



**EDUCATION IS  
NOT  
A PRIVILEGE**

 @peopleandplanetliverpool

# INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL ORGANISING

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# WHY THIS GUIDE

This guide was originally written at the beginning of the global COVID-19 pandemic, at a time where we had to cancel, adapt and adjust most of our organising plans. We have come to terms with the fact that physical distancing restrictions of some form are here to stay. Not government restrictions, our restrictions. The measures we take to keep each other safe.

We are putting this guide out to help new organisers enter a world of radical climate and social justice organising that never went away, just appeared on screens rather than meetings. In this context, this guide will help you to organise in your online spaces.

We want to make this knowledge as accessible as possible. Therefore, whether you decide to organise with your group in-person or online, we consider **it is important that our movement spaces are accessible to all** by adapting them to enable people with disabilities to participate fully. See the accessibility part of this resource for how to ensure you can embrace accessible online organising - as well as how it can also act as an exclusionary measure and how you might navigate that.



People & Planet are here to give you advice and support on how to run campaigns. Our team of staff can deliver training on any of the skills in this guide, either online or on campus!

Get in touch at:

[admin@peopleandplanet.org](mailto:admin@peopleandplanet.org)

[www.peopleandplanet.org](http://www.peopleandplanet.org)

# WHY THIS GUIDE

## KEEP ORGANISING

The intersecting crises of climate breakdown, capitalism and the hostile environment have not gone away in the wake of a global health pandemic. In reality, they have been worsened. The pre-existing inequalities have been hugely amplified by the effects of COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis, as well as by increasing repression of political movements in the name of 'public health' and 'security'. It is important that we keep organising: **climate and social justice can't wait.**

## SMASH CAPITALISM

Prioritising the economy above all else is forcing people into unsafe situations. Back to work, back onto public transport, back into crowded housing and back into classrooms. We shouldn't do the same things with our own activism, so **we need to create accessible and usable methods for organising that are sustainable** in the long-term.

Capitalism hasn't hesitated to restructure itself in response to the pandemic, and we shouldn't hesitate to meaningfully change how our organising operates either.

**"SO MUCH WE DO IS IN REACTION TO THINGS HAPPENING QUICKLY AND WITH SHORT NOTICE. IF WE WORK ON SUSTAINABLE STRUCTURES THAT HAVE AIMS, INTENTIONS AND ORGANISATION, THEN WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR QUICK RESPONSES, IT WILL NOT FEEL SO STRESSFUL."**

**ESHE KIAMA ZURI**

# UNIVERSITIES CHANGING

Most universities have now adopted a mixed modality between in-person and online sessions. This means that many UK universities, Student Unions, societies and student groups are still organising digital events and socials to welcome new students. Many seminars and courses remain online and discussion groups will be held behind screens or physically distanced. People & Planet student activists have stepped up to organise both online and in-person, and we all are on a steep learning curve to amp up our digital game. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted UK universities beyond these measures, which is worth taking a closer look at.

**Universities aren't isolated bubbles.** They are connected to and shaped by the same systems that foster global injustice. They are also shaped by workers' and students' struggles to reclaim our universities as spaces of material dignity, of learning and curiosity, and of knowledge creation that benefits society. **To organise for climate and social justice at our universities, we have to understand the battleground we are fighting on.**

UK universities have been thrown into extreme financial deficit and crisis by the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as in other spheres of society, the pandemic has shown whom those with power are willing to de-prioritise and ignore. We have seen university staff on temporary and outsourced contracts being made redundant and laid off.

We have also seen students struggling to pay rent, migrant students with No Recourse to Public Funds struggling to buy food, while being further saddled with lifelong debt to pay off their fees. Under the Hostile Environment migrant students and staff continue being monitored and surveilled by their own universities, who are acting as over-compliant border guards to fulfil the Home Office's Visa sponsorship requirements.

All this, while we watch our departments continue to invest in fossil fuels, arms, and border industry corporations while our VCs go to dinner with their execs.

Now more than ever, the chronic lack of public funding in education and universities' reliance on international students fees and corporate money becomes apparent.

# UNIVERSITIES CHANGING

Yet, students and workers have been resisting alongside each other. They know that their struggles are connected and that campaigning for workers' justice, for climate justice and for migrant justice are part of the same struggle.

