a movement if it has the potential to change something, but a movement will only change something if people join it. So everyone does what is in their own best interests: they ignore the protestors and get on with their lives. Better to try to find a new job than waste time failing to get your old one back. The problem is not a lack of consciousness. People evaluate their situation and act accordingly.

It is the representatives who fail to understand.

Everything is set up in advance to ensure that nothing actually changes. We are given a menu of options for managing the crisis and another for fighting the cuts. We do the hard work of organizing. We attend interminable meetings and plan largely symbolic actions. These things change nothing. The problem is simple: no decision-making body has the power to give us what we want – and especially during a crisis, when the very existence of capitalism is at stake.

We must reject all options on offer and demonstrate that without negotiations *it is still possible to act*. This is why we do not make demands. Completely discarding the cowardly idea that we should return to the status quo of the last year or the year before, to be taken away from us once again a year or two later, let's say that we were to set our demands just a little bit higher: free education and a university managed by faculty, students, and workers. Nothing short of a full-scale insurrection could ever achieve this. And if we were strong enough to bring the existing order tumbling down around us, why would we stop short and settle for the foregoing list? In any case, they've never responded to petitions or requests, only force. Why go through the motions of negotiation when we know we will not win anything but paltry concessions? Better to reveal the nature of the situation: there is no power to which we can appeal except that which we have found in one another.

That is also why we reject the logic of representation. No representative, no matter how charismatic, can achieve anything of consequence, except to deprive us of our own agency. Having representatives reduces us, once again, to passive onlookers upon our own activity. We have to take matters into our own hands. A huge demonstration is not a means to better bargaining; it is nothing if it is not an end in itself. A huge demonstration becomes an end in itself

only when people at the demonstration start to act on their own; when they reject the leaders who, acting on their own interests, tell people to be “reasonable” or to wait for the right moment. When things get hot, the self-elected of the student movement are waiting with their trusty fire extinguishers ready in hand because they know that when people act on their own, in their self-interest, their authority crumbles and everyone can see how bankrupt their strategy of containment actually is. We must denounce and destroy the recuperative, the parasitic, the representative who seek to de-escalate the movement and integrate it back into politics.

This is a guide to immediate action. It explains how to occupy buildings, with particular attention to universities. That is not because we believe students at the university have a special role to play, or because occupations are the only tactic with which we agree. It is simply because we are at the university, we have occupied a building here, and we begin with what we know.

Occupations are a common tactic used at universities and other workplaces around the world. In 1999, students occupied the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the largest university in Latin America, to ensure that university education would remain free. In 2006, students occupied universities throughout France to repeal the CPE amendment, which would have made it easier for bosses to fire young workers.

We have been criticized for having acted as clandestine “adventurists”, for ignoring the democratic process. We have seen the results of that process far too many times. It is never the case that, after people see the failures of letter-writing campaigns or teach-ins, they decide to try something else. They are disheartened that their hard work has come to nothing, and they return to their normal lives. When the next crisis occurs, new people get involved and democratically decide to make the same mistakes.

We have lived through too many cycles of failure and seek to try something else.

We wager that when people see what we are doing, they too will get involved. So far, that has proven true. Once enough people are involved, we will no longer have to act in a clandestine fashion. We will openly decide what to do next. Will we march immediately to the administra-

## The representation of the student body has become an enemy of the student body.

tive building and occupy it indefinitely, without demands? Maybe we will march from building to building with bullhorns, calling students and workers out into the street? Perhaps we will march to the base of campus and set up barricades, blocking entrances to the university.

In any case, we know that our movement will only grow in and through action. We do not have to wait: *we can act now and act later*. If in the past it has taken longer to organize these sorts of actions, that is either because people started too big, or because they were up against stronger foes than the bumbling administration of a public university. In fact, the reason it took so long to organize this action was simply that many were afraid. We respect these fears even if we encourage everyone to push their boundaries. Others will join the movement, not when their consciousness is raised to the appropriate level, but when they decide that participation is worth the associated risks. Some people feel they have nothing to lose and get involved immediately. Others have so much to lose that they will only get involved at the last possible moment. We trust one another to know what to do.

