

# Cyber activism

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## What does it include?

- Press release distribution → email, website
- Press contacts → online media
- News letters → email, website
- Rallies, demonstrations → email action alerts
- Letters to decision-makers → email, contact forms
- Post cards → email cards
- Petitions → online petitions
- Other info channels → weblogs/blogs, email lists, open websites...

## Why?

- Good way to reach a **lot of people**
- It is very **quick**
- **Cheap & easy**: If you can read and write and your computer has a modem, then you can do it  
→ No need to have all the latest computer models & programmes
- **Reduces the amount of paper**

## But remember...

- Cyber activism is a **supplement** to - not a substitute for - traditional organizing and outreach techniques
- **Don't stop** organizing demonstrations, actions and press conferences and calling & meeting people

## Basics

- Cyber activism requires same as other activism:
  - **Plan ahead** what you want to achieve, who you want to reach, the campaign time, the target and so on...
- Additional work:
  - Websites need updating, response emails need answering...

## 1) Email action alert

- Compile an **email list** for action alerts and keep it up-to-date.
- Use the **"Bcc"** field if mailing to multiple addresses (keeps recipients unidentified).
- Clearly **identify** your organization as the source of the action alert.
- Include your complete **contact information**: email & regular address, web site, phone & fax number.
- Include the name, title & contact info of your organisation's contact person, if there is one.

## 1) Email action alert

- Always include the date that your action alert starts and the date by which action is over. **Don't forget to include the year.**
- Clear subject line which tells that the message is an action alert. **Never leave the subject line blank.**
- Include clear background information & links to websites with more information.
- Avoid jargon and keep the format simple with short paragraphs, section HEADINGS and horizontal lines.
- Don't assume the reader is familiar with the issue.

## 1) Email action alert

- **Be specific** about what you want the reader to do. Include the address, fax or phone number if you are asking readers to write letters, send faxes or make phone calls.
- Email action alerts can go around the world in minutes. You won't know exactly who reads your texts → errors aren't easily corrected. **Verify facts before you hit the "send" key.**
- Always include information on how readers can join your organization, volunteer to help, subscribe to (or unsubscribe from) the action alert list.

## 1) Email action alert

- Write **http://** in front of every website you give in your email in order to make a direct link (e.g. <http://www.taigarescue.org>).
- Send the alert to yourself or to a colleague before distributing it to make sure there are no broken lines or other problems.
- It is not polite to send alerts to discussion lists or news groups on unrelated issues. **Do not spam.**

## 2) Media

- Send the press release as a regular email. **Never send attachments.** If there is a lot of data you want the media to have, send an email link to your website.
- **Keep the text brief and focused.** Same rules as in regular press releases.
- **Good subject line** saying it is a press release.
- Include your email & website addresses.
- Write the recipient field last – **Check everything before sending at least twice.**

## 2) Media

- Put your organization's **media contact info on your website.** Keep the contact info up-to-date and include information on how reporters can be added to your mailing list.
- Collect email addresses from your media contacts & keep an up-dated archive.
- Put the **press releases on your website** asap.
- Send press releases only to appropriate lists, news groups, and publications.

## 3) Website – Why?

- Provides the public with up-to-date info about your activities, goals and ways people can help your work.
- Acts as a bulletin board.
- Displays latest news and campaign developments.
- Acts as a library for old documents.

### 3) Website

- No need to have all the latest computer models & programmes.
- **“Less is more”**  
= more data there is on a website, the longer it takes to open.
- **”Keep it simple”**  
= more words → harder to read  
= less words → easier to read

### 3) Website – What to put there?

- Campaign information.
- Your mission statement.
- **Contact info:** postal & email address and phone number.
- A donations section.
- Cyber petitions and other **ways for users to take action** on behalf of your campaign.

### 3) Website – Remember these

- A link back to the home page & navigation bar from every other page.
- A site map = index of everything on the site.
- A search function (you can download these for free from the web).
- Return options so that a user can return to the last page they were on.
- Simple headings and images.

### 3) Website – Advertise it

- Whenever possible, **advertise your site:**
  - "Visit our website at [www.taigarescue.org](http://www.taigarescue.org)" is good.
  - "Sign the online petition to protect boreal forests at [www.taigarescue.org](http://www.taigarescue.org)" is even better.
- If you do this on emails, add **http://** to create a direct link.

### 3) Website – Avoid these

- Text on a colour background: Hard to read.
- Confusing navigation.
- Images & files over 30k: Usually too big to download.
- The endlessly scrolling page. Cut the content.
- Broken links.
- Spinning logos & other “fancy” & “exciting” stuff. Sure way to annoy people.
- A page wider than 500 pixels.

### Some other examples

- Online petitions: [www.metsavetoomus.fi](http://www.metsavetoomus.fi)
- Letter sign-ons & action alerts: [www.forests.org](http://www.forests.org)
- “Clicking sites”: [www.rainforestsite.com](http://www.rainforestsite.com), [www.ettklikforskogen.se](http://www.ettklikforskogen.se)
- Email cards: [www.seppo.net](http://www.seppo.net)
- Discussion forums
- Fundraising

## Forest websites - international

- Taiga Rescue Network & Boreal Forest Network: [www.taigarescue.org](http://www.taigarescue.org) & [www.borealnet.org](http://www.borealnet.org)
- Greenpeace: [www.greenpeace.org/forests](http://www.greenpeace.org/forests)
- Friends of the Earth: [www.foei.org/forests](http://www.foei.org/forests)
- Fern [www.fern.org](http://www.fern.org)
- "Glen Barry": [www.forests.org](http://www.forests.org)
- World Rainforest Movement: [www.wrm.org.uy](http://www.wrm.org.uy)

## Forest NGO websites - national

- Finnish Nature League: [www.luontoliitto.fi](http://www.luontoliitto.fi)
- Finnish Association for Nature Conservation: [www.sll.fi](http://www.sll.fi)
- Fältbiologerna: [www.faltbiologerna.se](http://www.faltbiologerna.se)
- Swedish Association for Nature Conservation: [www.snf.se](http://www.snf.se)
- Estonian Green Movement: [www.roheline.ee](http://www.roheline.ee)
- Russian forest portal: [www.forest.ru](http://www.forest.ru)

## Web campaigns on forests etc.

- Stuff about certification gone bad: [www.pefcwatch.org](http://www.pefcwatch.org)
- Petition for forests of Southern Finland: [www.metsavetoomus.fi](http://www.metsavetoomus.fi)
- Rainforest Site: [www.rainforestsite.com](http://www.rainforestsite.com)

## Useful reading

- A Virtual Activist Training Reader: <http://www.netaction.org>
- About cyber and other activism <http://www.greenpeace.org.au/getactive/>
- Info on hoax alerts: [www.nonprofit.net/hoax](http://www.nonprofit.net/hoax) & [hoaxbusters.ciac.org](http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org)