Under the current conditions, **it is important to organise and come together while keeping each other safe.**

This guide is written in the spirit of care and solidarity.

We need to fill up our toolboxes with tactics of remote organising and digital campaigning, understand the structural changes happening in our universities and reclaim them as our spaces.

## DEEP DIVE

- Listen to the panel discussion we hosted for Power Shift 2020, titled "The Pandemic University as a Battleground."
- Common Wealth report: Public Higher Education for the Public Good: Addressing the Covid-19 Crisis



# ONLINE MEETINGS

## SELECTING A PLATFORM

One of the first things you are likely to need in a digital context is a way to hold meetings remotely. This will require selecting a platform, and adjusting the way meetings run.

There are various platforms available. Each have their own benefits and limitations, including around accessibility - more on this later! All of them have concerns around data security and privacy. We're not recommending any of them, just making you aware of the options. We have only included those that are free or have a free version.

### SKYPE

- + Most people have heard of it, many already have it
- + Allows screen sharing
- + Chat function
- Participants must sign up to Skype, create a Skype name and add each other to their contact lists
- 25 participant limit in group calls

### ZOOM

- + Widely used; often people already familiar with it
- + Allows screen sharing
- + Chat function & private chat function
- 40 minute time limit on group meetings (free version)

### JITSI

- + Free platform, unlimited time and unlimited participants in group meetings
- + Can adjust video quality, useful for poor internet connections
- + No need to register to set up meetings and participate
- Only seems to work well on Google Chrome
- Chat isn't very functional

# ONLINE MEETINGS

## TIPS FOR GOOD ONLINE MEETINGS

### MUTE YOUR MIC WHEN NOT SPEAKING

This helps to reduce background noise

### USE THE CHAT FUNCTION

Use the chat to communicate facilitation signals (explained later) or for urgent questions, but **not for side chat**, as this disrupts the flow of meetings and distracts people.

### TAKE REGULAR BREAKS

This sounds obvious but it's even more important in a digital context. Aim to have a **minimum of 5-10 minutes break** for every hour of your meeting. Ensure people know they can request breaks if they need them.

### DESIGNATE A FACILIATOR

Collectively choose someone who will be responsible for running the agenda, and ensuring that voices are heard in an equal and fair way. Rotate this over time so that it doesn't always fall to the same person and become a position of power within your group. If people aren't comfortable facilitating, it is the responsibility of those that are to share those skills so that they are accessible to as many members of the group as possible. Buddy up and **make sure your group distributes power and knowledge**, rather than concentrating it in a few key members – a recipe for burnout.





# ONLINE MEETINGS



Unmute



Start Video

## IT'S OKAY TO HAVE YOUR VIDEO OFF

Don't expect or request people to turn their camera on – they might not have a strong enough internet connection, may not have a webcam, or may just not want to! Digital platforms are tiring as they are, and for some people having their camera on makes the whole experience even more exhausting.

## LOCATION DOESN'T MATTER

You need as good an internet connection and as much quiet as you can manage. Aside from that, do what you need to make the call work for you. Do it from bed, lie on the floor, stand up, move around, it doesn't matter! If you are worried about being distracting to others you can turn your camera off. You don't need to be sitting neatly at a desk – organising shouldn't feel like a job interview.

## KEEP IT SHORT AND KEEP TO TIME

If your meeting is going to be longer than two hours, it may be time to accept that it needs to be two shorter meetings in order for everyone to stay engaged and participate fully. If you agree the meeting will start at 6pm, be respectful of your peers' time and be there. If you can't make it at the agreed start time, communicate this ahead of time so that people can start the meeting without you. Equally, if you say a meeting will finish at 8, it is the responsibility of the whole group and particularly the facilitator that the meeting finishes on time, and unresolved issues are moved to the next meeting.

# ONLINE MEETINGS

## ONLINE FACILITATION SIGNALS

These signals are suggestions. Every group does it slightly differently, but this is what we've been using and finding useful as a staff team at People & Planet. Don't feel you need to adopt them all, feel free to chop, change and add to create a key of signals that makes sense for you and your context.

At in-person meetings, we use hand signals to indicate certain meanings without interrupting the person that is currently talking. These hand signals are picked up by the facilitator, and the information brought into the conversation at an appropriate time. Therefore, these online signals are primarily a text-based equivalents of those hand signals.