Those we meet – who are neither hostile to change as such nor self-described “leaders” offended by action taken without their permission – have not criticized us for acting too soon but for occupying such an insignificant building. To these we reply: you are not alone in your desire for escalation. Find us. When we have more numbers, we will take more and more buildings until the campus is ours.

Of course, the goal is not to shut down campus as an end in itself. Once we demonstrate our collective power to dissolve the university, we will decide together what to do next. By then, others will have taken action in their own contexts, and we will be able to decide with them. We know only this: that when we get the chance to strike, we will take it without hesitation. We will take whatever measures are necessary both to destroy this world as quickly as possible and to create, here and now, the world we want:

**WITHOUT WAGES, WITHOUT BOSSES,  
WITHOUT PRISONS, WITHOUT POLICE,  
WITHOUT BORDERS, WITHOUT STATES**

## GENERAL THEORY OF OCCUPATIONS

### Plan ahead

- Whether we occupy as a small group of clandestine adventurists or at the head of a large and unruly crowd, it is a good idea to plan ahead.
- Scope out the building. What sorts of doors will we have to lock down? What sorts of furniture are available for building barricades?
- Check as well for any useful materials outside or around the building. Are there escape routes? Are there materials to defend against police?

### Draw a large crowd to the occupation

- A large crowd, especially of ‘ordinary, everyday people’, is our first line of defense against a police attack.
- If there is a confrontation with the police, a large crowd will probably form anyway to gawk at the spectacle.
- But our best chance of holding the space is to get that crowd as close to the building as possible before the police arrive.
- That way, if the police build barricades, the crowd will be between us and the cops, rather than outside police lines.
- If that crowd is full of ‘ordinary, everyday people’, the cops will be less likely to use extreme force to remove us from the building.
- Draw a crowd by calling a meeting of some kind: to discuss the crisis or just to dance; or announce the occupation at some other group’s meeting.
- Either (1) announce to the assembled crowd that an occupation is occurring and rush them over to the building as quickly as possible.
- Or (2) give a rousing speech, convince the crowd that we all have to occupy a building immediately and then do it.
- Have a plan A, plan B, and plan C. In other words, have backup plans.
- Once inside, explain to the employees that it’s an occupation, and nicely but firmly ask them to leave.

### Get control over a door

- When we scope out a building, we want to get a sense of how we can open up the space to other people once the occupation is under way.
- Choose a door, an accessible window, or some other method of getting people into and out of the space.
- When outside barricades are built, make sure people know not to barricade this one entrance too heavily.
- For this entrance, set up a lock that can be opened and closed easily, so when the time is right, we can let more people into the space.

### Open the space to other people

- People often want to debate who they should let into the space, but it is best to let in everyone (reserving the right to turn away sketchy people).
- The risks of diluting the group or letting sketchy people in are minimal compared to what we gain by making the occupation open to everyone.
- Opening the occupation reduces the risks taken by the original occupiers. It’s also the point of occupying—to build a movement through action.
- If there is a continual police presence, having a crowd inside police barricades allows people to move in and out of the building via the crowd.

### Transform the space

When we occupy spaces, we never use them as they were ‘intended’ to be used: libraries are no longer for studying.

We take over spaces to transform their uses: we organize to occupy more spaces and build a social movement, but we also have fun.

Throw a sick-as-fuck dance party!

### Do not make occupations into arrest actions

Occupations are tactics within a broader struggle. There is no reason to get arrested just to prove a point. When all else fails, run away!

### RECONNAISSANCE

#### Choosing a building:

- Fewest doors that need to be secured.
- Heavy furniture for making barricades.
- Central location with a lot of foot traffic.
- Contact with the outside world (balcony, windows).

#### Who owns the building?

- Exploit ambiguities in ownership.

#### Some occupations are more disruptive than others

- At a university, occupying an administrative building would be more disruptive than occupying a student space.
- But for the same reason, administrative buildings are harder to hold.
- Do not be afraid to take space from our purported representatives: unions, student government, etc.

