

# Steps in a One-on-One Organizing Conversation

**One-on-ones are how we invite people into our work, encourage people to step into leadership, uncover barriers to our campaigns, and so much more.**

To build the power we need to stop unending war, climate chaos, and inequality across race, class, and gender, it's critical that new people come into our organizations, are given meaningful roles, and ultimately stick around, instead of marshaling the same, small group of people who already know and agree with us. One-on-ones are a key vehicle for how that happens.

Here's a 6 Step Model you can use to help plan your one-on-ones. Whether you follow this model, adapt it, or use a different one, having a clear sequence of steps to learn and practice helps you prepare and meet your goals in your organizing conversations.

## 6 Steps of a One-on-One

<b>1. Introduction</b>	Frame the conversation
<b>2. Issues &amp; Stake</b>	Use questions and stories to uncover what they most care about
<b>3. Agitation</b>	Ask more questions to identify who's responsible
<b>4. Educate, Vision, &amp; Plan to Win</b>	Share the larger vision and collective plan to win and build long term power
<b>5. The Ask</b>	Invite them to take a specific action towards the plan to win
<b>6. Next Steps</b>	Help them follow through on their commitments

	What YOU Do	What THEY Do
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<p><i>Confidently frame the conversation:</i> why you're here &amp; why you're talking specifically to them</p>	<p>Demonstrate, verbally or nonverbally, even a little openness to having a conversation</p>
<b>2. Issues &amp; Stake</b>	<p><i>Use questions to identify what they care about and what motivates them to action, like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you could wave a magic wand, what would you change?</li> <li>• Why does that mean so much to you?</li> <li>• What do you like/dislike about that?</li> <li>• What would it be like if it were different?</li> <li>• And then what happened?</li> </ul> <p><i>Note</i> when their face lights up, body movements or tone of voice get louder or bigger</p> <p><i>Summarize</i> what you've heard about what they care about and why</p>	<p><i>Green Light</i></p> <p>Give specific examples from their lives (enough detail where you can "see the story")</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>Demonstrate we've hit on their "stake" thru body language: raise their voice, use more gestures, more intense eye contact</p> <p>→ Continue to Step 3, Agitation</p> <p><i>Yellow Light</i></p> <p>Haven't given us a real sense of their "stake" in the issue through stories, body language, words</p> <p>→ Keep looking for what they care about</p>
<b>3. Agitation</b>	<p><i>Use questions to uncover causes of the issue and the need for action, like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you think that is?</li> <li>• Who do you think is responsible?</li> <li>• What's keeping the problem from being fixed?</li> <li>• Who's benefiting from it <i>not</i> being fixed?</li> </ul> <p><i>Encourage them to blame our targets</i> for the problem they want to see changed</p>	<p><i>Green Light</i></p> <p>Express that something could and should be done to change the status quo</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p>Name one of our possible targets as the problem, not "us" or people we care about</p> <p>→ Continue to Step 4, Education, Vision, Plan to Win</p>

	What YOU Do	What THEY Do
<b>3. Agitation (continued)</b>		<p><b>Yellow Light</b></p> <p>Don't demonstrate heightened body language or not ready to blame our targets for the problem</p> <p>→ Keep exploring here</p>
<b>4. Education, Vision, Plan to Win</b>	<p><b>A. Summarize their stake &amp; our shared interest:</b> "I heard you say you really want [THIS PROBLEM] to change, because [THEIR STAKE]. And I want that too because [YOUR STAKE]"</p> <p><b>B. Educate:</b> "...But [THIS OPPONENT] is standing in our way. Things can be different. [THIS IS HOW WE KNOW]..."</p> <p><b>C. Vision:</b> "...The good news is, we are [TAKING THIS COLLECTIVE ACTION] so that we can all enjoy [THESE DIFFERENT CONDITIONS]..."</p> <p><b>D. Plan to Win:</b> "But it will take us [DOING THIS TOGETHER]. If we [DO THIS], by [THIS DATE], [THIS THING] will happen... And we've seen that work before, like in [THIS EXAMPLE]..."</p> <p><b>Use questions to gauge their readiness for action, like:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much of that is new information?</li> <li>• Have you heard about that?</li> <li>• What do you think now that you've heard how things could be different?</li> <li>• What do you think of that plan?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Green Light</b></p> <p>Demonstrate open body language + Express openness to our analysis of the problem + Express openness to collective action to solve the problem</p> <p>→ Continue to Step 5, The Ask</p> <p><b>Yellow Light</b></p> <p>Demonstrate skepticism about our analysis of the problem, our vision, or plan to win</p> <p>→ Explore their objections or go back to Step 2, Issues &amp; Stake</p>

