

**The Unofficial Guide  
To Planning  
Your  
First Official  
Take Back the Night March & Rally**

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Campus Outreach Services**

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## Hosting your first Take Back the Night

Hosting your school's first Take Back the Night can seem like a daunting task. It's a great idea and an important event to hold, but the red tape, the supplies, the people and the 'what ifs' tend to be very overwhelming. That's why the people at Campus Outreach Services have designed this manual. This manual will help those of you embarking on the journey of preparing your school's very first Take Back the Night. Fear not, we are here. In this manual you will find everything you ever needed to know about hosting a Take Back the Night March and Rally. Prepared by people who have been the first to hold a school's Take Back the Night, we have first hand knowledge of how-to's and what-to-do-if's. Just sit back, relax and read on.

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## So This is Your First Take Back the Night: Who to talk to, who to meet with and who to ask for help

When deciding to plan an event like Take Back the Night (TBTN), having permission and support of faculty, staff, campus police (or local police) and administration is crucial to the events success. Who better to later recruit your audience than those who decide grades, admission and financial aid?

One of the first people you should contact is the President of your school. If you attend a large school, the President of your college is generally not going to be a close acquaintance of yours. But, if you have that luxury, by all means do so.

If that is not an option, or you have already spoken with the President, it's off to the Residence Life and Dean of Students offices.

Residence Life and the Dean of Students may suggest dates when facilities are available or when it won't be in conflict with another major event on campus. They may be able to offer financial assistance as well. Their support is a key factor in the success of your TBTN event.



Other great places to look for support are the Departments of Women's Studies, Sociology, Social Work and Gender Studies. If you have a Sexual Assault office or Women's Health Center on campus, visit them too.

When meeting with these people it is important for you to have a rough idea of what you would like to accomplish by hosting your TBTN. Often, these people will want something in writing to review. So it is a good idea to have a draft proposal or outline of what you would like the TBTN event to look like.

If you can, have a few interested students already on-board with your ideas. Once you have received the go ahead, assure the administration that you will keep them posted as you plan the event. By keeping the faculty, staff and administration on-board, you keep open the option of asking them for financial assistance later.

After you receive the necessary clearance from the tower, it is time to nail down a few highly motivated and creative people to form a planning committee, if you haven't already. These people will later serve as your rock,

your sounding board and your audience should no one else show up (heavens forbid). These people will always be there!

When selecting your planning committee it is important that you take into account these key factors.



- #1 He or she might be your best friend but what is their work ethic like and will you really get work accomplished?
- #2 Are these select people open about their convictions and truly interested in getting the important message of TBTN out there?
- #3 How dependable and available is everyone? You need a committee that will be willing to work from 10pm to 1am and not skip out to do something non-TBTN related.

If you are short on ideas of who to recruit for your planning committee, talk to your professors and friends. Someone always knows someone else who would be great for the job. Ask around. Once you have narrowed it down, draft a Nomination Letter to send to each nominee notifying them of their nomination to this highly regarded position. Trust us, people will be flattered to pieces! This is a great honor and if they are deserving of the position, they will take it very seriously but enjoy the experience as well.

A sample letter would look something like this:

Dear Jane/John Smith,

You have been selected to sit on the planning committee for This School's First Annual Take Back the Night March and Rally. The mission of this event is to raise awareness on our campus about the issue of sexual violence and to let it be known that this violence, or violence of any kind, will not be tolerated in our community or anywhere else.

Take Back the Night first appeared in Europe in 1976 and has continued throughout the world as a sign of empowerment for women, men and children. This will be the first time our college has hosted a Take Back the Night and it would be our honor to have you as part of our planning committee.

The first meeting will be held \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_ o'clock in \_\_\_\_\_. If you cannot attend but are interested in participating please contact your name here at your number here.

Thank you,



Strong support and sponsorship is another key to the success of any event. There are many ways in which people can support your event and there are many people who would love to sponsor it, they just need to find out about it.

Excellent people and organizations to ask for support and sponsorship are local police stations, rape crisis centers, homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters and agencies, churches, youth organizations and your own school. Local community services often times have grant money or community event money that they would be willing to contribute. They may wish to help you organize the event. A nice letter or well placed phone call can go a long way.

For additional financial support a good place to go is your school's student government, board of programmers and entertainment and athletics department. They have fairly nice size budgets and may be able to lend some financial assistance. If you are looking for large financial contributions from these organizations, it may be a good idea to have rough budget drawn up along with your written proposal. This way the people you are asking will have a clear and solid idea of what you are looking for and why; you may find them more generous in spirit. But, if the money is not forth coming, don't fret too much about the financial side of things...most TBTN's can be done on a shoestring budget.

