

How To Table

About this resource

This resource is intended to provide a quick list of tips and a checklist for doing effective tabling, a very common and crucial tactic for recruitment.

This resource was made by Alyssa Lee <alyssa@betterfutureproject.org> at Better Future Project/Divest Ed, with some language taken from The Student PIRGs Activist Toolkit. It was last updated on [2017-09-28](#).

What is Tabling?

Tabling refers to recruiting in any situation where people pass by or congregate. Tabling can have multiple purposes:

- ❖ Recruit new members
- ❖ Build visibility
- ❖ Gather signatures
- ❖ Distribute literature/information

The benefits to tabling are that it offers a forum for one-on-one recruitment while still being visible. It is also an easy way to engage and train your current members on communicating about your group/issue.

Tips

CHOOSING A LOCATION/TIME:

- Pick high-traffic walking areas, such as a dining hall, student union, or plaza. It can be indoors or outdoors.
- If you need to reserve a table in advance, try to do it as soon as possible as you want to be able to choose days that aren't too crowded.
- If you can, try to table in a variety of places and times to get a good mix of people.

SCHEDULING:

- In advance, send out a shift schedule of 1-hour rotations. If possible, try to ensure that one shift doesn't have all new members. Make sure the schedule includes phone #s so people can be contacted. A sample shift schedule is below.
- Remember to make shifts for set-up and clean-up and that those people have access to the storage spaces.
- Make sure that at least 2 people are tabling at any shift, 3 ideally. Have them practice talking to passersby. Encourage them to make a plan for who will say what when someone approaches.

Shift (> 2 people per shift)	Tabler	Phone #	Start Time	End Time	Any questions/ needs?

SETTING UP:

- Have your tablers wear your group's t-shirts or a similar color scheme. You can also do matching hats/sunglasses/ necklaces/bandanas as an easy way to look uniform.
- Make sure your table looks attractive, professional, and full (but not messy). Going vertical helps a lot - don't just have paper lying flat on the table but have things propped up. This is where signs, banners, and boxes help!
- It is generally better to have people sign up using a computer as it saves time on data input and reduces the chance of transcribing errors.

TABLING:

- In advance, do a short training on how to table, even if people think they know how. It takes practice to be willing to be outgoing and table effectively. If you can't do a training in advance, it's also good to just train someone new by "learning by doing."
 - 1) Have them watch you table for a couple people.
 - 2) Alternate.
 - 3) Provide feedback.
- Use the table as a base, not a wall to hide behind. It's not enough to just sit there smiling. You often have to say hello to people, have questions to hook people, and have a couple scripted talking points that you practice with tabling partners. Encourage tablers to float out into traffic and go up to people.
- Consider providing your tablers with a short printout of talking points for people! (See below for a sample tabling "rap")
- Encourage people in shifts to provide lots of feedback to each other!
- Make your table fun and high-energy!

FOLLOW-UP:

- **Regardless of if your sign-up sheet is digital or on paper, make sure there are 1-2 people assigned to input those contacts into your listserv/database by the next day and then follow up with them. This is critical! You want to follow up with people who signed up **within a couple days**, saying thank you for signing up and reminding them of the next upcoming meeting/event. Don't forget to do this!**

Materials

- Printed **sign-up sheet** OR laptop to sign up
 - Should include the following columns: NAME, EMAIL, PHONE, GRADUATION YEAR, INTERESTED IN JOINING?
 - Instead of the last one, you could also say "What are you interested in?"
 - You could also have a column for if people will attend an upcoming event - that way you can phone bank/email them.
- **Clipboards** (at least 2)
- **Pens**
- **Notepads**
- **Binder clips** of varying sizes (very helpful for holding up banners/posters)

- **Small heavy items** (important if tabling outside - the wind is not your friend)
- **Post-it notes**
- **Markers**
- **Fliers**
 - *SHOULD INCLUDE:*
 - the name of your organization;
 - 2-3 sentences about what you are doing/mission statement;
 - your meeting time + location;
 - contact info (website, Facebook, email, etc.)
 - maybe a short list of things people can do to support, such as:
 - 1. *Sign our petition asking the university to divest!* (Make a tinyurl link)
 - 2. *Join a working group!*
 - 3. *Attend our socials on the last Sunday of each month!*
 - 4. *Ask a professor if you can do a class rap about us!*
- **Fliers for any upcoming events**
- **Posters/signs**
 - Should be brightly colored, written in large print, and only contain 10 words max. Visual is the key!
- **Cardstock or signboards** to make signs
- **Other visuals**
 - It can be worthwhile to print some photos from past actions (it's fairly cheap at CVS) and put it on a signboard.
 - You can easily make a spinner like [this](#) to use around an activity.
 - Look up tabling activities and try to be creative for how you can engage people! You can do photo petitions, post-it note walls, games,
- Your group's **t-shirts** (even if you're not selling them, it's good and eye catching to have one out draped over the table or pinned up on a corkboard)
- Your group's **business cards**
 - If you don't have business cards for your group but want a way to easily provide contact info, you can get a custom-made stamp off of VistaPrint for only about \$9-11 that has your name, email, and website. This way, you can make homemade business cards or just stamp pieces of paper.
- **Tablecloth** (I find that having a tablecloth ALWAYS makes your table look better and cleaner)
- **Banner** (You can paint a banner using a bedsheet or get one printed at Staples for \$10)
- **Swag**, such as zines, buttons, orange squares, stickers, etc.
- **Food!!!** Candies and baked goods work best ([Here's](#) a recipe for pretzel bites that would be an easy enticing treat). Make sure to get a food permit or follow whatever protocol your school requires.
- **Plastic storage box** (recommended to store all these items - It's also good to stack signs on top of boxes. Going vertical makes a table much more visually appealing)

