

Tips on Door Knocking to Promote Campaigns

Door knocking is one of, if not the most effective way to reach voters.

Before you get started

- Decide:
 - Where are you walking?
 - What are your main talking points?
 - What does the candidate want you to communicate on their behalf?
- It's always helpful to give yourself a goal: Set a specific timeframe you plan to work with a goal number of doors you want to knock on. That makes the endeavor feel less overwhelming.
- The best times to knock are weekday evenings or on weekends. However, it's better to knock ANY day than not at all.
- Have two contacts with you while walking for questions/support: Your primary campaign contact and a second contact in the event the first contact is not available.
- Make sure to always carry business cards, postcards, and/or brochures (to hand out to those who seem interested, or to leave behind on doors that don't answer). You may want to keep yard signs in the car, just in case someone requests that you drop one off.

Door Knocking How-To

- Walk up to a door, knock, and wait 1-1.5 minutes since some people (older folks, for example) may take a little time getting to the door.
- NEVER go inside someone's house. This is not only for personal safety, but also so you don't get caught spending your entire time at one residence.
- Once the door opens, introduce yourself and ask a non-threatening open-ended question that they have to answer. For example, *"Hi, my name is Joe Smith and I'm with the Becky Johnson campaign. How are you today?"*
- How they answer your open-ended question will cue you in to how receptive they are to talk with you. Some of their responses might be:
 - *"Who is Becky Johnson?"* (The voter is open to hearing more. This is your chance to introduce the candidate and his or her stance on issues)
 - *"I'm fine, thank you."* (Because the voter provided a closed response, tread carefully. He or she is likely skeptical, and uncertain that they want to talk to you. Ask another open-ended question and see if their response provides a clearer picture of how willing they are to talk with you. For example, you could follow up with, *"I just popped into your neighborhood to find out what the main concerns are in your community relating to public policy. Would you be open to telling me the number one issue you'd like to see corrected after the next election?"*)
 - *"I'm not interested."* (The voter is not at all interested in talking to you. Simply say something that leaves them with a positive impression. If the person is kind and not

immediately shutting the door, you might try, *“I totally understand, may I leave this brochure with you so you can learn a little bit more about our campaign?”* If they are clearly uncomfortable with you being there, an *“I totally understand, and I appreciate your time. I hope you have a great day”* is probably the better way to go).

- While you want to have a few talking points about a candidate’s stance on key issues, you do NOT want a perfectly crafted script when you knock on doors. This comes across as robotic and impersonal. It is essential to be natural and conversational when talking with a voter. Remember: each voter has different issues important to them, find out what those are and make your conversation reflect that.
- Use active listening: When a voter speaks, paraphrase back what they said so they know you are listening. *“It sounds like you’re saying that...”*
- While you’re talking, pay attention to the voter’s body language. Do they seem relaxed and completely at ease in talking with you, or do they seem impatient or agitated? Respond accordingly. Don’t over-stay your welcome.
- If you’ve been talking with someone for a couple minutes, and it becomes clear they are wanting to get out of the conversation, bow out nicely with, *“Hey, I really appreciate you spending time with me today. I know you probably have something else planned, and I have a few more doors to knock on too. May I leave our campaign brochure with you?”*
- Door conversations should never take more than 3-5 minutes. If it’s clear that someone isn’t at all willing to consider your candidate, be nice and move on. This is short; use it only on those you think have the potential to be swayed.
- If you encounter someone who won’t stop talking, you need to get out of the conversation. You can do this by letting them know why you need to leave: *“Hey, I’ve really enjoyed having this conversation with you, but I’ve got about 35 more doors to knock on and I only have about an hour and a half left so I’ve got to hustle. Would you mind if we continue our conversation at a later date? If you give me your phone number, I’ll be sure to follow up with you.”*

Door Knocking Tips and Trouble Shooting

- If a voter begins asking for more in-depth information on a candidate’s stance on issues, do not answer on the candidate’s behalf. It is better to have this information come directly from the candidate. A good response would be, *“That’s a great question! If I can have your phone number/email, I will make sure to have the candidate follow up with you so he/she can give you more in-depth information about his/her plan relating to this issue.”*
- If you tell someone that you will follow-up with them (for whatever reason), DO IT. It is so important to fulfill any promise you make to voters when you are talking with them.
- If possible, take notes about the people you talk to after you leave their home (especially what issues they discussed). This way, you or the candidate can send a personalized note that mentions a specific issue that particular voter seemed to be concerned about most.
- When you’re having a positive interaction with a voter, ask if they use the Next Door app. If they do, ask them if they’d mind putting the word out that you’re walking around the neighborhood.

This not only lets people know you are not a threat (casing the neighborhood), but also you might find some people more receptive to talking with you since their neighbor did so.

- When there is a “no soliciting” sign on a door, do not skip it. Instead:
 - Knock and take a step back.
 - When the door opens say, “Hey, I saw your sign and I’m not here to sell anything. I just wanted to stop really fast while I was in the neighborhood. We’re talking to conservative voters in the area, and I wanted to make sure I hand you this and give a little bit of information about Candidate X.”
 - Present a rushed demeanor, like you are not intending to take any of their time and are in a rush yourself.
 - This body language acknowledges that you know they don’t want you there, and you are trying to honor this request.
- When no one answers the door, leave behind some type of material:
 - A “handwritten” sticky note (these can be ordered from printers) that you attach to a brochure that says, “Sorry I missed you! I stopped by to talk about Candidate X’s campaign.”
 - This handwritten note gives it a personal touch, letting them know that a real person was behind it.
 - You might include your name and contact on the sticky note to encourage them to reach out to let you know what issues matter to them most.
- Knocking on doors alone will allow you to reach more homes in a shorter amount of time.
- Knocking with a partner provides support and may encourage people to volunteer to door knock; just know it may take longer than doing it alone.
- A “happy medium” would be to have a pair of door knockers drive to a destination together, but walk separate blocks in the area individually while keeping in touch via text or a group app.

Additional Resources

- “Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout,” is a book by Donald Green and Alan Gerber that is considered an exceptional all-around resource for campaigns. It does not appear to be at area libraries (GRPL or KDL), but you can find it on Amazon.
- “Campaign Sidekick” is a phone app designed to help organize, communicate with, and keep track of activities by volunteers. Available on both Apple and Android devices. Read more about it at campaignsidekick.vote
- Notes from this tip sheet are from the podcast, “My Campaign Coach, Episode 54: 19 Canvassing Tips to Win Your Campaign”