Some of your biggest supporters will come from your school. Professors may not be able to offer financial support, but remember what I said before about their influence of students' grades? Ask your professors to bring their classes to your TBTN event. Even if they are night classes, some teachers are willing to offer extra credit to students who attend and write a brief summary about the event.

While you are asking for these peoples' and organizations' sponsorship and support don't forget to drop them an invitation and ask them if they would like to "table at the event". "Table at the event" means they will be able to set up a table at your TBTN with information about their organization or cause, spreading their message and educating your audience. When it comes to TBTN's, the more the merrier!

**A side note:** TBTN is an emotionally charged event. It is a wise idea to contact campus security and/or the local police and inform them that you are planning this event. That way they will be aware of the event, and if necessary be able to plan for extra security on campus, especially if your school has had problems with rowdy or riotous students in the past. They may even be able to assist you in securing a safe march path if you are planning a march and/or assist with crowd control.

## The Planning Committee and What it Does

By now, you have spoken to faculty, staff, campus security and administration, contacted potential planning committee members and heard back from those interested in participating. You've selected the committee and figured out your estimated budget. NOW its time to get planning.

A planning committee by definition is a group of individuals, gathered to plan and delegate tasks for a predetermined event or project. And that is exactly what you will do. Once the group has gathered and introductions are made, it is important to determine what the group's goal is and what their main objectives are. In this case, it is to plan a TBTN March and Rally. I say "March and Rally" but you can do just the march or just the rally, or both or neither and that is the job of the committee to decide.

A single individual should serve as the secretary of this committee to keep track of ideas suggested and the jobs assigned. A brainstorming session is always a good idea. After basic ideas have been suggested and written down, it is time for the delegation of tasks. Depending on how many committee members you have, one or two people should be assigned to each task. You will need someone to cover areas such as: advertising/media, funding, date and location, music, set-up and programming. Each task is rather self-explanatory and each position will be redefined by each person taking on that position.

**A Side Note:** The secretary should also keep track of any of the paperwork; i.e. contracts, permits, correspondences to sponsors and press releases. That way if there are any questions the information will be in one place.

Now that tasks have been delegated, it is important to reconvene as a whole to decide on some larger issues, such as where and when this event will be held. Some popular months to hold TBTNs are October, February, March and April. Depending on where you are located in the country, you can decide when to host you event accordingly.



The location of your TBTN is key to its success. Frequently attended areas of campus, such as a campus quad or square, are good ideas due to their prime location and high traffic flow. If you pick a popular place to go chances are you will pick up stragglers who didn't even know about the event but just happened to be there. You should check with campus facilities to see if the location is available on the date you have in mind, or in fact what dates are available. If you are planning something that might take you off campus at any point, like the TBTN March, you may need to check with local authorities about licenses, permits and regulations regarding where and when you can march. Cover all your bases before the event; that way things will run smoothly during the event.

The time of day which your TBTN occurs is rather obvious, but post-dinner, pre-partying is the best time to schedule the event.

The other large group decision made by the planning committee is the format of the TBTN. Do you want a rally? Do you want a march? Do you want both? Will you have speakers from rape crisis centers? Will you have a moment of silence? A speak out? Someone to facilitate the event? There are a million and one ways to plan the format of your TBTN, each individual to the school. But this is something that is decided by the planning committee and the size of your budget. If you are in need of programming ideas, there will be a plethora of them supplied at the end of this manual.



**A Side Note:** If you have the people power, it would be a good idea to appoint someone on your committee to be a TBTN Historian to document the event. This person should be someone who will be around to plan the next TBTN, usually a freshman, sophomore or junior. The history would include everything from the early planning stages through the completion. A three ring binder and floppy disk are excellent organizational tools to use. Keep a hard copy of all correspondences, invoices, receipts, thank you notes, programs and flyers. Pictures from the event are good to keep on hand so that if you want to create a poster for your next TBTN you have some past footage. Keeping a video of the event is a nice way to preserve the moment. By doing this you will make it easier for the next group to plan their TBTN.

## If You Build It, Will They Come: How to get people to Attend

When it comes to planning events, for the first time or for the fiftieth time, nothing is more stressful and nerve-wracking than getting people to attend. No matter how great the cause or how amazing the program, if people don't know then they won't go.

