

# SPEAKER DISRUPTION

## HOW-TO GUIDE

Speaker disruptions are a great way to take action ourselves and show fossil fuel recruiters that they have no place on our campuses. Here are some tips for successfully planning and taking part in a speaker disruption...



### STEP 1: MAKE A PLAN

You will often find the date, time and location of events on your university's website. Once you have the details of the event, it's time to start planning your action.

- **Think about how you will get into the event.** Can you just arrive or will you need to book a ticket

to get in? Do you need to be a member of a specific department or society to get a ticket? Will some students be able to get in more easily depending on who the event is aimed at (i.e. postgrads or undergrads)? Remember that ticketed events which require you to sign up in advance also run the risk of you being identified by security - make sure that everyone who's taking part is happy to take this risk!

- **Make a plan for how you will disrupt the event.** Ideas include getting to the front/on stage with a banner or starting a chant from the audience and raising placards. If getting into the event itself is too difficult (e.g. the event is only open to students from a specific course or tickets are expensive) you might want to plan to protest outside of the event such as making noise over the event when speakers get up to talk.
- **Involve the group.** If you're planning on making a banner in advance, this could be a great social event for your group. Getting everyone together to paint a banner can also be a really good way to get new people involved. You might want to make several smaller banners instead of one big one, to make it easier to get them into the event unnoticed. Remember to agree on who is responsible for bringing the banner to the action!
- **Messaging** - why are you targeting this particular company's stall / this careers fair? Come up with a few sentences that speak to why you're protesting a particular company or the lack of an ethical careers policy - this will form the baseline of your disruption and social media and press outputs as well.
- **Roles** - To make sure that the work to plan the action is shared out, we recommend starting by splitting into roles, so that different people take responsibility for different sections.
  - You can have more than one person per role! Some key roles/teams are: Welfare, Logistics, Outreach + Recruitment, Art + Materials, Press, Photographer, Social Media. And of course, people need to volunteer to take part in the action!
  - Make sure that everyone in your group knows what their role is and feels comfortable and supported with how they're participating in the action. Roles like handing out leaflets, press and group photographer are very important but don't require being one of the people physically disrupting the event.
- **Recruit** - Make sure you have enough people for your action to be a success. This could include reaching out to friends or other societies. Actions are a great time to build up links with other groups, and to get people involved in your campaign. Remember that the more publicly you

recruit people to help with your action, the more risk there is of the university expecting your action and potentially having more security in place.

- **Press** - You should be putting out a press release, or at least a public statement, for every action that you do. It's one of the key ways to make sure your action is impactful. It's always best to have this drafted before the day of your action so that it's ready to be sent out straight away. Newspapers will want to publish a story as close to the event as possible before it becomes old news. Remember to also make a list of journalists to email your press release to. This could be local newspapers, student press or online blogs.
- **Social media** - You'll also want to draft your social media posts in advance, so that they will be ready to post straight away once you've taken photos of your action on the day. Remember to tag your university and careers service so they know the action has happened. You can also reach out to other groups on campus and ask them to share. It's also important to consider security when posting photos of actions on social media, such as covering or blurring faces so people taking action can't be easily identified.
- **Follow up emails** - Before your action, make sure to draft an email to your University management and careers service, reaching out to discuss your demands. You can then send this as soon as you've done your action and build up the pressure for them to commit to an Ethical Careers Policy.
- **Photos/videos** - Assign someone to take photos during the action. This is a really essential role, and doesn't need a fancy camera. A phone camera works well! This is perfect for someone who doesn't want to or isn't able to physically take part in the disruption. Videos are also a great option and often work really well for speaker disruptions, especially if your group will be making speeches or doing chants as part of the disruption. Remember that when posting photos or videos online, you may want to obscure people's faces so they face less risk of being identified.
- **Welfare** - Actions can be draining and intense! Make a plan of how you're going to look out for each other both during and after your action. A great way of doing this is by having a buddy system where everyone is paired with a buddy who they stay with throughout the action. Make sure that you know where your buddy is at all times and if there is any particular support your buddy might need when taking part in the action. It's also important to schedule a debrief for after your action has taken place. This is both a space for people to discuss how the action went as well as a space for people to share how they are feeling and check in with each other.

- **Know your rights** – Before any action it's super important to make sure that you know your rights and are aware of any risks you might be taking. Remember that different people may face different levels of risk and this may impact how they choose to take part in an action. Take some time to check out these resources for more information:

- [Rights when protesting at universities in the UK](#)
- [Green and Black Cross legal advice for protests](#)
- [Legal advice for protesting in Scotland \(SCALP\)](#)

## STEP 3: TAKE ACTION

Meet up at your agreed meeting point and go into the event in pairs.

- If you're bringing a banner, think about how you will carry this into the event without it being taken away by security. There may be bag checks at the doors, so wrapping your banner around your body and under a jacket is a good option. You might also want to bring a spare banner just in case.
- Your action will be most effective if you are able to disrupt the speaker straight away. Do you have a signal for when you will start the disruption?
- How are you going to disrupt the event? You could start chanting as a group when the speaker gets up to talk or you might want to stand up to disrupt one by one to create a longer action and make speeches. If you decide to disrupt one person at a time, make sure you have a running order and a short plan for what each person will say. If you don't want to make a whole speech, you can just have one or two sentences or chants off the top of your head to use during the disruption.
- Think about how you will photograph or film the action. Having multiple people taking photos/videos from different angles will give you a better chance of capturing the event. If you are filming the disruption, then make sure the person filming is sat close enough to make sure that the disruption is heard on camera. Remember that although being a photographer is a great role for someone who doesn't want to be physically disrupting the event, taking photos and videos can never be risk free and that the person taking the photos/videos may still be asked to leave or physically removed by security.
- Anticipate security presence – There is often a security presence at University events, so think about how you will prepare for this. Make sure you are all agreed on what to do if security tries to

stop your action or tries to get you to leave. When going into an event in pairs, you can encourage the first pair to report back on what security was like via a Signal chat.

## STEP 4: FOLLOW UP

However your action went down, you can turn it into a moment of pressure. Whether the oil company pulled out or you pulled off a successful blockade, you can make the most of even the smallest action by getting the word out and making sure your action doesn't go unnoticed.

### Checklist for after your action:

- ☐ Send out press release
- ☐ Publish social media posts (remember to add any photos)
- ☐ Reach out to other groups to share your action on social media
- ☐ Email University management and the Careers Service to explain that actions will continue to escalate (and invite them to negotiate your demands if that is part of your current strategy).
- ☐ Send any open letters to management or petitions you've been working on

## STEP 5: DEBRIEF

After any action, it's important to have a debrief. This is a space to check in on how everyone is feeling and also reflect on how your action went.

Things to discuss in your debrief could include:

- How is everyone feeling now? Is there anything in particular that people need from this space?
- How do people feel that the action went on the day?
- What are some successes to celebrate?
- Was there anything that didn't go to plan? Was there a way that this could have been made better or could have been anticipated in advance?
- What are the key learnings from this action that you will take forward when planning actions in the future?

## RESOURCES

Here are some links to more resources to help you when planning an action!

You can also drop us an email at [fossilfreecareers@peopleandplanet.org](mailto:fossilfreecareers@peopleandplanet.org) to book a workshop or some training on direct action or action planning.

**[Guide to Action Planning from Seeds for Change](#)**

**[Direct Action Handbook](#)**