Why not just continue using hand signals? Poor internet connections, large numbers of participants, a lack of access to webcams and respecting people's preference to have their cameras off all contributed to our decision to use chat-based symbols as facilitation signals.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | I would like to raise a point   |
| 2 | I have a direct response to what is being said                            |
| C | I have a clarifying question about a piece of information                 |
| L | I would like a piece of language explained                                |
| T | I need to raise a technical point (e.g. someone has dropped off the call) |
| P | I would like to make a proposal to the group                              |
| + | Agreement/yes/positive reaction   |
| = | Uncertain/no strong feelings  |
| - | Disagree/no/negative reaction   |

These last three are often used as signalling votes in a decision making process, or as part of a temperature check to get a sense of how people are feeling about an issue.

# ONLINE MEETINGS

If there are multiple signals at once, it can sometimes be confusing which to pick. If different people are using the same signal, in general **it is good to request contributions in the order they were entered into the chat.**

**Technical, Language and Clarification points are often given priority.** This is because they are temporary distractions from the current flow of conversation, before returning. They do not take the conversation in a different direction.

Direct points (2s) are given priority over indirect points (1s) because they deal with the issue currently being spoken about, allowing everyone to be heard before moving onto the next points.

It is really **important that people remain muted unless and until the facilitator calls on them to speak.**

This helps avoid common issues on calls like multiple people starting to talk at the same time, which is especially relevant in digital contexts as there is often a lag, and people feel the need to fill the silence. You may feel as though you are being helpful, but **trust the facilitator** and it will all work out!

It will take a little while to adjust to and remember these new processes, so please be kind to each other and try not to get too frustrated as we adjust to new ways of working. We believe that **collective care is a political position and an essential aspect to create a fairer world** and as such, we encourage groups to cultivate it.

If you need more support with this, you can reach out to us and we can schedule a call!



# EVERYDAY ORGANISING

This section will explore the ins and outs of everyday digital campaigning, helping you to organise online and make the most out of the plethora of digital campaigning tools out there.

We will explore everyday communications, social media and digital campaigning tools. Don't feel obliged to use all the tools listed below and in the accompanying guides – instead, compare them and select what is most useful for your campaign.

## ONLINE TOOLS AND PLATFORMS

Effective and accessible online communications channels have become more important than ever. You'll want to develop a **platform for your group to communicate on between meetings** – this may mean a Slack or Discord board anyone can join, messaging platforms like WhatsApp for specific social or campaigning purposes, or a mixture of platforms.

Consider the **specific circumstances of your campaign**, and from there the **strengths and weaknesses of different platforms**. For example, if there are only a few of you a rapid-response platform like Signal might be suitable, but larger campaigns with lots going on might want a messaging board. Equally, you might have use one platform for more casual topics (e.g. WhatsApp) and another for campaigning work (e.g. Discord). You could use one-to-one chats for sensitive or short-term topics.

You'll also want to **consider questions of security and accessibility** (see later sections).

Equally, **organisation** will be pivotal to your campaigning, with social media and digital campaigning taking on new prominence. Consider what platform to use to **store campaign documents**, how to ensure they're easily accessible, and how to make sure responsibility is clearly assigned for keeping this ordered.

Finally, as physical actions recede, **data will be central to campaigning**. As such, a **mailing list** will be highly useful: for petitions, events, online mobilisations and more. Consider all available options, including through the university or SU. Build it through events, petitions and more. You can then use this to keep supporters updated about your activities and offer ways to get involved remotely.

# EVERYDAY ORGANISING



## SOCIAL MEDIA

To build, demonstrate and engage your supporter base, social media will be a vital tool. That means developing a **strategy** for how you're going to use it to further your campaign goals. You can use social media to disseminate campaign messages (e.g. posting articles), publicise campaign activities (e.g. events, actions), make asks of supporters (e.g. sign a petition, donate) and build your base (e.g. recruitment call-outs).

It's worth thinking about **different platforms and when & how to use them**. Instagram, for example, lends itself more to storytelling, while Facebook is more adapt for events and groups, and Twitter useful for quick reaction (especially with hashtags) and engagement with campaign targets. Some students have even used Snapchat for campaigning!

**Think about the audiences you're trying to reach** for certain aims, and how to use platforms to reach them. Whether it's a freshers' fair, webinar or petition launch, you should have a **social media plan** ready in advance.

