



THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO TABLING

In 1961, British lawyer Peter Benenson launched a worldwide "Appeal for Amnesty" on behalf of individuals imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their beliefs. Today, Amnesty International has grown into a global movement of more than 3 million supporters, activists and volunteers, united by the *commitment to freedom and human rights for all*. Amnesty International USA is the largest country section of the organization with nearly 250,000 members who work for human rights independently, through national online networks, or with high school, college or community chapters.

But how did we get this big? We are a movement of people, and growing our membership, activist, and volunteer base is key to the success of our organization. One of most critical tactics for activists to help build our movement is to get the word out about who we are and what we do. This is where tabling comes in.

Tabling is an important and essential tool for recruiting new members, gathering signatures and building support for your groups' work. It is one of the simplest and most effective ways to increase the visibility of Amnesty International in your community or at your school. This guide walks you through key areas needed for successful tabling, including preparation, presentation and follow up.

1. PREPARATION

This section helps prepare you for the day of tabling. It is important to adequately prepare your volunteers, choose the right actions

VOLUNTEERS

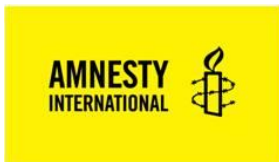
Anyone can table, and it's no necessary for tablers to be the group leader or coordinator. Volunteers must simply be able to engage comfortably with members of your school or community, allowing for positive and effective interaction leading toward involvement and taking action. Successful volunteers must be familiar with a couple of key areas:

THE ISSUES... Volunteer should be able to speak about each of the actions or issues you will present while tabling. They should know enough background on the issue to be able to speak about why it is important, as well as what the "ask" is – what do you want someone to do? If asked a question beyond their knowledge, the volunteer should feel comfortable referring them to the Amnesty International website for more information or agree to get the answer and follow up with them at a later time. The website is www.amnesty.org.

THE HISTORY... Volunteers should feel comfortable speaking about Amnesty International as an organization. They don't have to be experts, but should at least know a couple simple facts. Amnesty International:

- ... was started by British lawyer Peter Benenson in 1961
- ... has more than 3 million supporters and volunteers in more than 150 countries around the world
- ...was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977
- ...operates independent of any government or corporate interest
- ...works based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Information about Amnesty International can be found online and in print. Contact your Regional Office if you need information on our history or areas of work.



ORGANIZING TOOLBOX

YOUR GROUP... It is important that volunteers are able to give basic information about your Amnesty group including when it was started, how many members you have, when and how often you meet, what types of action you take, and how they can get more involved.

CHOOSING ACTIONS

Actions are the things you want people to do for human rights issues when they visit your table and may take the form of a petition, postcard, photo action, phone call, or other act. There are three important things to remember when choosing actions:

- Actions should be **relevant** to current Amnesty campaigns and issues and not be out of date. Your Regional Office can help you identify the best actions, or clarify if actions are still being used.
- Actions should be **appropriate** for the audience and community in which you are tabling. For example, if you are a Pride parade, an LGBT rights petition makes more sense than a maternal mortality postcard.
- Actions should be easy and **quick** for passersby. Petitions or postcard actions will generally yield more success than a hand-written letter because few people have time to spend at the table beyond 3-5 minutes.

It is also important for you to limit the number of actions at your table. It is better to have 2-3 key areas on similar areas of work than 5+ actions on a number of different issues.

SIGN-UP SHEET

A very basic, important, and often overlooked aspect of tabling is your groups' sign-up sheet. Many people who stop at your table will want to find out more about your group and you don't want to miss the opportunity to capture their contact information.

Sign-up sheets can be paper or electronic. If using paper sign-up sheets, attach them to a clipboard to keep them organized and professional. The sheet should be oriented horizontally in landscape format with your group name and the current Amnesty International logo (not the circle, which has been officially "retired") clearly visible at the top. Format the sheet with horizontal and vertical lines establishing definite columns and rows clearly indicating where to fill in information.

Sign-up sheets should always include columns for name, phone number and e-mail address. Additional columns could be "Keep me informed about XX issue" or "I'd like to get involved locally".

A laptop or tablet computer can also be set up to gather information while tabling. A simple spreadsheet could be used or an online form, which protects information of those who sign up before others. Make sure volunteers have the password to the computer in case it gets locked out. A QR code (quick response code) can also be used to direct people to a sign-up page on their smartphones. For more info on QR codes click [here](#).

For a template sign-up sheet that you can customize for your group contact the Regional Office.

