





Writing a winning petition


Crafting a message that sparks a movement


Petitions have been used by activists to rally people behind a common cause for centuries. Early trade unionists, like hat-makers in the 1770s, used petitions to win fights for wage increases and better working conditions.


But petition campaigns continue to be influential today. A successful petition that has the right goal, is written for the right target, and has a strong story that resonates can have a huge impact. Let's dive headfirst into how to do this:

 **Set your goal.** The goal for a petition should be defined, direct and achievable e.g. "End exploitative zero-hours contracts in the NHS." Instead of starting a petition to just raise awareness, your goal must be something the decision maker and target of your petition can help you with and have a concrete outcome. In the words of social reformer and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, "Power concedes nothing without a demand."


 **Carefully choose your decision maker.** You might need to do some research to find the right person who can make or influence the decision you need. It's key to pick someone who can give you what you want. Addressing your petition to a specific person will be more successful than directing it to an organisation or group, who will find it easier to ignore you.


 **Write a snappy headline.** Your title is the first thing people will see. Make it urgent. This is crucial to grabbing attention and creating a connection to your cause. If your petition is about a local area, a specific workplace or industry, include that in the title.

 **Tell a story.** To explain why this petition is important, tell people a personal story. People are most likely to take action when they understand who is affected and what's at stake. Name a worker who has experienced this issue and share their story. You can use the "Stop, Start, Now" format to structure your petition. What needs to be stopped? What should we do instead? What benefits can we achieve by changing course today?

 **A picture says a thousand words.** Petitions with a photo receive six times more signatures than those without. Choose photos of real people that are connected to your cause and capture the emotion of your story.

Other tips:

 Keep your petition concise. Use action words (e.g. join, stand, fight) and don't bore or overwhelm the reader by giving them too much detail about policy or process.

 Accuracy matters! Signing a petition is an act of trust, so make sure your information is backed up by facts, well-researched and not duplicating other petitions that exist.