It can be useful to have a **social media calendar** for each week, so you can plan your posts. Think about what's coming up in the next week, and quiet times to post campaign asks (e.g. for donations), or try out new content (e.g. memes, polls). Websites like Canva make it really simple to create eye-catching graphics, gifs and videos, but don't be afraid to just take a video straight from your phone! Think about what kind of content engages you when you're scrolling and how you can incorporate some of those elements.

# EVERYDAY ORGANISING

## DIGITAL CAMPAIGNING TOOLS

Campaigning digitally doesn't mean you can't turn up the heat. But you'll **need to be savvy and inventive** to cut through the noise. Of course, some tactics will be familiar – **using our petition tool**, circulating open letters or putting panel events online. You could also swamp administrators' inboxes with emails, potentially using **bespoke email-writing tools**. A digital art-build is a participatory and fun way to get people's attention while scrolling, alongside traditional methods like home-made campaign signs.

Equally, it's important you **integrate your digital campaigns with your social media**, working out what your ask of supporters is, and how best that translates onto each platform. If you're launching a new campaign, consider doing so with a video. Using cool graphics – potentially with quotes from supporters or influential figures – can be helpful to build momentum.

**Going digital doesn't mean abandoning disruption**, either. You could flood the phones, or web support. Look out for any open-access sessions your campaign target might be putting on. Check out more in the 'online actions' section.

**"LET'S REFRAME SOCIAL DISTANCING AND CALL IT THE PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT. WE NEED EACH OTHER."**

**NEW ECONOMY COALITION**

# EVERYDAY ORGANISING

## ONLINE SOCIALS

It's **important to offer social opportunities** when campaigning – they're important for an open group supporting new people to get involved, as well as **building trust and relationships** within your campaign. It's worth thinking about creative ways to have socials online.

This might mean a relaxed conversation on digital platforms such as Zoom, with (optional) ice-breaker games. Other typical suggestions might be an online film night, a quiz (ideally with an interesting theme) or a digital talent show. At People & Planet, we have even organised campaign-themed digital escape rooms – email us if you're interested in finding out more.

## TOOLS FOR ORGANISING

**Messaging tools:** Facebook; WhatsApp; Signal

**Work management systems:** Slack; Trello; Discord; Loomio; Zulip

**Information management:** Google Drive, Airtable, Basecamp

**Video conferencing:** Skype; Jitsi; Zoom; Teams

## RESOURCES

**Blueprint for Change Apps & Platforms Guide**

**Labour Party Digital Organising Guide**

**People & Planet Petition Tool**

# TAKING ACTION ONLINE

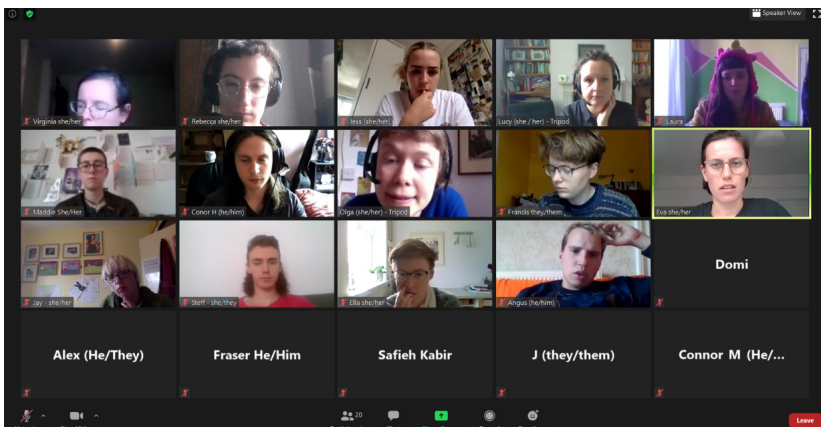
This section explores the 'How To' of 'Online Actions'. You will find some case studies of actions that have successfully worked in the digital world, and how you might adapt them to the university setting. We have also highlighted the top three learnings we have arrived at through our research and organising experiences online so far. Finally, we have included some resources to support your digital organising.

**Transformative action is still possible in a digital context.** In many ways, this has made the often exclusionary world of direct action accessible to a wider audience, creating space for previously marginalised folk to engage with our movements.

