

Tips on Creating Petitions

A petition is a legal document used to communicate the people's will to elected officials. Each one should contain a brief summary of your concern and space to record each person's signature, address, and date signed. You, as the carrier of the petition, will sign the bottom saying that the citizens signed the document in your presence.

Some Simple Do's and Don'ts:

DO NOT let someone take the petition out of your sight to sign it – the witness statement says “signed in my presence.”

DO NOT let a husband sign for a wife, a mother sign for a daughter and so on. Each person must sign her/his own signature.

DO NOT let people sign in pencil; use a pen, preferably in blue or black ink.

DO NOT go inside people's homes to get your petition signed. If you are going door-to-door, work in small groups during daylight and talk with people from outside their front door.

DO format your petition so the total number of signatures per page is divisible by 5 (i.e., 10, 15, or 20). This makes it easier to count later.

DO fill out ALL the information of the petition; if the person doesn't have time to write her/his ask permission to let you fill it in for them.

DO sign your name to the witness statement at the bottom legibly.

DO be neat. A clean petition will be taken more seriously than a sloppy one.

Online Petitions

In addition to paper petitions, you can also issue them online. Online petitions may not be taken as seriously as traditional ones, because they are harder to verify. But you can sometimes get more names, more easily.

Adapted (in part) from The California Center for Civic Participation and Youth Development's "Teens Taking Action: A Resource Guide for Youth Action Leagues."