#### When doing reconnaissance, be discreet but thorough:

- How many doors are there that have to be secured?
- Look for hidden doors and fire escapes.
- What do the doors look like, and how are they opened (handles)?
- Doors can be secured using structural supports (poles, pipes). Are there any available?
- What furniture is available for building barricades?
- Can we secure a door in such a way that we can open it, either to let people in or to make an escape?
- Are there a lot of employees in the building?
- What floor are you going for? Is there stairway or elevator access?
- Is there an alarm system? Are there security guards?
- What are the open hours?
- Are there surveillance cameras? What are ways to block them? (Umbrellas? Paint? Gum?)
- Boardrooms often have microphones, how can they be disabled?
- If possible, take pictures or at least take

notes. It is always harder to remember the details than you think!

#### We may be in there for a while:

- Is there a bathroom, access to running water?
- Is there any way to get supplies in and out without opening a door?

It is often possible to secure a floor or even a room, leaving the rest of the building intact.

### SECURING DOORS

Doors open either towards the inside or the outside.

- Doors opening into the occupied space are the easiest to secure because we can barricade them closed.
- Unfortunately, doors in newer buildings tend to open out, so we have to secure the door independently of the barricade.

Different doors have different types of handles and are thus secured in different ways. Here are some examples.

#### • Door with handles:

Tie one end of a cable lock around the door handle. Tie the other end to a structural support, or even to another door handle. If no structural supports are available, use a piece of furniture or a large block of wood – anything larger than the door frame.

#### • Doors with bars:

If there is a space between the bar and the door, tie one end of a cable lock around the bar and the other end to a support.

If there is no space, secure a C-clamp to the bar. Loop the cable lock through the space created by the clamp.

#### • Swinging push doors:

Almost impossible to secure without damaging the doors. Unless they open into the occupied space, avoid them.



**BE CREATIVE!**

Make sure the doors are secured as tightly as possible:

- If the door opens even an inch, then the lock can be cut.
- Use carabiners to tie locks to one another.
- Carabiners also make it easy to open doors without disassembling the locking mechanism.

**BUILDING BARRICADES**

Whenever possible, build barricades both inside and outside the doors.

**For the inside:**

- Use as much heavy furniture as possible.
- Distribute the furniture evenly among the doors.
- Nothing too complicated or precarious.
- Do not excessively barricade the door we want to control.
- Do not stack up furniture that can be easily pushed aside, once doors are breached.
- We need to be able to apply pressure to keep the barricade in place (i.e. by pushing on it).

**For the outside:**

- Have a large crowd surround the building and especially against the doors.
- If police are erecting barricades, we want the crowd inside the barricades.
- A separate, outside team should roll in and build outside barricades and then disperse.
- Use dumpsters, trees, wood pallets, chain-link fences, garbage cans filled with rocks.
- Make sure the outside team knows which door we want to control, so they do not barricade it too heavily.

**OUTSIDE SUPPORT: LEGAL TEAM**

Before the event takes place, write the number of a known lawyer on your body. The lawyer should have some experience with similar situations.

**Have a legal support team:**

- Have someone outside to note or record any abuse by police officers and their badge numbers.
- Have someone at a landline to contact for jail support. This number should be able to accept collect calls.
- Anything on you in the event of arrest can be confiscated by police.

**Know your rights:**

- The only thing you legally have to tell the police is your name, your date of birth, and your address. You have the right to remain silent - use it (even though they will use all sorts of tactics to try to get you to talk).
- Resisting arrest raises the stakes. If a police officer stops you, ask if you are being detained. If you are not being detained, walk away.

**OUTSIDE SUPPORT: MEDICAL TEAM**

Have assigned medics both inside and outside:

- Medics should know about the needs of specific individuals involved in the action beforehand (medications, allergies).
- They should have a medical aid kit. Bring with you: water, latex gloves, duct tape, band-aids, gauze and tape, hydrogen peroxide, polysporin, aspirin, benadryl.

**Wear or bring with you:**

- Comfortable clothing, running shoes, long-sleeves, eye protection, clothes to change into, a mask.