## EDUCATE

As ever, creating spaces to share knowledge is key to our campaigns. We must ensure we can communicate to others why our demands are important and why they should get involved.

Organising events like this in the virtual world can be easier - no need to book a venue, stick up posters around campus or pay for travel. You can just set up a Zoom meeting - or whatever your preferred platform is - and share it around on social media with a sign-up link (we find Eventbrite a useful tool for this).





# TAKING ACTION ONLINE

## CASE STUDY: #DIVESTPRIDE

Our Divest Pride campaign was all about reclaiming Pride as the site of protest and celebration that it is meant to be. Launched during lockdown, this campaign has used pure online tactics and has succeeded in reaching thousands of people. This has included online workshops on pink-washing and rainbow capitalism, an online panel event culminating in a party with performers at Alternative Pride, and two videos. Be they DIY or professional, videos can be a supremely useful way to educate people on your campaign as well as constituting an easily shareable piece of content to get people inspired and involved.

For example, our Divest Pride video simultaneously shared campaign demands, encouraged viewers to sign our petition and had a call to action for a future video piece on visions of Pride.

These aspects are all adaptable to a university setting and there are various downloadable video editing softwares you could use to experiment with creating engaging video content, as well as Canva online.

Queer Liberation,  
the Climate  
& Disco

 BARCLAYS

3rd July 8pm

**&** Panel  
& Performances

#DivestPride

 **people & planet**  
student action on world poverty and the environment

 AM-POP inc













# TAKING ACTION ONLINE

## CREATE

### COLLECTIVISING THE INDIVIDUAL

Whether your group decides to organise online or in-person, there are some digital actions that can be helpful to collectivise small acts - which after all is what a movement is made up of!



### CASE STUDY 1: DIGITAL ART BUILD

Digital art builds involve disparate folk each contributing an artwork that will form part of a bigger piece. Our Barclays digital art build consisted of individuals each taking responsibility for a different letter of "Barclays funds the climate crisis". This art build was used to challenge Barclays' funding of fossil fuels during their virtual AGM, making use of a tweet-storm. The concept of a digital art build allows distanced people to create a collective creative action together by contributing their individual part to the whole. Couple this with a strong social media game and you can reach nearly 18,000 people - like the Barclays digital art build did!

This could be adapted to the university context by using the same concept and making the letters spell out whatever your campaign message is! You could even do a call out to other campaign groups for specific letters so that you can keep contributing to the building of a social justice movement at your university.

# TAKING ACTION ONLINE

## CASE STUDY 2: DETENTION RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

During lockdown there was a push for detained people - anyone held in cages such as prisons and/or detention centres - to be released so that they could be safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants made eye-catching posters and banners, and hung them out of/stuck them on their windows/garden gates etc. Photos of these creations were then posted on social media with the hashtags #LeaveNoOneBehind and #PapersForAll. This action ended up taking place across lockdown but began with a call to action specific to one weekend.

This is easily adaptable to the university context, as individuals could undertake similar action, mobilising around the same campaign message - such as demanding a Fossil Free University - and amplifying it out through social media. This kind of action may also prompt further action outside of your campaign group and get new people involved - BONUS! And if you would like any support with planning a coordinated decentralised banner drop / social media action like this, then please get in touch and we can have a phone or Zoom call!



# TAKING ACTION ONLINE

## AGITATE

### DIGITAL DIRECT ACTION

'Direct action' is about directly intervening against unjust disparities of power. For example, blockading a road that is used by a bus carrying people from detention centres to a deportation charter flight airport. Whilst some forms of action are not replicable there are still ways to transfer meaningful disruption to the digital realm.

### CASE STUDY 1: VIRTUAL SIT-INS

This involves disrupting the use of certain spaces and tools in the online world. For example, in 2015 in response to the government intention to create a single internet gateway, Thai activists - in their tens of thousands - visited several major government websites and continually refreshed the page. This led to such an overwhelming amount of traffic that the websites were forced to go offline.

Whilst this type of action wouldn't work in the university setting due to the numbers that would be required, the transferable tactic would be: a number of individuals simultaneously undertaking a simple action. For example, 'Zoombombing' (or whatever platform your university uses) could be utilised to disrupt everything from Open Days to Graduation Ceremonies. Your campaign group might use this space to challenge or shame the university on its links with the fossil fuel and/or border industry. This might be achieved through various means:

**Verbal** - unmuting your microphone speaking your message out loud

**Written** - using the chat box

**Visual** - pasting images or links to images and a campaign website or petition into the chat box, or holding an image up with your camera on.