### Advertise! Advertise! Advertise!

One of the best and cheapest ways to advertise is by way of mouth. Talk-up your event! Before class, ask your professor if you can make an announcement at the end of class. If you do that in every class you have, figure that is 6 classes, and you have an average of 30 students in each class (providing that you don't have every class with all the same people) you have told 180 people about your TBTN. If each member of your planning committee makes an announcement in each of their classes, you will be spreading the word without spending a dime!



Flyers are another inexpensive way of advertising. A simple computer printed flyer with a hand-drawn sketch with your event's information is sufficient. Ask the Dean of Students' office or Student Government's office if you can use their photocopier and there you have it, flyers!

Another great flyer idea that requires a little more time and patience are small flyers to go in students' mailboxes. Who doesn't like getting mail?

But before you begin advertising, decide on a theme and stick to it. Consistency is another key element. If all your ads are on bright blue paper, people will begin to connect the bright blue color with your event!

Some schools allow their students to send mass emails across campus. Contact the computer resource department. Find out if this is a viable option and then, if it is, email away!





Just remember, no matter how you advertise, make sure all your information is on the advertisement! No point in advertising if no one knows when, where and what.

Don't forget your local media sources. Call around to local radio stations and t.v. stations and ask about having your event announce on air. Some stations will give you a 5 second air spot for free. It might be at 3a.m. but its airtime. Some schools even have a school sponsored radio and/or t.v. station, see if they will promote your TBTN.

By preparing a press release you will be able to mail, fax and email your information to these stations in a seconds notice.

A sample press release would look something like this:

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**CONTACT:**

Your Name  
 Someone Else's Name  
 Planning Committee  
 Your College  
 Phone Number  
 Email Address

"Take Back the Night March and Rally"

**Town, State, Month, Year**—To address issues of sexual violence, students at \_\_\_\_\_ College have organized their first annual Take Back the Night Rally and March to be held \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. This event will include an inter-faith vigil, march and close with an empowering and unifying rally.

\*\*Use your own creativity here to include  
 more details or brief history of TBTN\*\*

Remember, the key to a good press release is keeping it brief but informative. Sending a press release is easy, too. You can look up the email addresses of local t.v. and radio stations and email them the press release. Many times, that will be all you need to do to have your event included in their next issue or segment.



One other strong form of advertising is by offering "freebies". Everyone loves getting things for free. They won't be free for you and your planning committee, but they could do wonders for your turnout. Shop around with different printing companies and price t-shirts. Most companies will do deals like 100 shirts for \$500, which is a steal. Design a simple logo to represent your event and have it made into t-shirts. If you don't have the budget, you may want to ask a potential financial supporter, like a local pizza parlor or small business for a contribution, in exchange for putting their information somewhere on the shirt you are making. If you need to, you can ask several establishments. You never know until you ask.

Other good freebies are bumper stickers, key chains, posters and magnets are all rather inexpensive to produce and guaranteed to get results.

Another great way to guarantee attendance at your event is to offer free food! Like I said before, people love freebies and really love free food!

## You've Planned It, People are Coming...Now What?

You are now a week away from your big event. Time to organize your game plan. What will happen first? Will people sit or stand? Will you have food and drink? Who is speaking? Do you have a Master of Ceremony? How about a soundtrack?

Sounds like a lot, yes? Well, it is but it will all come together rather quickly once you sit down with your committee to organize and finalize. Out of your group, pick one or two people to act as your Master(s) of Ceremony. This person should be comfortable speaking in front of an audience and have a pleasant speaking voice. Once you decide on the order of events, print them up as either simple booklets (printed pages, folded in half and stapled in the center) for your attendees or as single page copies just for the planning committee and speakers. During your event, your Master of Ceremony will read from this to announce speakers or the next portion of the night.

When it comes to having speakers at your TBTN it's important to know your financial limitations and what issues you want the speakers touch on. If you have a nice size budget, by all means, hire a professional speaker to present at your TBTN. You might want someone to talk about date rape, childhood sexual abuse, healthy relationships or same-sex sexual assault. You might want just one or you might want them all. If you have money left over from your advertising campaign, and money remaining from your budget, hire a great speaker; the more powerful the speaker, the more powerful the message.

If money seems to be decreasing as you read, decide among your committee who would like to speak and about what. Pick topics you are comfortable addressing in front of a crowd. This is not for the shy and timid. A good TBTN will be 2-3 hours in length. The length of time you have set aside for your TBTN will determine how many speakers you should have and how long they should speak for. So if you have one speaker, you may want them to speak for 45 minutes to 1 hour. (But no more than that, you don't want your audience to fall asleep on you). If you have two speakers, you may want to allocate them 30 minutes to 45 minutes, depending on what else you have planned.