**Do NOT wear:**

- Contact lenses, oil-based make-up, things which can be easily grabbed. Do not use tampons if you may end up in jail.

For pepper spray: clean out eyes with a mixture of milk of magnesia and water.

For tear gas: cover mouth with a cloth soaked in vinegar or lemon juice; use eye protection.

**OUTSIDE SUPPORT: MEDIA TEAM**

This is not a symbolic action, but it is still important to have a media team. Have one or more people designated as media contacts, on the outside of the occupation:

- Remember to emphasize the media people as delegates, not representatives of those involved.
- Send articles to different news outlets; alternative media such as Sabotage Media or GrèveMontréal allow for self-publication of events.

Set up an email address and website associated with the occupation; make this information easily available.

- Do not use the email addresses of anyone involved in the action.

No particular individuals inside the occupation should become too visible, lest they be branded as leaders.

No one on the inside should give televised interviews, or any more information about themselves than is necessary.

**Press Releases:**

- Have an initial statement prepared before the occupation is announced.
- Pour out your feelings, but make sure you provide a reasoned explanation for what you are doing.
- Do not have an official line. Do not prevent people from expressing themselves in their own way.
- Have people on hand to make and distribute flyers keeping people informed about what you are doing.

**OTHER THINGS TO ORGANIZE:**

Collect phone numbers to set up an emergency mass text-message in case of a police raid.

- Bring supplies into the occupation.
- It is possible that you will be removed in the first few hours. Do not overpack.
- Bring some food, a lot of water, and medical supplies, but not much else.
- Pack extra locks and cables in case you need them.
- Bring flashlights, paper and pen, and a miniature first aid kit.
- Bring a safe computer, in case police confiscate your supplies. Likewise with a cell phone. Don't have phone numbers that you don't need for the occupation saved on your phone - police routinely go through people's contacts.

If you are successful, people can bring you extra supplies:

- Food, cigarettes, blankets, etc.

Share everything. Inside the occupation, there is no private property.

Break down barriers between people.

If possible, take pictures of the building before you leave, for legal reasons.

Use the building as an organizing space. Now that it's ours, it can be a launchpad for more occupations and other actions. It can become a gathering point for the disaffected and pissed-off. Invite members of your community to come in and help build the struggle.

Occupied buildings become spaces from which to further strike the exploiters of this world and, at the same time, disrupt and suppress the ability of the university to function.



Around the world, universities have played a role in contributing to wider social struggles.

In Chile, the police do not come onto the university campuses. When the dictatorship came to power in the coup of 1973, the enforcers of law and order entered the campuses and rounded up those opposed to the coup, imprisoning, torturing, and executing hundreds. Even though the dictatorship is now officially over, democracy has proven itself not much different to those who oppose hierarchy and power.

*The police still perform an inherently political function, regardless of whether capitalism is managed by democracy or dictatorship.*

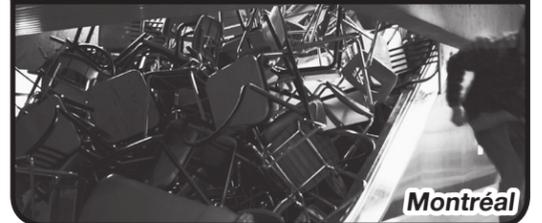
Police do not come onto campus because they are not welcome. When they try to enter, students, anarchists, and other rebels fight them out, and keep them out with barricades and continued confrontation. Because universities are liberated areas, people at odds with the state can use them to stage attacks against capital and get away safely.

The student struggle in Chile also regularly spills over into the streets. In 2011, there were over forty demonstrations, many turning into pitched battles with police and shutting down the flow of commodities across the cities with burning barricades. Strikes paralyzed not only the campuses, but the larger society around them.

Similarly, in Greece, police entering a university is understood as a declaration of war. A widespread and frequent practice of occupying the campus for assemblies and organizing gives these spaces an important place during heated moments in the anti-austerity struggle. During a recent racist pogrom where fascists were attacking migrants, occupied universities provided a defended space from this onslaught.

