



# **SKILLSHARE: How to Occupy!**

*Notes from the How to Occupy skillshare*

*This document is an (incomplete) overview of different groups' experience on how to occupy schools and universities. Feel free to use it as a helpful guide!*

**Please share any experience from occupations here and ask questions!**

→ <https://padlet.com/occupyleedsuni/6p2rg209ltppis0b>

End Fossil callout:

→ <https://endfossil.com/>

Pin your occupations in the map:

→ <https://endfossil.com/>

And remember to use **#EndFossil** with any occupation promotion!

**Thank you to everyone who contributed!**

**At the occupations we want to aim to create a joyous space that educates, empowers, and mass mobilizes**

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**Forming communities of resistance is just as important as getting demands met**

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**Important to direct pressure towards national government to smash the fossil industry, not just uni/school!**



### **National and local demands**

- Think about how to make national demands of the government with other groups in your country, define what success means, how long you are prepared to stay, and whether you want to do multiple occupations in succession/aim to spark more occupations all over your school/uni.
- Can call on scientists and academics to join and do more than just publish papers
- Can have local demands that call on governing bodies to come out in support of national demands
- Might need to talk about daily issues to involve people who aren't particularly driven by climate - student issues such as debt, racial injustice, misogyny, among others.
- Can stay fluid with demands, and plan for 2 scenarios - if you get lots of people involved in your country you can really target national demands, if not, creating a space is in itself valuable

### **Choosing location**

- How symbolic is it?
- Can people join once it's occupied?
- How many people can fit in space?
- How will you barricade doors if needed - padlocks/chairs...?
- Are there toilets? (soooo important!)
  - o Ideally, you'll have access to toilets and with enough social media attention you can kick up a fuss if they are blocked but come prepared - bucket, paper, sheet (for cover) it's got to be done!!

**Share everyone's capacities beforehand** - be realistic about how long they can commit to - make a rota if useful

### **Decision-making processes**

- Think about how you'll make decisions collectively when you have more people in the space, and how to include people who may not be staying in the space the whole time.
- Do check-ins and train people up in facilitation and consensus beforehand and during! Good facilitators are gems!

**Escalation** - create an escalation plan for before, during and after the occupation

### **Security and legal**

- *(This is loose guidance dependant on where you're occupying, and how harsh you expect the response to be)*
- Don't bring ID
- Use code names
- Use encrypted messaging apps and documents
- Blur faces in photos (wear covid masks and hats if this feels right)



- Designate people to liaise with security/police
- Write next of kin contact details of people on paper if anything happens during occupation and burn after (depends on the level of risk at your uni though – if you've got lots of people joining in it will be harder to control, but institution won't want to take action against a large number of people hehe)
- It might be useful to speak to a protest solicitor beforehand and have them on call
- Hand out bustcards before and during
- Do 'Know Your Rights' trainings before and during

### **Food**

- Think about how you'll get food in before (consider trolley and boxes if hard to carry)
- Water!! Bring enough for a few days if you're not sure about access to running water
- Can reach out to community groups to see if they'll provide food
- Prep food, freeze, and thaw
- Bring kettles (for hot drinks and food) and toasters
- Suggestion: 'just add hot water' food like super noodles
- Don't forget fruit and veg (you'll get sick of just eating biscuits!)
- Food that won't go off quickly

### **Starting the occupation**

- Book a space to hold a talk, at the end announce you are now occupying the space!
- Hide in a building to open it up from the inside during the night, padlock doors if needed
- Occupying more secure buildings/floors/rooms with key fob access - Leeds scouted out the building at 8am to see how regularly people entered and left from the management floor, so on the day we knew to expect cleaners and therefore simply caught the door from them to get in.

### **Social media, spokespeople, and messaging**

- Settle on your media lines beforehand to have clear messaging that emphasises demands
- Think about who's up for speaking to media (including whether you want to use an alias)
- Socials - make it fun! Especially with tiktok and insta for students, aim to reach an audience who aren't currently active
- Make it fun!!

### **Wellbeing**

- Look out for each other, especially newer people, those who are less vocal within the group and people from marginalised communities
- Think about community guidelines beforehand
- Do check-ins
- Rest!
- Separate space and respect people's need to sleep and work



### **Lisbon occupations are:**

- Working with feminist groups at uni who are angry about professor's treatment of women to occupy law school
- Building good campaign before and make people angry
- Doing film screenings of Brazilian occupations
- Postering in different faculties to link why they're occupying to that department - health, engineering etc.
- Holding assemblies to plan and mobilise
- Did a build up action pushing fire alarms
- Demands:
  - 1) the government declares that it will end all fossil fuels in the country by 2030 and;
  - 2) the Minister of Economy, António Costa e Silva (ex-CEO of oil company Partex), quits.