You might also decide to change your screen name to a campaign message once you have entered the meeting.

# TAKING ACTION ONLINE



## CASE STUDY 2: HOAXING

This involves creating content that appears to be from a certain source, but is actually from you, carrying your campaign message. For example, in 2019, a bunch of journalist-activists distributed a fake Washington Post with the front page headline 'Unpresidented', detailing Trump's resignation. This had the desired impact of bolstering the grassroots push for Trump's impeachment, and allowed the creators to shine a light on Trump as a result of the system rather than a rogue election result.

To adapt this to a university setting, your campaign group could use your student newspaper to communicate a fabricated story that the Vice-Chancellor has agreed to whatever your campaign demands are. For example, if the Vice-Chancellor had agreed to fossil fuel divestment you could go with something like 'Unfossilised'. Your student newspaper might be up for supporting this, or you might have to be a bit creative with programs like Canva which is available for free online.

# TAKING ACTION ONLINE

## CASE STUDY 3: JAM THE PHONES

Although not strictly virtual, a phone jam can be a way to disrupt everyday business as usual. By pulling together a core group of people - and perhaps doing a call out for additional participants - each armed with a script, a telephone number (or multiple depending on your target!) and a phone you can cause disruption effectively at a distance. "Hello [insert name of decision-maker], are you aware of the ways that you are complicit in the Hostile Environment? Because I'm about to talk you through them all..." And when you don't get through be sure to leave a voicemail!



**PHONEJAMMING!**

**ALL DAY FRIDAY 30 JUNE**

Spam the crap out of A&P in protest of their complicity in human rights abuses and tell them to stop working on the  Bibby Stockholm Prison Ship

*A&P phone number - 14101326212100*

*Go to Option 5*

**There's a mass demo too!**

**Next Slide ->**



# TAKING ACTION ONLINE

## KEY LEARNINGS

From our experience and research, three key themes came through around action online:

# 1

### CHOOSE THE RIGHT TYPE OF ACTION

In terms of your aim, as well as within your wider campaign strategy. For example, if your aim was to “educate stakeholders about the links between the fossil fuel industry and the university sector”, you’d choose a panel discussion on an online platform rather than a digital art build to be shared on social media.

# 2

### BE CREATIVE

This is key to a successful digital action. With the overwhelming amount of content there is on the internet already, and multiple campaigns online, you’ll be competing for reach alongside a bunch of others. Make any works you do or actions you undertake as creative as you can, so it’s more likely to be shared and reach a wider group of people. If you want to get some inspiration, reasearch what other groups have been up to!

# 3

### ACCEPT THAT NOT EVERYTHING IS REPLICABLE

Actions that involve using the body as a way to blockade or occupy space are not available in a digital context - unless you’ve got access to software that allows you to virtually occupy! - and whilst the online world affords us space for creative improvisation and opportunities, they are easier to remove us from with the click of a button. This is why it is important that your strategy involves a diversity of online tactics, so that you’re prepared for that when it happens. **Be sure to also celebrate that some actions work better virtually and challenge us to be more creative!**

# TAKING ACTION ONLINE

## FIND OUT MORE

This action guide only outlines a couple of the ways that people have taken digital action during this time. To see and learn more about other forms of resistance that have taken / are taking place please check out the following resources:

### RESOURCES

Phil Wilmot - 'Digital direct action seizes power on the internet without waiting for permission'

Commons Librarian - 'Tactics in a time of physical distancing: Examples from around the world'

Rae Abileah and Nadine Bloch - 'HOLY SH\*T! 7 things to do instead of hoarding toilet paper'

Digital art-build how-to guide

People, Not Polluters Digital rally reflections

People & Planet petition tool

**"WE DO NOT GET TO CHOOSE THE HISTORIC MOMENTS WE ARE BORN INTO, BUT WE DO GET TO CHOOSE HOW WE RESPOND, AND AS WE RECOVER, AND PUT OUR WORLD BACK TOGETHER, WE HAVE A CHANCE TO PUT IT BACK TOGETHER DIFFERENTLY AND BETTER."**

**RAE ABILEAH AND NADINE BLOCH**



# DIGITAL SECURITY

Digital security is complicated, and scary. Especially if you know very little about technology, it can be overwhelming. And with all the information available online, it can be difficult to decide what it is useful for your personal case.