As you see fit:

- **Painter's tape** (to mount posters or signs)
- **Scissors**
- **Cash box + extra cash** (1s, 5s, 10s) (if you are selling t-shirts or other items)

Tabling Rap

A basic tabling rap includes:

- **Greeting** - A friendly way to connect with someone (rather than bombarding them with stats)
- **Hook** - An intro question/statement to get attention
- **Personal response** - Share a bit about yourself and how you relate to their response
- **Description of organization** - Briefly: Who you are, what is the problem, and what you're doing
- **Test interest** - A simple question to see if they're interested before making an ask
- **Make ask** - A request for a small commitment
- **Follow up** - Make sure you get their contact info or see if they need any info from you
- **Thank you!** - THANK THEM for their support, or at least for listening!

EXAMPLES:

Greeting	<p>"Hi! I'm __(name)__. Would you like to hear why I'm out here today?"</p> <p>"Hi! How is the activities fair going for you?"</p> <p>"Hi! Our group is gathering signatures today - would you like to hear about it?"</p>
Hook	<p>"Did you know that __(university)__ invests in fossil fuel companies?"</p>
Personal response	<p>"I know! I was surprised when I learned too."</p> <p>"Good question! I had that question too when I first joined as a first-year."</p> <p>"I've been working on this campaign since last spring when when I attended an a documentary screening about fossil fuels."</p>
Description of organization - Who you are - What is the problem - What you're doing	<p>"__(campaign)__ is a group of students who are trying to get the university's Board of Trustees to divest - that means take their investments out of fossil fuels."</p> <p>"We are a student group that does outreach, holds events, and also takes action to ultimately get the university to no longer invest in fossil fuels."</p> <p>"Fossil fuels are directly causing the emissions that lead to global warming, which is going to wreak havoc on all of our ecological systems. We think that it's unacceptable for universities to invest in something that is so destructive."</p>
Test interest	<p>"Are you interested in supporting what we're doing?"</p> <p>"Does this sound like something you would like to see happen?"</p> <p>"Would you like to take a small action to help us out?"</p>
Make ask	<p>"Will you sign our petition to __(university)__ urging them to divest? We already have __(#)__ signatures so far!"</p> <p>"We are also putting on a __(upcoming event/action)__ that features ____ and talks about ____ . Would you want to attend?"</p>
Follow up	<p>"Could I get your email to send you more info?"</p> <p>"Can I find you on Facebook to invite you to the event?"</p> <p>"Will you sign up for our mailing list? That's the easiest way to hear about our meetings."</p>
Thank you!	<p>"Thank you so much for your help! We really need students like you to support this."</p> <p>"It's so important to have students show their support. Thank you!"</p>

SAMPLE TABLING RAP:

“Hi! I’m Alyssa! I’m here with Fossil Free UCLA. Would you like to hear a bit about us?”

>Response<

Well, did you know that UCLA makes investments and some of those investments are in fossil fuel companies?

>Response<

I know - isn’t that wild? I joined the campaign last spring and it’s been really eye-opening. Fossil Free UCLA is a group of students who are trying to get the university’s Board of Trustees to divest - that means take their investments out of fossil fuels. What do you think about that?

>Response<

We’re doing this because investing in fossil fuel companies means directly investing in the biggest drivers of climate change, which will be responsible for millions of deaths, displacement, as well as human and ecological destruction. It’s something that really matters to me. Are you interested in supporting what we’re doing in a small way?”

>Response<

Awesome! We’re currently gathering signatures on our petition to UCLA urging them to divest. We already have ___(#)___ signatures so far! Will you sign?

>Response<

Great! Thank you so much! We are also putting on a ___(upcoming event/action)___ where we’ll _____. Would you want to attend? There will be free pizza!

>Response<

Awesome. I’ll definitely follow up with you now that I have your email and give you more details. Do you have any questions right now?

>Response<

Thank you so much for your help! We really need students like you to support this.”

NOTES:

- This sample rap is only meant to give you an idea of what to say. You should read people and try to create a dialogue about that person’s interests.
- If you read a lot of interest, see if they’re interested in having a one-to-one over coffee and/or joining your next meeting.
- Try to ask them casual questions - something that makes the conversation more personal.
- Be enthusiastic and show gratitude - you need their engagement to succeed as a group. Show them that what they did was meaningful!