	What YOU Do	What THEY Do
<b>5. The Ask</b>	<p><i>Frame the choice:</i></p> <p>“You care about [THIS CHANGE] because [THEIR STAKE], but that can only happen if we [TAKE THIS ACTION]...”</p> <p><b><u>Can I count on you to [THE ASK]?”</u></b></p> <p><i>Don’t say anything</i> until they answer</p> <p><i>Ask follow-up questions</i> &amp; return to earlier steps if they express ambivalence</p> <p><i>Use follow up questions, like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think will happen if you do?</li> <li>• What do you think will happen if you don’t?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Green Light</i></p> <p>Give you a “clear yes”: body language and words both communicate they will follow through</p> <p>→ Continue to Step 6, Next Steps</p> <p><i>Yellow Light</i></p> <p>Ambivalent response, uncertain, unclear</p> <p>→ Back to Steps 2-4</p> <p>Hard “no”: This is the wrong ask or the wrong time</p> <p>→ Back to Steps 2-4 -or- end the conversation</p>
<b>6. Next Steps</b>	<p><i>Use questions like:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When do you think you’ll ___?</li> <li>• How should I follow up?</li> <li>• When can I call to follow up?</li> </ul> <p><i>Summarize</i> what they agreed to do, by when, &amp; how you’ll follow up</p>	<p>Clear instructions on how and when to contact them, and specific times by which they will have completed any action steps</p>

## Some tips for effective one-on-ones:

**It's helpful to prepare for these conversations.** When you're able to schedule one-on-ones (instead of doing them on the fly), it helps the person you're meeting – and you – prepare and go into the meeting with more focus. At the start of a big one-on-one drive, you could talk with other colleagues on your team about what your one-on-one goals are: what asks you want to make, what role you want to fill, etc.

**No two conversations are the same.** That's part of what makes one-on-ones fun! There's always some new connection to forge or new insight to gain. While the steps above can be a helpful guide, these are not strict rules: they're guardrails. As you practice these conversations more and more, you'll get a feel for your own pace, timing, and style.

**You may repeat yourself.** Good! Typically when you're doing one-on-ones (especially as a series), you'll be saying the reason you want to meet and the ask you want to make over and over again – and it will sound similar each time. That's not a bad thing! In fact, it's a sign that you have strategic clarity about your work and are inviting people in a consistent way.

**Honor your curiosity.** Juggling multiple considerations across these steps might distract you from your natural curiosity. Your genuine curiosity might actually help you get to your goals. It's like a maze, you have a destination, but there is more than one way to get there. Your curiosity can guide toward an authentic path to your goals.

**These conversations are about making asks, but not coercing someone into a 'yes.'** You haven't failed as an organizer if someone says “no” in your one-on-one. In fact, a worse outcome is someone saying “yes” to something they don't actually want to do and won't do. Said another way, a strong commitment isn't the only good thing that can come from a one-on-one. Maybe you'll learn more about the neighborhood or town you're in. Maybe you'll identify a key way your strategy is landing. Maybe you'll get clearer about an opponent. There are many measures by which a one-on-one can be a success.

**Let the silence do the talking.** One-on-ones are not typical conversations. You might ask questions that the person you're speaking with isn't used to being asked. And as a result, that person might get a little stuck. “Well, huh. I never thought about that. I don't know.” Sometimes we can get the urge to “assist” someone else in a conversation when they're a little stuck like this: “You know, don't worry about it. Let's talk about the next thing.” Resist this urge! It's often in these moments where, if you let the silence exist, something new can emerge.

**It ain't magic.** If you've ever witnessed an organizer do a really effective one-on-one, it can look a little like a magic trick, but it's a skill anyone can learn. The way to learn that magic is by paying attention to the small details. And practicing. And more practice.

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