

TENANT OUTREACH GUIDE



Introduction

Say who you are and why you're talking with them. Let them know that you live in the building or that you work with an organization.

Hi my name is _____ and I live in apartment _____. I'm here to talk about starting a tenant association in our building.

Understand the person you're talking with

Try to find out more about the person you're talking with, their history in the building, and their concerns about their housing. You can also share your own experiences to get the conversation started, but remember to spend more time listening than talking!

- *How long have you lived here? Has there ever been a tenant association in the building before?*
- *What do you like the most about the neighborhood? How do you feel about the changes in the neighborhood?*
- *Do you have any problems in your apartment? How does your landlord treat you? How have things changed in the building since you lived here?*

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Help them imagine things differently

Give people an opportunity to think about what organizing can mean for them.

- *What if we had a voice in deciding what happens to our building?*
- *How could things improve if we came together as a tenant association?*

You can also talk about examples where other tenants have organized in your neighborhood.

Ask them to attend the meeting

Ask them to take action, for example, coming to the first tenant association meeting.

- *Will you come to our first tenant association meeting on Monday at 7:00 PM?*
- *Can you help us plan the first meeting?*
- *Can I get your name and phone number so I can remind you about the meeting?*

What if people can't make it to the meeting?

It's common for people to be resistant to organizing at first. People have busy lives! Working people, especially, may have difficulty taking time away from their jobs or families to organize. You can't control whether someone is interested in joining your organizing effort, but you can try to find out more about what resistance they have to joining. Here are some examples:

If people in your building are scared to organize because they're afraid of the landlord:

For many of us, organizing is new—and it may be something outside of our comfort zone. You may be afraid to organize because you're afraid of retaliation or repercussions from your landlord. Many cities and states do protect a tenant's right to organize, and it's important for you and others in your building to know what your tenant rights are. If others in your building aren't ready to organize yet, you can start your first meeting by holding a "Know Your Rights" workshop. The workshop can be hosted by a local tenant's rights or nonprofit organization. You can also invite an attorney to your first meeting, in case people have any legal questions.

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If people in your building don't think organizing will make a difference:

It's understandable that people may be skeptical, especially if they've never been part of community organizing before. You can help people to see what is possible by sharing examples of what has happened in other organized tenant associations. You can even invite a representative from a neighboring tenant association to attend a tenant meeting and share about their victories with your group.

If people in your building are too busy to attend the meeting and it's hard for them to find time to get off of work:

If tenants in your building get off work late, consider holding the meeting at later hours or on the weekends or their day off. Remember not everyone will be able to attend every single meeting, but a representative from their household can fill them in (or they can get regular updates on the TA activities from your neighbor).

If people in your building can't come because they have to care for their kids:

See if you can find a volunteer to help with childcare during the meeting. You can also find ways to involve children in the tenant's association activities, for example, including community events that are family friendly as part of your association.



Other Outreach Tips

Don't let hearing "no" dissuade you

There are others who will join your cause (especially once they see that you're getting repairs done in your building!)

Spend most of your time listening

The best organizing conversations happen when you spend 80% of your time listening to the other person, and only 20% of your time talking.

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Bring a friend or neighbor to do outreach with you

Knocking on doors is more fun in pairs!

Use the “rule of doubles” when doing outreach

The “rule of doubles” means that you need to reach out to at least twice as many people as you would like to come to an event. If you want to have 20 people at your tenant association meeting, try to get 40 people to commit to coming.

Keep track of contact information

When you’re knocking on doors, keep a log where you collect contact information for the people living in your building and any notes so you can follow up on the conversation.

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