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# The Ultimate Door Knocking Guide

## Be Prepared!

A good walk, pleasant conversation -what's not to like! Here's a checklist for a successful doorknock.

## Comfort

- Dress for comfort. Dress appropriately for the weather. If your feet are happy, you are happy: get inserts or orthotics. Sunglasses! And dress up a little; that old stained T-shirt festooned the bumper stickers and buttons you love so much? No. Take that off. Wash it. Then burn it. Please.
- Find a door knocking buddy who will go with you as campaign season progresses.
- Bring your fully charged phone or ask a staffer for one.
- Bring water and a snack. Note: these are often in plentiful supply at campaign HQ.
- Park near your door knock route and move the car from time to time to be close to it.
- Know that door knocking is a protected form of free speech –one solicitors do not have. You are not violating the law even if there is a no solicitation sign, however you should be sensitive to voter's wishes.

## Materials

- Walk Sheet -a list of voter names and addresses and a map.
- Note party/candidate/issue and other answers and data on the walk sheet.
- FYI, you may not call on every house because strong Republicans, perhaps strong Dems and others may have been eliminated from your list. Your walk sheet will show the target voters in a household, sometimes identified by age, gender and party leanings (or “no data”). Of course people move and there's bad data from time to time, so note any necessary corrections.
- A pen, for checking off boxes and writing short notes -things like “moved”, “scary dog!” or “brews anthrax in garage”.
- Voter Registration cards -don't leave home without 'em!
- Candidate/issue literature.
- Phone, so you can stay in touch with fellow walkers and the office.
- Smart phone -you *may* be able to get your walk sheet on an app where you can enter data directly into the database. Ask a staffer.

## Voter Courtesy

Enough about you; what about the voters? Do not take a voter's lawn signs, pick their flowers, pet their dog or hand them their newspaper. Picking up a bit of trash is nice as long as you don't hand it to them!

- Do not argue; if you feel the urge, leave. Remember, this is their home.
- Walk on walkways and driveways not on lawns or through gardens.
- **Do not put literature in mail boxes –it's illegal.** Wedge it in the door or other noticeable place where it won't end up flying around the neighborhood.
- Do not surprise people. Make noise as you approach.
- Do not go around the back of the house or peer in windows.
- Stay out of secure buildings. Do not get one tenant to open the door and then call on everyone in the building. Door knocks on these building need to be arranged by the campaign.
- People get nervous if you talk to their kids beyond asking for mom and dad.

## Safety

Nothing is more important than safety. Incidents are exceedingly rare -let's keep it that way!

- Trust your instincts over politeness or social convention. Leave an area if you feel unsafe. Don't go into voter's homes.
- Take your cell phone or ask for one (burners are standard campaign gear).
- Share you phone number with HQ and the people you are door knocking with.
- If you are very uncomfortable going alone, ask for a partner. If campaign staff insists you go alone, refuse and lodge a complaint with the campaign manager.
- Drive the route before you begin.
- When carpooling or splitting up, agree on meeting places and times.
- Know where you are going. Most campaigns provide maps.
- Ask to contact voters in your own neighborhood. You not only know the area better, you will be better received when you identify as a "neighbor".
- With the staff, agree on a time to return to the office. If you will be out for a while, check in with your partner and/or the campaign to let them know where you are.
- Bring a flashlight -in northern states it gets dark before you'll be done.
- Dress to be seen.
- If the dog looks scary, move on.
- If the *voter* looks scary, run!

## Now Go Get 'em Tiger!

OK, you are primed, pumped and ready for this and you're maybe a little nervous. That's normal. Here are some hints on getting the conversation started:

- Consult your walk sheet *before* you get to the door. Look for any information that may be helpful. Party ID is likely already noted as well as gender and age. Two or more voters separated by a dashed line means they live in the same household and you can ask for them too. Note if any kids have moved or are off to college.
- Remember that you will need to contact many people. Have a feel for the time and avoid twenty minute conversations -especially with people who are already on our side.
- Avoid yes/no questions. You want a *conversation* during the persuasion phase or information during the identification phase. Especially avoid asking if you can have a few moments of their time; it *is* polite, but you've just given the nervous voter an easy way out of the conversation.
- Introduce yourself and why you are there. If you have any connection to the area mention it up front. "Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm a volunteer and I *live here* (in our neighborhood, down the street, here on the West side)." People are more comfortable talking to -and less likely to hassle- someone who lives nearby and who they might run into at the grocery store.
- It is OK to make a little sincere small talk "I like your garden, or "nice doggie" but keep it short.
- Again, if you are contacting voters in your neighborhood, by all means identify yourself as a **"neighbor"**!