



# Participating In Phone Canvassing

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## WHAT IS PHONE BANKING?

In a political context, phone banking is a method of outreach used by political campaigns to identify potential voters, identify supporters, raise funds, get people to attend events, and persuade them to support or oppose a candidate or a cause.

### 1 HAVE A PHONE LIST OF PEOPLE TO BE CALLED

This list should be provided for you by the ballot measure or candidate campaign you are working on or the political party you will be working with. This list should be a selective list to ensure you will be calling targeted or persuadable voters. Phone lists from county election officials are better than nothing but lists available from commercial sources tend to be more accurate and include more good numbers.

### 2 PREPARE OR ACQUIRE A PHONE BANKING SCRIPT

It is important that the campaign you are working on has a clear and simple message that can be relayed quickly to the people you call. The campaign you are working with should have a script for you that is designed to project a consistent message.

Typically, you will not want to read a script verbatim as this sounds robotic and unappealing to most call recipients. So, while not changing the message of the script, you may want to paraphrase parts of the script with your own words, contractions, and phrases so you will sound more natural on the call.

### 3 RECRUIT FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS TO HELP

If you are not comfortable with phone banking, enlist some friends or family members to help you. Doing so sometimes makes it easier to break tensions and provide mutual support for people who are not used to phone banking.

### 4 PRACTICE, PRACTICE

There really is no way to acquire real skill in phone banking other than to start doing it. Still, one can partially accomplish this by practicing. With a friend, family member, or fellow volunteer, take turns role playing with one person being the caller and another being a call recipient. Try different kinds of scenarios. It may seem weird and awkward, but it helps. Once you start making real calls, you will be amazed at how quickly you become proficient.

### 5 DON'T WASTE TIME

Once you start making calls, keep conversations brief. You are phone banking to reach as many people as possible. Avoid conversations and debates. If you want to talk more with a contact, save their information and contact them later – informing them that you will be contacting them personally and not as a campaign representative.

### 6 PREPARE YOURSELF

Make sure that you have a quiet or business environment to work in. Minimize distractions like barking dogs and children as best you can. If you are using a cordless or cellular phone, make sure it is fully charged. Have a pen ready to make notes. Have your calling list and everything else you need to use your time efficiently.

### 7 DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY

There will be people who are rude. Many will hang up on you before you finish your first sentence. You may call people who, once they realize they disagree with you ideologically, may be abusive. Some people will simply be jerks.

## **7** DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY (CONT)

Remember – these people know nothing about you or your life. You are a disembodied voice to them, not a real person with feelings. If these things happen to you, don't take it personally. Many people do lot like to get phone calls, so this will happen a lot.

But remember, you are not asking for their money or their time, other than the time they spend talking with you. You are offering them information they can use to exercise their political rights. You are doing them a favor and you will also talk to wonderful people that you have things in common with. If you can enjoy such positive experiences without taking the negative experiences personally, you can become an amazing phone banker and will have rewarding experiences.

## **8** HAVE FUN AND INTERACT WITH YOUR TEAM LATER

Canvassing can be hard work, but there is no reason it can't be fun. You will have good and bad experiences, but mostly good ones. You will meet interesting people and, maybe, some new friends or allies. At the end of the day, go out for pizza with your team. Talk about your experiences. You will learn from each other and be even more effective next time with a proven team!