Remember you want leave room for your audience members to have a chance to share their experiences and testimonies. Leave yourself a good half

hour to hour (depending on the size of your audience and length of your TBTN) for a speak-out. This is a crucial part of the healing process. You don't want to take away from that by over-packing your speakers.

Here are two sample TBTN Schedules for you. Please use them only as a guide. Every TBTN will be different and should reflect your creativity and your community.

FIRST ANNUAL TAKE BACK THE NIGHT RALLY AT YOUR COLLEGE (for a 2 ½ hour program)	
7:00pm	Opening Ceremony.....Master of Ceremony
7:15pm	Keynote Address.....Speaker 1
8:00pm	Vigil/Candlelight Ceremony.....Master of Ceremony
8:30pm	Speakout.....Audience Members
9:30pm	Closing Ceremony.....Master of Ceremony

FIRST ANNUAL TAKE BACK THE NIGHT MARCH AT YOUR COLLEGE (for a 2 ½ hour program)	
7:00pm	Opening Ceremony.....Master of Ceremony
7:10pm	Start the March
7:20pm	First Stop - Keynote Speaker.....Speaker 1
7:45pm	Start Marching again
7:55pm	Second Stop - Announce Facts and Stats.....Master of Ceremony
8:10pm	Start Marching again
8:20pm	Final Stop - Vigil.....Master of Ceremony
8:30pm S	Speakout.....Audience Members
9:30pm	Closing Ceremony.....Master of Ceremony

Depending on where you are holding your TBTN will determine whether people sit or stand. If you are having a vigil inside, people can sit on chairs or the floor (the floor will be easiest). If you are rallying outside, they will want to stand. Remember, you can have a vigil inside and rally and march outside. This doesn't all have to take place in one venue. Variety is the spice of life!

If you are offering free food and refreshments to encourage attendance, ask your cafeteria service to provide basic drinks, like coffee or hot cocoa. They might also be willing to gift your event day-old baked goods. Another option may be to contact a manager at a local coffee shop like Starbucks, which donates to community service events, and see if they will donate coffee and left over pastries to the TBTN event. If not, ask your committee members to pick up some cookies on their way to the TBTN. Free food does not need to equal gourmet food!

What better way to create the right ambiance than having your very own TBTN soundtrack.\* It is virtually free and will make a world of difference if composed of the right artists and songs. Below you will find a list of artists which can act as a reference list when compiling your soundtrack.

Excellent TBTN Artists

Ani DiFranco  
 Tracy Chapman  
 Suzanne Vega  
 Jewel  
 Bare Naked Ladies  
 Sarah MacLachlan  
 Tori Amos  
 Shawn Colvin  
 Dar Williams  
 Catie Curtis  
 Indigo Girls  
 Disappear Fear  
 Joni Mitchell

If you are planning on having sound/music, you need to coordinate with whoever is doing sound for your event. If you need a cd-player or tape-player, make arrangements in advance for a sound system. There's nothing worse than putting together an awesome sound track for your event and no one has the opportunity to hear it.

Along the same lines, make sure you have adequate amplification for your MC(s), speakers and audience members who want to speak out. A podium with a microphone is a good idea if you are in one location. If you are marching, your leader may want a bullhorn. The larger the crowd, the more amplification you will need. It is key that your MC(s) and speaker(s) be heard over the crowd. Otherwise they may have a hard time controlling the situation. In this department it is better to over plan than under plan; be prepared.



Talk to someone in facilities or your school's theater department to see if they have the ability to set up a sound system for you. If not them, see if one of your friends d.j.'s or knows someone who does and will let you borrow their equipment. There's always one kid on campus who's got the right equipment.

## The Plethora of Ideas Section

Here is the section I promised you in the beginning of this manual. In this section you will find more suggestions and ideas for what to do, who to invite and ways to organize your event.

Inviting people from the outside always helps liven things up and it doesn't have to cost you a penny. Check out your local rape crisis center to see what services they provide. They can be an excellent, inexpensive resource for your event. "The Silent Witnesses" ([www.silentwitnesses.net](http://www.silentwitnesses.net)) provide wooden silhouettes of victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults and their personal stories. "The Yellow Dress" is a performance piece on relationship violence. "The Clothesline Project" (<http://www.now.org/issues/violence/clothes.html>) is a display of t-shirts written on and colored by survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse. Each t-shirt carries a powerful, emotionally charged message.