In France, when the CPE law was passed in 2006, collective daily actions were organized on campus. Some of these included blocking train lines, building barricades in the streets with the furniture found in nearby workplaces, and highway blockades to prevent the transportation of workers to work.

In Montréal during the student strike of 2005, people set their sights on the economic functions of the city. They ran riot through the underground mall, sabotaged gas stations, clashed with police, blockaded an SAQ depot such that no alcohol could be delivered anywhere on the entire island, and temporarily shut down the port. The strike spread outward and was not limited to student participation.



# SECURITY AWARENESS

SECURITY AWARENESS IS A SET OF PRACTICES designed to keep everyone involved in social struggle safer by systematically reducing risk. The simple reality is that governments target and try to repress groups and individuals engaged in struggle, no matter the tactics that they use. This is because the state exists to defend the political and economic interests of capitalism. By adopting a widespread security awareness, we can limit or neutralize counterintelligence operations meant to disrupt our political organizing. Security awareness is most effective when an entire movement or community understands the practices and the logic behind them. Also, there is no perfect formula that can be applied in all situations - the ability to think critically about security is what counts. Finally, like anything else, these practices are not fool-proof.

**What not to say**

To begin with, there are certain things that are inappropriate to discuss. These things include:

- Your involvement or someone else's involvement with illegal activity.
- Someone else's desire to get involved with such activity.
- Asking others if they participate in illegal activity.
- Your participation or someone else's participation in any action that was illegal.
- Someone else's advocacy for such actions.
- Your plans or someone else's plans for a future action.

In short, don't ask and don't tell.

It's fine to speak about direct action in general terms. It is perfectly legal, secure and desirable that people speak out in support of direct action and all forms of resistance. The danger lies in linking individuals to specific actions or groups.

**Two exceptions**

There are only two times that it is acceptable to speak about specific actions and involvement.

1. If you're planning an action, with the people you're planning it with. However, these discussions should never take place over the internet (email), phone lines or in proximity of a cell-phone, through the mail, or in an accomplice's home or car, as these places and forms of communication are frequently monitored. The only people who should hear this discussion would include those who are actively participating in the action. Anyone who is not involved does not need to know and, therefore, should not know.
2. After a person has been arrested and brought to trial. If they are found guilty, they can freely speak of the actions for which they were convicted. However, they must never give information that would help the authorities determine who else participated in illegal activities.

The reason for these security precautions is obvious: if people don't know anything, they can't talk about it.

**Also\*:**

- Don't gossip or brag in order to impress others or try to "fit in".
- Beware of alcohol/drugs and loose lips.
- Know your limits: don't do anything if you couldn't live with the worst possible consequences.
- Lying to the police is a crime, but you have the right to remain silent - use it, even if they try to pressure you to talk.
- You don't have to let CSIS or the police into your home unless they have a warrant.
- Balance the need for security with the need to be accessible to potential friends.
- Good security awareness is not paranoia institutionalized.

Some people just don't know about security awareness, so if someone is behaving in a security-violating way, it's really important to tell them and ask them to stop.

**Silence**

It needs to be stressed throughout our movements that no one is under any legal obligation to provide the police with any more information than one's own name, address, and birth date, and only if one is under arrest. That is it! Saying anything more jeopardizes security. Even answering seemingly insignificant questions can assist the police in developing personality profiles. It may not be "evidence" but it is used to give police "leads" on other suspects and construct intent during legal proceedings. The only principled response to police questioning when under arrest is to say nothing more than your name, birth date, and address. If questioned further, you can simply say "I have nothing to say".

\*Advice on secure communication techniques can be found in the zine "Anonymity/Security". A more in-depth and logistically focused resource is "Practical Security Handbook for Activists & Campaigns". "Security Culture: a handbook for activists" covers repression in the Canadian context. "What is Security Culture?" looks at social dynamics surrounding security.

# STREET DEMONSTRATION TIPS

modified from crimethinc.com



have your own goals and plans.



