

2.4 Non violent direct action

Despite new laws which give the police more powers to make protest difficult, you still have a right to go out there and assert your right to do it. Here's how to keep the law on your side:

- Bring people with you – Make sure you all agree on the reason for being there
- Don't be antagonising – In dealing with the police, company employees or members of the public, stay calm and seek to reason. If told to do something, ask why, politely – even if the other person is not being polite. Violence towards others can never be part of peaceful protest.
- Assert your right to protest – Remember that you have a right to protest

The legal stuff

- **Getting Permission** - You don't need permission from the police or the local council to assemble on the public highway. A large march will probably require police permission, which may take a few weeks notice.
- **Prohibiting an assembly** - The police cannot prohibit an assembly, and you don't need to give notice (except to assemble around Parliament).
- **Trespass** – trespass is not (normally) a criminal offence. However, if you assemble on private land without permission, you will probably be committing trespass
- **Criminal damage** - Chalking, sticking and pouring paint can leave you liable for this offence. The damage does not have to be permanent and even if it is graffiti made with chalk which will wash away with rain it may still be considered criminal damage.
- **Causing an obstruction** - Blocking a road or pavement, even unintentionally, could be seen as causing an 'obstruction', and will probably cause the police to move you on. Make sure people can get past if they want to.
- **Giving your name and address** – You are only required to provide your name and address if the police have reasonable suspicion that you are engaged in anti-social behaviour. Taking part in a peaceful protest is not defined as anti-social behaviour, so it will not normally be an offence to refuse to provide your details if you do not want to.

Remember: If it's on university grounds then you need to abide by university rules, i.e. you may need to meet their safety requirements, stick to their arrangements with regards to postering, banner drops, chalking, flyering or using loud speakers.

More info about the legal implications of peaceful protest can be found at www.liberty.org.uk