Doorknocking

Door Listening

Why Door-to-door Listening?

You may want to consider approaching members of your local community to invite them to take part in Actions or Community Assemblies. The process of knocking on people's doors and simply listening to what they have to say is both humbling and empowering, and if done with care and consideration, it can foster strong links across a local area, helping to initiate a local movement and/or help an existing one gain momentum.

What Do I Need to Consider?

Throughout the door-to-door listening process it is important to remember that you are approaching people's homes/businesses/places of worship and that people may not be able to talk or may not want to. If someone does not feel like they have time to engage with you, then listen to them and respect their wishes – their home is their private space, and they are entitled to feel safe and free from hassle.

It is also important to try to avoid making assumptions: avoid judging someone on their race, gender, religion or age, and/or what their house looks like or the area in which they live. Everyone is different, knock on someone's door with an open mind and with a willingness to connect and learn.

With door-to-door listening it is vital not to have an agenda, do not knock on the door with content that you want to peddle through as this will prevent you from being able to actively listen. Listen, genuinely listen, and let the person whose home you have knocked on guide the interaction. Do not try to equate their experiences with yours or interrupt with questions. Questions you might have will be related to your perspective and they will work to interrupt someone's flow or make the conversation change direction.

Step by Step Guide

1. Knock on the door. Take a step back once you have knocked so that people can open the door without feeling like their space is being invaded.

2. If a child answers the door, do not introduce yourself, ask to speak with an adult.

3. Introduce yourself slowly and clearly, making eye contact and avoiding making fast movements. Think about your body language – having your arms by your side and visible will make people feel more relaxed than if you have your arms crossed or your hands in your pockets. The aim is to make people feel at ease.

4. Explain who you are, why you are there and that you are representing either your Local XR group or your Community Group – it is important to be transparent.
   A good introduction would be “Hello, my name is _____. I am here on behalf of _____ and I am knocking on doors to better understand the issues that matter to people and their families in the local area.”

5. It is important to give people the option of whether or not to engage, so follow this short introduction with a question, such as “do you have some time to talk to me about the issues that matter to you?” If people do not want to engage, move on. This is their home and you are a visitor.

6. If people want to engage with you, then actively listen to what they have to say, keeping in mind your body language throughout the process. Let them guide the interaction. Do not interrupt, argue with them or outline your opinions. If you need to take notes, then explain why you would like to and check that this is ok with those you are listening to. Ideally, however, do so after the process as this will ensure you are fully present when you are listening.

7. Be engaged. You may wish to highlight that you have heard what they have said by nodding along or making small sounds of agreement.

8. If someone asks you questions, engage with them, but try to ensure that you avoid stressing your opinions if it may make people feel uncomfortable about expressing theirs. If a natural point arrives at which you can ask a question, prioritise asking probing questions that seek to understand their perspective better. Do not ask prying questions about personal information – people are entitled to privacy and such questions can alienate.

9. Thank the person for their time and for sharing their views and feelings.

10. If you feel there has been positive engagement and a genuine connection, then before you depart you may wish to give the person more information about your Local Group or any local events happening. However, if there is no right time to do so, then leave this step out.
    Be prepared with leaflets and sign up sheets if they are interested but don’t push it upon them.

11. Follow-up your door knockings - if you’ve forged a relationship with someone, you should be the one to follow it up. Keep track of where you’ve had meaningful interactions.

Top Tips:

- Arrive open and ready to actively listen.
- Speak only to adults.
- Speak slowly and clearly, maintaining eye contact.
- Be transparent: introduce yourself, who you are representing and why you are there.
- Give people the choice about whether or not to engage.
- Listen to them, avoid equating their views/experiences with yours.
- Ask probing questions, not prying questions, if an opportunity arises – do not interrupt their flow.
- Speak 80% less than you think you should.
- Work in pairs, it's more fun, and feels more secure, especially for less experienced rebels.
- Ask what is worrying them and listen: a lot of people are not looking for solutions, they want you to hear them. If you can listen, people are more likely to meet with you again.
- Thank people for their time.

How to use Door Listening as a Local Group:

- Find some seasoned campaigners or community organisers within your group, they will have some experience of door knocking and are a good way to seed a team.
- Map out areas to canvas, don't just target streets you think may have higher levels of interest - try roads that don't necessarily reflect a stereotypical demographic. Keep track of responses.
- Split into pairs and pick the streets you will go along. Knock on doors solo though (except maybe your first couple!) as two people at the door can feel overpowering
- Stand well back from the door- lots of people aren't keen on cold callers so have a well-practised, friendly, opening line.
- Debrief after the door knocking session - what went well, what not so well - and collectively work out solutions for the next time.
- Feedback to your Local Group - try to encourage more to give it a go. Sometimes, outreach is a personal challenge and Principle 2 ('We set our mission on what is necessary') is a poignant reminder that sometimes we have to nudge ourselves out of our comfort zone in order to mobilise that crucial 3.5% of the population.

GOOD LUCK!

Try virtual door knocking

- Your goal is the same as before - to listen, have meaningful conversations and learn what is important to them.
- If you know your neighbours, they'll be easy to find on social media.
- If you don't know them, use https://nextdoor.co.uk/ - this website lets you register yourself In your local area and shows you posts from people in your area, without having to add them as a friend. It's simple:

a. Log in, find 'Directories' on the left-hand side of the screen.
b. Click 'Neighbours'.
c. Click 'Message' to contact individual people with your invite!