The purpose of the bloc as a tactic is to have everyone look as similar as possible, so that no single individual can be identified within the anonymous mass. Blocs are not necessary for acting in the street – people can also self-organize into contingents, or act as individuals – but they can help to keep everybody safer. If only some people within a bloc take these precautions, the cops can more easily spot and target individuals and groups, which is dangerous both for those who are acting within the bloc and for those who are not. Those who make the effort to stay anonymous can draw extra police attention; those who don't can be more easily identified, which can make them easier targets. Neither of these situations is desirable.

- If you're going to wear a mask, keep it on at all appropriate times. If you are captured on camera or witnessed at any point with your mask off, you can thereafter be easily identified with it on. Don't just cover your face. Bandanas are popular and convenient, but they don't conceal enough. Cover your head completely so your hair cannot be seen – especially if it's distinctive. In a bloc, you can do this by wearing a ski mask or making a mask out of a t-shirt – stretch the neck hole across your eyes and tie the sleeves behind your head, with the rest of the shirt covering your head and shoulders.\*

- Be extremely conscientious about where and when you change into and out of your mask and other anonymizing clothing; there should be no cameras or hostile witnesses. If possible, explore the area in advance to find appropriate spaces for changing. Remember that police are especially likely to target masked individuals who are not in a crowd that is similarly dressed.

- Wear different outfits layered one upon the other. Ideally, you should have one outfit for getting to the site of the action without attracting attention, your anonymous gear for the action itself, and then another outfit underneath so you can look like a good citizen as you exit the area.

- Do not march in a bloc wearing your regular clothing, especially if it's distinctive. Cops may be stupid, but they can probably match the pictures of the masked-up person

with the purple polka-dotted pants to pictures of the same person in the same outfit minus the mask – even if the pictures were taken on different days.

- Backpacks and shoes are also used to identify people from demos. Rather than using the same ones you wear in everyday life, use different ones. Consider covering shoes with large socks if appropriate.

- Cover or remove anything that can identify you: patches, piercings, and tattoos.

- If possible, cover your eyes with goggles to protect from pepper spray or tear gas. If you wear glasses, wear non-descript ones. Contact lenses are not recommended in situations where you may come into contact with chemical weapons. If in winter your glasses fog up with a mask, you can wear contacts but have goggles on hand.

- Be careful not to leave fingerprints. Wear cloth gloves – leather and latex can retain fingerprints and even pass them on to objects you touch. Wipe down tools and other items with rubbing alcohol in advance to clean fingerprints off them – you never know what might get lost in the chaos.

- Banners along the sides and front of a bloc can function to obscure surveillance, and can also help to protect people from being snatched by police.

- Placards and flags made with heavy wood can be used for self-defense in a pinch (and are longer than batons!). Barricades, fireworks, paint bombs, fire extinguishers, rocks, and other creative means can keep enemies at a distance.

- Knowing the terrain can be invaluable.
  - where are there barricade materials, action targets, and stash spots for tools to be picked up during the demo?
  - where are there alleys, backyards, hiding spots, crowded areas, cameras, and public transit locations for dispersal?

Do not let any of this give you a false sense of security. Be careful. Assess your relationship to risk honestly. Make sure you know and trust the people you're working with, especially when it comes to high-risk activities. Practice security awareness at all times. Know and assert your legal rights when dealing with police. Doing so may not make things better, but failing to do so will certainly make them worse.

**W**HILE PEOPLE CAN PARTICIPATE IN DEMOS WITH their crew, sometimes it makes sense for crews to act together in a contingent or a bloc. The form chosen should fit the context. Here is a collection of tips for acting within demos – some are applicable more broadly, others are more specific to a bloc.

- The way a demo moves can determine its outcome. While there are situations where moving quickly can be strategic, running blindly in a panic is the worst thing people can do. The police often attempt to disperse rowdy demos, and being able to hold our ground, not panic, and fight back is crucial.

- A snake march – weaving up and down different streets and changing direction often and unpredictably (but strategically) – is a good way for spontaneous demos to evade police. Marching against traffic on one-way streets makes it difficult for the police to control the march.

