

The Zaynab and Lucas guide to activism and being an activist

Being an activist means you actually DO something to try to get changes to the way people think or behave or to protect something you think is important. Here is a kind of checklist to help you work out what you want to do and some ideas on how you could go about it.

Goals: Be clear about what you want to achieve

If your goal is too big or too vague or too complicated, you will find it hard to achieve. "I want to save the planet" is lovely, but it's a little bit ambitious! Look at what Greta set out to do.

She wanted to raise awareness of the climate crisis and she did that very simply at first with her solo protest and hand-painted sign. Her protest developed into an effort to get the Swedish government to prioritise action on the climate crisis. She then came to symbolise the voice of young people across the globe, expressing the anger and frustration her generation feels at the slow progress being made to tackle the issue. As a result, she got access to the most powerful politicians in the world.

So look at your situation. Ask yourself if there's anyone you know whom you need to persuade to take climate crisis seriously. That could be your first aim.

Awareness. Your next aim might be to persuade your community to take some action and then to monitor and report on results. It's good to be able to tell people how well they did.

Maybe your local council or MP don't seem to be doing anything about the crisis. You can find out how your MP votes on climate issues [here](#). Just because you are not old enough to vote does not mean you cannot write to your MP. Maybe, if your MP does not seem to be acting in the environment's best interests, you could get a petition together and get as many of your friends, family and neighbours as possible to sign it, asking the MP or the councillors to vote in favour of laws that help the planet. Keep on and on at them and ask them to come and talk to your school to explain themselves! Maybe you're lucky and have a pro-planet MP. Ask them to come and speak, too! Actual letters are better than emails. It is best if an adult also signs to say that they are a constituent of the MP (MPs need to care about their voters if they want to keep their power)



Form a group or join an existing group. There may well be a club at school already. Give yourselves a catchy name. [Twin with a climate group in another country.](#)

Make climate news a regular feature in assembly. You could be the school researcher and reporter!

Make artworks or [musical instruments out of rubbish.](#) Hold a concert and an exhibition to raise awareness. Run recycling/upcycling clubs, sharing outgrown clothes, toys, dvds etc and have a fashion show from upcycled clothing.

You could talk to your school about holding a climate emergency awareness event. Maybe your school would support a Fridays for Future demonstration.

Make some placards. You don't need anything fancy. A piece of cardboard cut from a box is enough, but make sure your writing can be read at a distance. Use a thick marker or a dark paint. Say what YOU want to say. Keep it simple.

*IT'S OUR FUTURE!
NO PLANET B
Be the solution, not the pollution
Clean up your mess!*

Rhymes work well, because people remember them. Usually, the rule of three is the best one to follow: three words:

*We need Change
Climate Justice NOW
Evidence over Ignorance*

There's just something about three words that humans really like!

If you hold an event, make sure you contact your local paper, the regional and national TV and radio stations. Take pictures and make a video, but be careful to check that all children and young people you film have given permission for their images to be used. Also be sure to demonstrate somewhere where lots of people will see you but which is also safe. Don't demonstrate on a narrow pavement near a busy road, for example. If you are outside a shop, make sure they don't mind and be sure not to block their entrance. In fact, always be careful not to block entrances or roads. Get parents' permission and tell the police.

Chances are they'll join you! Borrow a loud hailer (from school?) so you can make a speech and ask a friendly builder for a hop-up for you to stand on.

Be ready with some words in case anyone interviews you. I always think "What do I want this person to remember?" This makes me really focus on the message and not go babbling on!



Always wear a badge or a piece of clothing that shows you care about the climate. It can start a conversation and help you find people who feel the same way you do. Maybe make your own badge or make a design on a plain canvas bag or T-shirt.

If you get the chance to go on a march, here are some top tips:

Backpack! Water, comfortable shoes, sun cream, energy bars. Take some slips with you with info about your group or campaign to share with other people you meet. Make a big banner with a sheet from a charity shop and get friends to help you carry it. If you wear something funny or eye-catching, the press will be more likely to film you. Again, be ready to say something if you get asked!

Praise your friends and community if they do a good job! Write to your local newspaper and MP to tell them what you have achieved.

Create an online newsletter to keep everyone updated.

Good luck! Whatever you do, don't give up!

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Anthea Simmons has a long history of campaigning, and most recently has been a prominent figure in the pro-EU movement in the UK as one of the organisers of the grassroots group Devon for Europe. She has taken part in numerous marches; speaking to crowds and organising coaches for those travelling to them.

