

Canvassing (Door-to-Door)

[Running the Campaign](#)

During a campaign, whether it is an election campaign or a campaign within a district or town, media advertising or poster and leaflet distribution are no substitute for direct contact. Door-to-door is one of the most important forms of direct marketing (other forms include organising meetings and debates). It is one of the most time-consuming ways of conducting a campaign, but it is also one of the most effective. If we come to somebody's home, there is a much greater chance that he or she will remember us (compared to, say, reading our leaflet or an article about us in the local press).

Door-to-door campaigns are always worth doing even if we are inexperienced. It may be that someone is more willing to vote for a slightly lost-looking young person who knocks on their door and presents his or her programme than for a completely anonymous individual displayed on a leaflet left in their postbox. Remember that people/voters appreciate effort.

Visual impressions are most important when it comes to direct contact. That is why, when conducting a door-to-door campaign, the focus should be not only on the **verbal message** but also on **non-verbal signals**: appearance, gestures, facial expression, breathing, attitude, tone of voice, etc. In direct contact, our credibility depends on whether our verbal and non-verbal signals are consistent. If they are not, the recipient will rely on visual signals, assigning them greater importance (she will trust what she sees, not what she hears).

Where is it best to conduct door-to-door campaigns?

Door-to-door campaigns are best done in apartment blocks or areas with terraced housing. In areas of low-density housing, with free-standing gated homes, going from one door to the next will be very time-consuming.

One important piece of practical advice: start at the top and proceed to the bottom (buildings, roads).

How many people should do door-to-door campaigns?

Door-to-door campaigns can be done individually, but experience shows that two-person teams are best, i.e. the [candidate](#) and an assistant, which can be useful if the conversation becomes prolonged (and the situation requires speaking with other voters).

How should conversations be conducted?

Before the door is opened, it is a good idea to take a step backwards so that the household member does not think we are trying to enter their home. Your opening statement can be constructed in the following way:

- who you are
- why you are canvassing votes / what the purpose of your campaign is
- how things are (bad)
- how things should be (good)
- how this will be achieved

Thus constructed, the statement should communicate that:

- we are aware of the issue that is of importance to the recipient
- we are a person/organisation that understands the issue
- we have the necessary competence to resolve the issue
- we are sending a message with a specific intention, e.g. asking the recipient to vote for us.

What should you do if the person who opens the door is clearly busy/ irritated, etc.?

The problems associated with direct contact include recipients' reactions that interfere with our message and recipients' subjective feelings that are at odds with our intentions, for instance: the person is tired, has had an argument with a family member, is busy looking after their child, or we have interrupted their favourite television programme, etc. In such cases, we should be sensitive to the given situation. We could, for instance, say the following: I see you're busy, don't worry, I understand, I also have a small child. Here's my leaflet, please have a look at it when you have a moment, I'm canvassing votes; or: I'll be coming past your house again. Would you mind if I came back in half an hour?

Remember: don't focus on, or take to heart, the reactions of people who open their door to you. What is important is to present your proposal briefly and effectively, to win support, and to hand over a leaflet.

What should we do if the person we are talking to engages us in a long conversation?

When conducting a door-to-door campaign, we should expect to devote approximately 3 minutes to each person. If we exceed this limit, we should say: I would very much like to speak with you further but I have to visit 30 other people today. Please call us or send an e-mail to our office. All our contact details are in the leaflet.

However, we must not avoid answering the most important questions, e.g.: what's your view about the incineration plant (our response should not be: we discuss this in the leaflet, please read it). We should briefly present our opinion and, for example, invite them to visit the website.

When should we ask for someone to vote for us?

We should ask at the end of the conversation and do so openly. For instance, we could say: Please vote for us in the coming elections.

Should we offer small gifts or gadgets bearing the party logo, and if so, when?

All gifts should be offered at the end of the conversation. It is also important to hand over the leaflet together with the gift or gadget – the person may read it later or show it to other people.