

## Activity: Canvassing the Community



**Suggested Levels:** D B J C S A

**Objective:** Use flyers and other media to connect directly with potential supporters.

**Leader Prep:** Before starting this activity, create flyers and an elevator pitch to focus the identified issue into a few important points.

**Supplies:**

- Flyers and/or postcards
- Elevator pitch
- Map of community
- Pencils
- Clipboards
- Water, snacks
- Volunteer adults
- Permission slips

**Ways to Include Supporters:**

- Ask background checked adult volunteers to accompany girls as they canvass
- Ask a local printer to donate copies of your flyer or postcards
- Ask supporters to join you so you can cover more ground

1. Canvassing is the act of connecting directly with people by visiting them at their home and distributing information about your cause while sharing key information in order to gain support. Canvassing is often done by supporters of political candidates or grassroots activists just like you.
2. Before you get started, research other advocate or political groups in your community. What are some of their suggestions for successful canvassing? What do they recommend you not do in order to gain positive support?
3. Canvassing can take a long time because you'll be on foot for the majority of the experience and neighborhoods can be quite large. Be thoughtful in which communities you'd like to connect with – are you looking for families, the elderly, teens? Look to your city website or other areas online that can help you determine where your supporters might be. For instance, if your issue concerns students getting adequate school supplies, you may want to connect with families with kids in school. If your issue is about pets, you may want to reach out to pet owners only, so try canvassing near a dog park or veterinary clinic.
4. Once you've determined where your potential supporters may live, you'll need to split your region into smaller pieces so that canvassers don't feel overwhelmed or overworked by the number of houses that must be reached. Consider how long it takes you to walk about one mile. Use that time to think about how far you could go in about two hours. This is a good model for the amount of ground that can be covered in a canvassing shift. Break up your map so that each section can be covered by one canvassing group in about two hours.
5. Gather all of your volunteer canvassers together to train each other on delivering your elevator pitch, talking about important details for your cause, speaking to strangers, shaking hands confidently, and being thankful and thoughtful. These may be skills you've picked up by selling cookies or participating in other activities in Girl Scouting.
6. Provide each canvassing group with an appropriate number of adult chaperones, lots of flyers, postcards, and any other giveaway items to help people remember your cause, and some snacks and water. Make sure one or two people stay at "home base" and can be contacted in case of an emergency. Everyone canvassing and everyone at home-base should have access to a cell phone and know the phone numbers of other canvassers and people in charge. Be safe!
7. When canvassing, be respectful of the time you're asking a stranger to give your cause just by listening to what you have to say. Be safe at all times! Never walk into someone's home or leave your canvassing group.
8. At the end of the canvassing time, regroup with the entire volunteer team at your home base. Be thankful to your volunteers – they gave a lot of time and energy today!