### **PREVIOUS OCCUPATIONS LEARNINGS!**

#### **Divest McGill, Québec, Canada**

- March 2022: Occupation of arts building on unceded Kanien'kehá:ka territory for 12 days and then 2.5 days
- Demanding reparations and divestment due to McGill's colonial and slavetrader roots, aiming for complete and transparent divestment from fossil fuels and education/mobilization of the community to support justice-oriented climate action:
- Made declarations instead of demands this time: Decolonize, Democratize, Divest as board of governors have ties to fossil fuels and have refused to accept demands despite endorsement from senate and student bodies in the past.
- Consulted indigenous communities beforehand to ensure that they supported the action on stolen land + invited them into the space to share their grievances with the university and beyond.
- Invited other groups to join, Palestine action, queer groups, assemblies weekly in evenings, over 100 ppl attended talk on participation and democratisation
- Result: declarations were powerful in creating conversation but there was no response from the board of governors
- Next time: aim to have more specific demand based on desired outcome

#### **Takeaways**

- ➔ **Acknowledge and address** the power dynamics and history of the people and area you are occupying to create a more just movement
- ➔ **Identify what success means** in terms of occupy until you win, as occupations can be exhausting



- **Security culture** – use encrypted messaging apps, documents and blur faces in photos (wear covid masks and beanies if this feels right), designate people to liaise with security, use code names, write next of kin contact details of people on paper and burn
- **Accessibility** – have different roles people can take on if they can't stay the night eg: with food logistics
- **Capacities/red lines** – check in with people on how far they're willing to go – some people were happy to be arrested but not expelled, some people might want to leave before there's any chance of police arriving (eg: international students)
- **Funds** – honorariums for speakers who came into the space and to replace things that may get broken, applied for bursaries from student associations
- **Legal** – ensure people know their rights and potentially speak to a lawyer beforehand/have them on call for advice during
- **Delegate** – committees for supplies, activities (reading circles, talks, movie nights and use them to bring others into the space), wellbeing, food (reach out to community groups who may be willing to support, arts, comms).
- **Long-term onboarding** – think beforehand how to minimise the divide between organisers and new people, have people ready to talk to new people in the space
- **Separate the occupied space** for different things – eg: quiet/work space
- **Care** for each others very important – do check ins and look out for people who are less likely to speak up
- **Accountability systems** – define group boundaries/ community guidelines especially if you have lots of people entering and leaving
- Ensure you plan a schedule that's sustainable – **rest!**

### Letzte Generation, Hamburg and Leipzig, Germany

- Internal aim to educate, radicalise and mobilise
- External message to media: Doing occupation for uni official board to release official statement against drilling in north sea
- Different for Hamburg: communicated that unis and schools can be considered as pillars of support (big power within countries and the world), if you have social movements, you need that pillar of support among others
- Outreach to people to join letzte generation
- 7 people in Leipzig, planned in 8 days
  - Some people will be there but won't plan and the opposite
  - Goal 15-20 willing to sleep and willing to be dragged out by police
  - Talk in biggest lecture theatres by a letzte gen about climate change and the uni
  - After the speech, walked onto stage, spoke about statement and said they won't leave lecture theatre until it happens
  - Brought all food with them
  - Prepared if they turned off electricity
  - Toilet paper, buckets if they blocked access
  - Prepared programme - talks, discussion circles, Q&A about shutting down pipelines
  - Talked to people as much as possible - included them by having arts materials - go to other lectures and disrupt them and join us in lecture hall



- Different talks with the board
- After negotiations, a tiny win, not a full statement but convinced to take demands and bring them to the biggest board meeting, it was shut down, one of board members made speech about climate change and
- Framed as a win
- Hamburg
  - Climbed up front of uni and spray painted: 'this uni doesn't acknowledge climate change'
  - Aimed to create image of police dragging students out of uni
  - Learned that in Germany you have to pressure unis to call police on you, they know it's bad press, you're not disrupting them enough
  - Must be seen on campus lecture hall not visible, so had info point tent in central area of uni, directed people to occupation

### **FFF Venezia, Italy**

- Different experience of occupations, not only educational institution
- One time they occupied main hall of principal building for waste management – against building of new incinerator
- Italian schools movement has a lot of power – very important to build community as well as meet demands
- More recently: 2 students died from work and education overload, 2000 people died in Italy. So protests all over Italy, especially Turin and Rome
- Have been working to build connections between this movement and the climate movement
- Venetian occupations spoke about climate, besides other student issues
- Weekly student assembly discussing different issues and actions
- They have decided to occupy main hall of school
- Link with local everyday issues of students and pupils
- Created different groups within occupations – ex: food, communication, etc

### **Leeds, UK**

- ➔ @occupyleedsuni (see instagram and twitter)
- ➔ <https://www.instagram.com/occupyleedsuni/?hl=en>
- ➔ <https://twitter.com/OccupyLeedsUni>



## **More useful resources on occupying:**

Practical tips on occupying by organizers of secondary school occupations in Italy:

→ [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mol6K836U8tmw78wH-rB5XhV04txvskBuC\\_8vVA4abM/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mol6K836U8tmw78wH-rB5XhV04txvskBuC_8vVA4abM/edit?usp=sharing)

Learnings from occupation of Granada university in Spain [español]:

→ <https://www.15-15-15.org/webzine/2022/05/14/la-pequena-toma-de-granada-receta-para-ocupar-tu-universidad-mas-cercana/>

Scientist Rebellion guide on how to occupy:

→ <https://scientistrebellion.com/sr-strikes-occupations/>