2. DAY OF TABLING

On the day of tabling, volunteers will be engaging with members of their community and using a number of supplies and materials.

TABLING KIT

A tabling kit contains all the materials and supplies volunteers will use while tabling in a compact, organized manner. The kit includes pens, markets, tape, sunscreen, and a number of other items to use as needed. See below for a picture of items your tabling kit may include.

Make sure to have at least one Amnesty International banner and consider mounting a poster to be sure that those passing by know which group you represent. Arrange your actions, sign-up sheet and other materials in an organized and concise fashion, ensuring all materials are clearly visible. Include an area where people can help themselves to general Amnesty International information, such as brochures or stickers. Don't put too much on the table, as this will overwhelm people walking by and won't encourage them to stop and talk with you.

TALKING TO THE PUBLIC

When tabling, volunteers should stand up to talk with people who are passing by. When approached, remember to say hello and ask if they have heard of Amnesty International. If they have, introduce the actions chosen for your tabling event and ask them if they would like to sign. Then, take the opportunity to share information about your group, including the types of action you take and issues you are working on. If they have not heard of Amnesty, briefly tell them about the history, mission and basic background on priority campaigns and issues. Click [here](#) to watch a video that shows an example of both good and bad tabling, and see the pictures below.

PROMOTING YOUR GROUP

Not only will tabling result in actions taken for human rights, but it's an invaluable way to promote and grow your Amnesty International group. While talking with people about Amnesty International, share with them what your group does and how they might become more involved. Be prepared to talk about ways of supporting Amnesty other than joining your group, such as becoming a member of Amnesty International or joining another group in your area. Have on hand brochures, flyers, bookmarks, or business cards that promote your group. These items should have key information about your group and a way to contact you. The Regional Office can help develop these items with you.



ORGANIZING TOOLBOX

3. FOLLOW-UP

The purpose of an AI tabling event is threefold: to educate about human rights issues, engage and mobilize on human rights issues, and recruit new members and activists. The potential value of tabling is lost without proper follow up, as outlined below.

CONTACTING NEW MEMBERS

Following the tabling event, input all contact information into your group's database or email list. Within one week, contact those who signed up to thank them for stopping by the table and initiate contact with a member of your group. Invite them to an upcoming meeting or event and address any questions they asked about while at your table. Make sure that new contacts have a way of getting in touch with the group, such as the New Member Coordinator or generic email address.

SENDING ACTIONS

A signed petition or postcard doesn't make an impact on human rights if it never reaches the intended target. Following the event, gather and sort all signed petitions, postcards, or other actions. Send them to the address listed on the action, and if no address is listed please send them to the Regional Office.

As a reminder, do not contact or distribute information of those who took action unless they also completed the sign-up sheet.

ONGOING

Periodically check Amnesty International's website, Facebook page, and newsletter for up-to-date human rights information on the issues you have taken action on. Inform your group if there have been any developments, such as the release of a Prisoner of Conscience. **Sharing successes** help people see the importance of the actions they helped with in the past.

Debrief with your group after tabling to identify best practices and things to avoid. Reflect on which actions generate the greatest response and help volunteers find answers to questions they were unable to answer while tabling.

Be aware of active periods for Amnesty International priority campaigns (i.e. Torture Awareness Month in June and the Security with Human Rights campaign) and **plan** tabling opportunities accordingly.

CREATIVE TABLING

Once you've mastered the basics of tabling, start thinking about creative ways to make your table stand out among the rest. You'll find greater success in bringing people to your table and staying involved once they go home.

DISPLAY

Assemble a display for your table that is visually appealing and interactive. A tri-fold display board can be used to add depth to the board, or consider a theme for the display that matches the issues you are working on such as a prison scene. If you are tabling at night, consider adding colored holiday lights or a spotlight to draw attention. If you have a projector, show a video or slideshow of pictures behind your table with a human rights message.

