

# Dance Flash Mob

## Step-by-Step How-To Kit

### Adapted slightly from:

US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation

<http://www.endtheoccupation.org/article.php?id=2893>

*Why not use a flash mob to promote your campaign in a way that's **effective, empowering, engaging, and fun?***

### STEPS

#### 1. **Form a Flash Mob Working Group**

*Assign clear working group roles (for writing lyrics, choreography, scouting location, back-up planning, planning distribution, etc.)*

#### 2. **Basics**

- a. Set a **date, time, and location**. Things to consider: When can the most participants be present? When is the store or staging area most busy with people? What time will draw out media?
- b. Build a **time-line** leading up to your action, incorporating all the sections below.
- c. Don't necessarily send out the date and location of the flash mob far ahead of time, lest management be waiting for you. You might want it to be a surprise!
- d. Start **recruiting** participants and filmers (see recruitment section below)
- e. Start forming a **distribution strategy** for getting the word out
- f. Don't forget the big picture! Clarify the bigger questions:
  - i. What are your **goals**?
  - ii. Who is your **audience**, both in the public venue and for the video? Who are people who will be affected by your Flash Mob (ie. workers, shoppers, etc.) and how will they be affected? How will you interact with them?

#### 3. **Recruiting**

- a. Flash mobs can be a great **group-building and coalition-building tool!**

- i. It can bring in **young people** looking for a new kind of activism integrating pop culture and social media.
  - ii. Talk to **allies in other social justice struggles**. This is something quick and fun that allies can join without investing a lot of time.
    - b. Some activists may be scared off from flash mobs because they think they can't sing or dance. Remember that in a song-and-dance flash mob, **enthusiasm** is just as important as a good singing voice or dance moves!
    - c. One great benefit of a flash mob is that it's something everyone can participate in! **There are many roles besides performing**, even if it's just supporting the performers or passing out fliers. All are needed!
4. **Scope out Location**
- a. **Envision** what you'll do where...
  - b. Will it be inside or outside?
  - c. Where will the **filmmakers** be to have a good angle?
  - d. Is there enough room for everyone? If you're a big group, you might measure **how much space** you're working with to recreate during practices.
  - e. If needed, create a **map** of the space itself and/or how to get there.
5. **Optional: Music**
- a. **Pick a song**—something trendy or classic perhaps?
  - b. [Creative Commons](#) has a wide selection of songs that are free for anyone to use. This would safeguard your video from being deleted on grounds of copyright infringement .
  - c. Consider writing **new lyrics** (the simpler the better).
  - d. Consider **shortening the song**; you want it to be a “flash” mob, i.e. pretty quick!
  - e. Will you bring in instruments, do it a cappella, or carry speakers to project? If singing with music, make sure the latter doesn't overpower people's voices.
  - f. **Practice singing slowly**—people tend to speed up when they're nervous.
  - g. Do you want a **skit** at the beginning ?
  - h. Or a **speaker** at the end?
6. **Optional: Choreography, Costumes, or Props**

- a. If doing dance moves, **make steps simple** and easy to remember. When everyone dances together, even something simple looks great (and better than something complicated but less in sync).
- b. People **joining in a bit at a time** can look nice.
- c. **Costumes:** Some groups go all out. Some order matching shirts or shirt-decal to visually unify the group and reiterate the message.
- d. **Props:** One flash mob integrated props that were in the store.
- e. **Simple is also good.** You will also look less conspicuous without a costume, adding to the surprise factor when you start.
- f. When developing actions, writing lyrics, and choreographing dance moves, we should always be thinking of those most closely affected by this conflict. The playfulness can be very fun for participants but we should be conscious about how it plays for people most adversely affected by injustice. You can always adopt graver lyrics and tone if that feels more right to you.

#### 7. **Optional: Fliers or Signs**

- a. People often have trouble understanding lyrics, even when they are sung well, so it's nice to have a **flier that explains what you are doing and why.**
- b. One or two people holding **very clear signs** can help clue people in to the fact that this is not just a fun thing to watch and film but has a purpose. And it looks good on the film.
- c. If you choose to pass out fliers on private property, be careful of legal issues.

#### 8. **Planning for the Worst**

- a. You may be made to leave the area by security or the police.  
**Have a plan.**
  - i. How will you react? How will you end it or move out so it looks organized?
  - ii. If it's an indoor action, you can continue it outdoors and do it on the street outside, which also looks good on film.
  - iii. You may want to scaffold the flash mob and have two distinct groups: One starts and when removed another group of bystanders starts.
- b. **Arrests** are rare but not unheard of. Here are some ways to mitigate your risk:

- i. If two flash-mobs are done consecutively, don't do them in the same police district.
    - ii. If you drove there, don't congregate in the parking lot afterwards where you're a clear target. You might want to park spread out.
    - iii. Know your rights.
  - c. Have a **buddy system** to make sure everyone gets out alright.
- 9. **Jobs Besides Performers**
  - a. **Filmer(s)**: This is arguably the most important job (see "Filming" section below).
  - b. **De-escalator(s)**: This is also one of the most important jobs. There should be a couple people observing what is going on and prepared to de-escalate possible conflicts with customers, employees, security, etc. This should be someone who can stay calm and gently take aside anyone trying to interrupt. They should be *especially* conscious of addressing anyone getting in the way of the camera. Some groups—but not all—have their de-escalator(s) wear business clothes!
  - c. If you're worried about possible arrest, you could have a **police liaison or legal observer**.
  - d. **Musicians** or Boom-Box Holder(s)
  - e. **Camera Guard**: This person can be near the primary filmer to make sure people don't stand in front of the camera, etc.
  - f. **Flier-Distributors**
  - g. **Sign- or Prop-Holders**
  - h. **Enthusiasts** in the crowd to clap, support, engage with strangers, etc. These people can blend with the audience and in effect, be the audience. A few can stay afterward and get post-performance crowd reactions.
  - i. **Film Editor**
  - j. **Film Distributors** (Everyone should do this to some extent.)
- 10. **Rehearsals**
  - a. **Practice, Practice, Practice!** The Flash Mob Working Group should teach participants ahead of time—It's lots of fun and a great bonding experience!
  - b. Pizza party the night before the action, including a **dance party/practice?**
- 11. **The Day of the Flash Mob**

*Meet an hour or so before the flash mob performance for a dress rehearsal as close as possible to the real thing.*

- a. **Film the last rehearsal(s)**
- b. Meeting right before also provides a **good timing mechanism** (to get everyone to the location on time).
- c. Solidify roles and provide **last-minute polishing up** of moves/lyrics.
- d. Remind people again not to rush through.
- e. If it's a big group, will you all **arrive simultaneously or staggered** to the location? Take into account if there are people with conspicuous stuff (signs, large instruments, etc).
- f. How will you know when everyone is in place and ready—especially the filmers? Make sure there is a **clear cue** or time that that flash mob will actually begin (cue, synchronized watches, song intro, skit lead-in, etc).
- g. Does everyone know where the **cameras** will be?
- h. In case of disruption, does everyone know the **agreed-upon exit strategy**?
- i. Do you know if, where, and when you're **meeting up afterward**?

12. **Filming**

*Your largest audience is not those who witness the mob; rather, it's all the people who will see it online afterward. What will look best for the video should be a primary consideration in planning.*

- a. Make sure there's a **good place for the primary filmer** to stand, with a good angle.
- b. Having **multiple filmers from different angles** is best. If someone gets shut down you need to have backups, especially if the action has complex viewing angles.
- c. If you're worried about getting shut down, **try not to be conspicuous** setting up the camera.
- d. **Flip cameras** are small, easy to use, and quick at uploading videos to YouTube.
- e. Make sure to **tape the reactions of bystanders** (and authorities?). The idea of the flash mob is that you're doing something unexpected and creative in a public place, so it's important to see how people respond.
- f. If it's an inside action, consider having **someone outside** filming people stream out.

- g. If you were rushed/cramped doing the main action, consider doing it again in an open/safe space afterward for a clearer video. **Filming then or during rehearsal** is a great way to get clear sound and allow you to set up shots.
- h. **Consider interviewing participants** about why they're doing the flash mob.
- i. **Consider interviewing bystanders** afterwards.

13. **Optional: Meeting Up after the Flash Mob**

- a. **Reflect** on what did and didn't go well.
- b. Make sure you have **contact info** for all the participants.
- c. Make sure there's a clear **distribution strategy** once the video is released.
- d. Since you want it to go viral, stress the importance of one final version, in which the messaging has been okayed by everyone. Early posts of individuals' unedited footage will likely decrease distribution of the final product.

14. **The Video**

- a. **Make the video as soon as possible** after the flash mob.
- b. Keep the video to **2-4 minutes** if possible.
- c. If there were lyrics, **subtitles** are strongly recommended.
- d. Consider text or images at the beginning to **orient people** (Possibilities: What are you boycotting? Why? Where did the action happen? When? Who? Etc.)
- e. **Include an action that viewers can take**, or a web site they can visit for more information
- f. **Upload the file** to YouTube or another video-sharing site.
- g. **Recommended:** Wherever you promote your video, direct people to watch it embedded in a page on your own web site, so that if the video host (e.g. YouTube) censors the video, then you can put up a new one or a issue an announcement that people will easily find on that same page.
- h. **Keep an extra copy** in case it's taken it down.

15. **Distribute like mad!**

*Prepare your distribution plan and lists beforehand.*

- a. Send **press releases** to media. Have it ready beforehand. If you send it out immediately following the event, you can tell them you have raw footage they could run so they don't have to wait for the whole edited piece.

- b. Post widely on **Facebook** and ask others to do the same; it can spread like wildfire.
- c. **Twitter** (Don't forget to use hashtag #bds)
- d. "**Like**" and **comment** on the video on YouTube and Facebook, which increases traffic. That includes on friends' Facebook pages.
- e. Send it local, national, and international **allies/leaders** on this and other issues, especially people connected with larger networks and communities.
- f. Send it out on sympathetic **email lists**, asking people to forward
- g. Write related **articles** for online publications
- h. For all the above, you can organize a gathering right after the video is released during which people sit together with their laptops and post the links on Twitter, Facebook, forums, listservs, websites, etc. Make a fun evening of it. The Bathrobes Brigades in the Netherlands organizes regular **internet activism evenings**.

**One final note:** There are lots of other kinds of actions. In this how-to kit, we focused on song-and-dance BDS flash mobs, but don't forget it's just one tool in the tool-box! Here are some others types of actions and flash mobs: Freeze-Mobs, "Follow the Leader," Die-Ins, etc.

### **GOOD LUCK!**

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