We are by no means expert on this, but what we wanted to collect here are a few tips on how to make your online organising at university a little more secure. It's a very brief introduction – if you want to find out more, we have included some links to resources we have found useful at the bottom of this section.

Finally, remember that, unfortunately, whatever you might do, you're never 100% secure while being online – so don't go down a rabbit hole with it!

## GEARING SECURITY TO YOUR NEEDS

Using a baseline of digital security is good, but as with all other tools in organising, **it's good to adjust the levels to your and your group's specific needs**. Organising a panel discussion on your university's investments is different from drafting a super-secret press release for an occupation of your VC's office, and so the online tools you will use can be different.

As with all other aspects of organising, **keep in mind accessibility**: are your security requirements preventing new people from joining your group? If so, are they really necessary, and are they doing the right job for you? The more

complicated it is for new people to organise with you, the less likely they are to stick around: don't overdo it!

Finally, remember you can use a variety of different online tools, depending on what you are organising for. **Have a healthy distrust of big corporations**: it's true, they do collect your data, and use it in very unethical ways, but their services can be useful too. Again, unless you're planning to break into the White House, it's fine to use a Google Doc to co-write a press release!

**Make sure the tools you use work for you, and not the opposite!**

# DIGITAL SECURITY

## DIGITAL SECURITY AT UNIVERSITY

Universities can be very cheeky, and with a few clicks can gain access to all the activity you've had through your university account. They are not to be trusted; it has happened before that information gained through access to a student email was used against them during a disciplinary hearing.

We would therefore advise you not to use your university account for your

organising. That means your email, but not just that. Be mindful of what documents you save on the university drive or using a university computer.

And be careful about your online activity through a university computer or through the university Wi-Fi! It might not be the best idea to google search "how to run a university occupation" while using a campus computer. Do it from home instead!



## A FEW MISCELLANEOUS TIPS

We could have gone much longer with this guide, but we decided to share a few last tips for organising that might be useful to you.

Social media is a great tool for campaigning, and this is not a discouragement from using it. However, whilst obvious, it's good to remember

that nothing published there is safe and secret. So use it wisely! And make sure that, if you use it as a way of communicating amongst members and supporters, you also have alternative ways of getting in touch and getting involved – not everyone is on social media.

# DIGITAL SECURITY

There is also a lot that can be said about having safe(r) communications. We just wanted to briefly touch upon messaging. Unless you want to chat about what you had for breakfast, it's good practice not to use text messaging or Facebook messenger. They are really insecure. WhatsApp is a little better, although still owned by Facebook – which you should, healthily, distrust. The safest platform out there is currently Signal. It's a free app you can download from your app store. It's easy to use – give it a go!

A final word on general password security – it's one of the easiest ways of keeping your personal information secure! Don't share passwords between accounts – that means, use a different one for Facebook, email and Twitter. Make sure that, for shared accounts, passwords are stored in a safe way – not in a google doc or a Facebook group! Finally, a simple way of creating a safe password is by putting together four unrelated words, such as "climbing.anarchy.violet.misty". Easy to remember, hard for computers to figure out! Read more about this in [this guide \(cldc.org/passwords\)](https://cldc.org/passwords).

## BIG BROTHER

These considerations obviously only scrape the surface of what you can do to protect yourself from systems of surveillance that go beyond universities. Guides have been written about that by people much more competent than us,

and here are a few that we found very useful and quite accessible. Have a browse through them, and don't hesitate to get in touch if you want to further discuss any of this!

### RESOURCES

[A DIY Guide to Feminist Cybersecurity by Hackblossom](#)

[The Surveillance Self-Defence website](#)

[This Seeds for Change computer security postcard](#)

[The Digital Security section of the Civil Liberties Defense Center](#)

# ACCESSIBILITY

As with “in real life” organising, you should strive to embed accessibility as a key principle within your online organising. We’ve noted a few ways you might choose to do this, but it’s by no means an exhaustive list!