- It is important to pay attention to what's happening around you. Stay aware of your surroundings. Notice any police lines that are being reinforced. Kettling is another tactic police use in mass arrests wherein they try to surround a demo from all sides, either in a street between intersections, or inside an intersection. This is why, if the demo is large enough, it should always try to hold two intersections at a time to leave an alternate route open.

- Structures for quick communication need to be developed. People can spread messages and plans quickly by going from crew to crew.

- Never take photos of anything that can be incriminating. If putting media online, black out faces – police routinely use footage posted online as evidence. Placards, banners, and paint can be used to block unfriendly cameras.

- Don't come to a demo as a passive observer, hoping others have a plan. Come prepared to participate actively and

## WHY WEAR A MASK?

Individuals cover their faces and conceal their appearances for the simple reason that they have no need to be identified. In this world where cameras sit on every other street corner, where the police, CSIS, and the RCMP use every chance they get to profile us, where participation in social struggle or public demonstrations can compromise our freedom and ability to act in the future, there is no reason to make their jobs easier for them. Just as we refuse to cooperate with CSIS interrogations and police investigations, we're also going to make it as hard as we can for the systems of social control to crack down and break us. Developing a practice of (partial) anonymity at demonstrations opens up space for participation in actions for people who would otherwise be risking "too much" – be it legal status, immigration status, or employment. Not only does it make profiling more difficult, it also helps to keep people out of police custody: the Toronto police and community snitches had a much harder time identifying masked faces in their post-G20 Most Wanted list than those without, just as the police would have had a harder time arresting people in the aftermath of the Vancouver hockey riot if the hooligans had been wearing masks. Wearing masks won't get us home safely all the time, but it does disrupt routine repression and social control.



Demonstrator shoots fire extinguisher at riot police who were guarding Charest's office on Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> in Montréal.

**Further Reading:** [zinelibrary.info](http://zinelibrary.info)  
[grevemontreal.noblogs.org/texts](http://grevemontreal.noblogs.org/texts)  
[lamitrailleuse.wordpress.com](http://lamitrailleuse.wordpress.com)

- Theory:**
- How Non-Violence Protects the State
  - It's not books, nor high marks. What we lack is life.
  - Worker-Student Action Committees: France May '68
  - After the Fall: Communiqués from Occupied California
  - Toward the Destruction of Schooling
  - Communiqué from an Absent Future
  - Communiqué d'un futur absent
  - It's Easy to Attack / C'est facile d'attaquer
  - From Politics to Life / De la politique à la vie
  - Lettre ouverte aux étudiants en lutte
  - La cloche (Montréal 2005)
  - En suspens (Montréal 2012)

- Practical:**
- Bodyhammer
  - Crowd Control & Riot Manual
  - Blocs: Black and Otherwise
  - Activist Guide to Basic First Aid
  - A Protester's Guide To "Less-Lethal" Police Weaponry

*Disclaimer: This publication is intended purely for informational purposes only, and does in no way encourage or condone any illegal activity. Find the joy of making war on domination at your own risk. Anti-copyright. Montréal, Winter, 2012.*



## PAINT BOMBS: lightbulbs filled with paint

First, put on your cloth gloves. This will keep your fingertips (and the paint bombs) clean. You should work on a soft surface (like a folded towel) to protect your bulb.

1. First, use needle-nose pliers to cut off the metal fitting. You can either cut two vertical slits in the fitting and wiggle it off, or simply cut around the entire thing.
2. Next, remove the glass tube and filament from inside the bulb. If they haven't already broken in the process of cutting off the fitting, try gently poking them from the bottom with a screwdriver.
3. Fill the bulb with paint (use a funnel or dish soap bottle and add some water if the paint is thick), seal the hole with paper, clay, or similar, and seal with electrical tape or melted wax. Mixing indoor and outdoor paint makes it much more difficult to remove.
4. Wipe down the bulb with rubbing alcohol to remove any prints.



**A free university in the midst of a capitalist society is like a reading room in a prison; it serves only as a distraction from the misery of daily life.**

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