ACTIONS

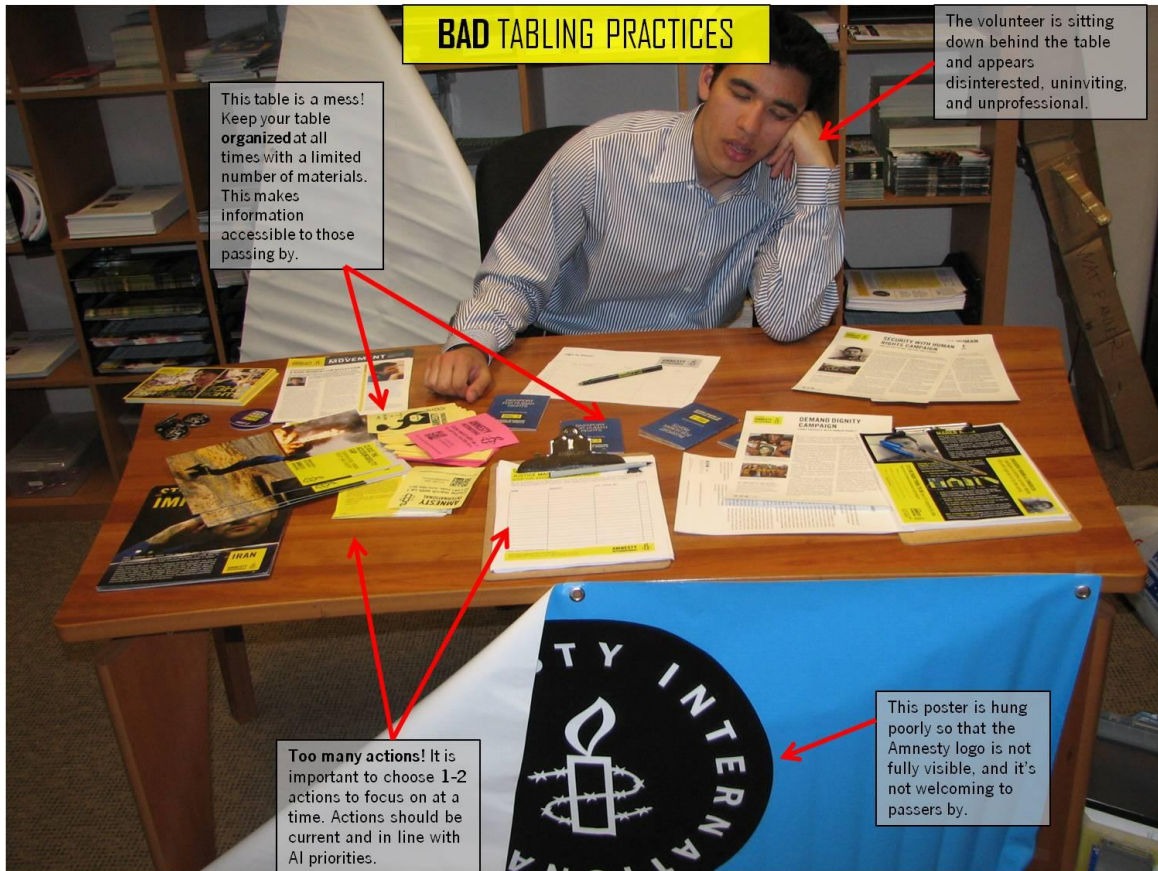
In addition to petition and postcard actions, consider innovative actions that people don't normally think of as activism. Some options to consider:

- Photo or video petition
- Solidarity messages to Prisoner of Conscience
- Large-scale visuals, such as a bed sheet handprint action
- Craft projects, such as a quilt that puts together squares made from different people

FUNDRAISING

Identify a prize, such as a signed book or iPod, that someone in your group can provide as a raffle prize. Sell tickets for a minimal amount that allows your group to raise funds.

Create a wheel for people to spin when they visit your table. The different spots on the wheel could involve actions (sign two petitions, take one photo action), prizes (Amnesty International buttons or stickers), or education (learn about human rights or a Prisoner of Conscience).



BAD TABLING PRACTICES

This table is a mess! Keep your table **organized** at all times with a limited number of materials. This makes information accessible to those passing by.

The volunteer is sitting down behind the table and appears disinterested, uninviting, and unprofessional.

Too many actions! It is important to choose 1-2 actions to focus on at a time. Actions should be current and in line with AI priorities.

This poster is hung poorly so that the Amnesty logo is not fully visible, and it's not welcoming to passers by.



GOOD TABLING PRACTICES

Posters are hung so the Amnesty logo is **clearly visible** and not messy.

Note: behind the table you should have your "tabling toolkit" with extra petitions, postcards, flyers, pens, tape, water, sunscreen if necessary, etc., and anything else you think you might need for successful tabling!

Relevant postcards, placards, pins, and stickers are in neat order.

Amnesty membership cards and recent AI magazine

Group sign up sheet including name, email and phone.

The volunteer is in front of the table, clipboard in hand, **actively engaging** with the passerby.

1-2 petitions, mounted on clipboards with pens

Flyers and other relevant materials for your group's upcoming events and meetings



ORGANIZING TOOLBOX