## OPPRESSION IS COMPOUNDED BY TECHNOLOGY

Principle 9 of the **Leading Groups Online Guide** tells us that marginalised groups and those with oppressed identities often tend to participate less frequently in online spaces. This can become compounded by technology in three ways:

# 1

**Oppression hammers people’s confidence. As a result, folks’ confidence in navigating a novel online space may be challenging. The risk of shaming and exposing ignorance may be much higher.**

# 2

**People with less resources have less access to high end tech and a dedicated space to work from. Instead of working in front of a large computer with a headset, they might be perched outside on their phone as traffic and neighbours pass by.**

# 3

**People in money-poor areas have largely been abandoned by internet providers. That means people may have inferior or no internet access at all. Without high-end high-speed internet, people’s connection may be spotty at best.**

# ACCESSIBILITY

None of these issues can be fully alleviated without a change in systems bigger than us. So if you're annoyed about it, do join social justice movements for change.

To be fair, tech also can be an equalizer. Online training can be more accessible — like for people who are home-bound, people with partial hearing loss, or people in small towns where national organizations rarely go.

As a facilitator, you have the power to make this situation worse or better.



Hence, you shouldn't assume that everyone in your organising group has access to a laptop and stable internet connection, it's important to check in with each other and be realistic about how this might limit your campaigning activity. If somebody does not have access to the internet then you should choose a platform that enables people to dial in from a phone or landline (see the Big Hack article below for more information on this).

You may want to fundraise some money as a group to spend on equipment for your members. See our Movement Building Guide for fundraising tips or get in touch with us at People & Planet if this is something you would like help with.

# ACCESSIBILITY

## IMPORTANT

There has been very legitimate criticism from disabled students about the lack of online provision before the pandemic (when it was predominantly disabled folk accessing content that way) and during the pandemic (when abled folk also started to access content this way). For years disabled students have been fighting for lecture notes to be shared online, for lectures to be recorded, and for the option to join lectures via video, amongst other things. The response has often been that this would take too much time or extra work, or cost money.

However, when the pandemic began these changes happened automatically because it was non-disabled students that were affected. It's important to be humble and if a disabled student asks why events were not done in this way before the pandemic, you should not get defensive.

Accessibility for disabled folk benefits EVERYONE - please always ensure to make accommodations when you are asked, and if possible before you are asked!

Equality



Accommodation



Accessibility



# ACCESSIBILITY

## A FEW MORE THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

**This article** compares a lot of different video conferencing platforms on their accessibility for disabled folk, it would be a good starting point for identifying a suitable platform for your group meetings and events.

Once you've settled on the platform you'll be using for the meeting/event/action, it's important to recognise that access needs aren't universal, so be open to exploring different tools and technology to make sure that your attendees have no problem attending the event. Make sure you give people a way of contacting you to inform you of any additional needs or concerns you may not have considered!

Consider offering to do a practice call if someone expresses nerves about using a new platform; this could be a member of your organising group or a complete stranger wishing to attend your event.

You could also develop a "tip sheet" and send it round to participants before the event containing useful information such as how to find the chat box, how to mute/unmute the microphone and switch between different cameras. According to Noor Pervez, the community engagement coordinator at Autistic Self Advocacy Network, the most important thing for access is to be patient and not rush attendees. This counts for "in real life" as well!

Rooted In Rights have put together a **really detailed list** of what you can do before, during and after your virtual event to make it accessible to the disabled community, we highly recommend giving it a read!

Finally, have a look at this **Introduction to Web Accessibility!**

**"MY DISABILITY EXISTS NOT BECAUSE I USE A WHEELCHAIR, BUT BECAUSE THE BROADER ENVIRONMENT ISN'T ACCESSIBLE"**

**STELLA YOUNG**

# THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to read this **Introduction to Digital Organising**. We hope it will be useful in planning and running your campaigns on campus. If you're not yet organising, check out People & Planet's current student campaigns: **Fossil Free**, **Fossil Free Careers** and **Divest Borders**. If there isn't already a group on your campus, we'll help you to set one up!

## **Remember you can always contact People & Planet:**

- For assistance with all the different areas covered in this guide
- For support planning any aspect of your campaign
- To let us know what you're up to so we can share it with the movement

## **CONTACT PEOPLE & PLANET**

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## **SUPPORT OUR WORK**

If you'd like to support us to continue providing resources, training and guidance to student activists organising for climate and migrant justice, please do visit [peopleandplanet.org/donate](http://peopleandplanet.org/donate)

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