A speak-out, where audience members are encourage to speak out is an excellent way of creating a unifying experience. Allocate a specific section of your event for this speak-out. People can talk, read poems, sing, cry, yell or request a moment of silence. Each person's time deserves utmost respect. You can also use this time to light candles in remembrance of victims and survivors. It may be beneficial to have a few campus counselors available during and after this time.

During your march, chants and cheers provide entertainment and spirit. A list of cheers can be found at the end of this manual, along with a checklist of tasks for committee members. At least one day before your event, mark off and write down a designated route for the march. It's a good idea to inform campus security, facilities and the administration of where you plan to march, especially if you are concerned about security issues. Committee members should split into three groups; one to lead, one to travel in the body of the crowd and one to tail. On your march, select specific places to stop and address the crowd. Use that time to read out-loud statistics, poems or general information.

The last portion of your event should be used to thank your participants and supporters. Encourage them to join next year's planning committee, but,

more importantly, not to wait until next year to address the issue again. Challenge them to address the issue of sexual violence every day, in their actions, speech and thoughts. It is also a good practice to send written thank you notes to all of the people who contributed their time, financial assistance, and or made a contribution to your TBTN.

## List of Songs & Chants

### **"We're Marching for Women"**

Sung to the tune of "We're Marching to Zion"

We're Marching for Women  
Beautiful, beautiful women  
We're marching forward to victory  
We march to take back the night

### **"Women Unite"**

Women unite, Take back the night  
Women unite, Take back the night

### **"We are Singing for Our Lives"**

We are a gentle, angry people  
And we are singing, singing for our lives  
We are a gentle angry people  
And we are singing, singing for our lives

We are women and men together  
We are \_\_\_\_\_ students together (your school's name in the blank)

### **"Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round"**

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round  
Turn me round, turn me round  
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round  
Gonna keep on walking, keep on talking  
Gonna build a brand new world

Ain't gonna let nobody steal my joy  
Steal my joy, steal my joy (continue)

## Chants!

Women/United/Will never be defeated

2-4-6-8 No more date rape

Women Unite/Take back the night

Yes mean yes/No means no/Whatever we wear/Wherever we go

Out of the halls/into the streets/we won't be raped/we won't be beat

Hey hey/ho ho/date rape has got to go

Join together/free our lives/we will not be victimized

We have the power/we have the right/the streets are ours/take back the night

We are women/we are strong/violence against us has lived too long

Take back the night/the time is near/we will not be controlled by fear

Sexist/rapists/anti-gay/don't you take our night away

Survivors unite/take back the night

Wish I may/wish I might/free our lives/take back the night

Claim our bodies/claim our rights/take a stand/take back the night

Strong women/proud women/together tonight/no more fright/together we fight

Old/young/black/white/all women/take back the night

We are women/We are men/together we fight/to take back the night

## Final Checklist

### Coordination of Tasks

- ❖ Designate project coordinators
- ❖ Develop list of potential supporters
- ❖ Schedule multiple planning sessions
- ❖ Develop "countdown" calendar
- ❖ Design logo and color scheme
- ❖ Produce final event's list or booklet

### Correspondence

- ❖ Write nomination letters
- ❖ Meet with administration, faculty and staff
- ❖ Contact potential speakers and programmers
- ❖ Invite your audience
- ❖ Send press release
- ❖ Contact local resources
- ❖ Thank you notes

### Logistics

- ❖ Plan route of march and site for rally
- ❖ Obtain permission and/or permits
- ❖ Arrange for security, if needed
- ❖ Arrange for counselors or rape crisis staff to be available
- ❖ Arrange for music, food and freebies
- ❖ Set up chairs and table, if needed
- ❖ Secure microphone and podium
- ❖ Secure candles
- ❖ Arrange for some people to stay after and act as clean up crew

### Advertising

- ❖ Develop and distribute flyers and mailers
- ❖ Send emails
- ❖ T-shirts, bumper stickers, key chains, posters and magnets
- ❖ Prepare banners
- ❖ Media contacts

**Congratulations!**  
**You are now on your way to your first TBTN**

While it may seem like you have just taken on the most daunting and impossible task, you must realize that for every challenge and new road you build, you are creating an event that your school will cherish for years to come. The task of preparing the first TBTN will bring you headaches, stomachaches, heartaches and more rewards than you can even imagine. This will be truly one of the most rewarding experiences ever. While the road may be bumpy and winding, the destination will be well worth the trip!

*\*We are not suggesting that you create a cd or tape to sell at your TBTN. Rather just put together a song list for background music. If you plan to sell such an item, we suggest you get permission from the artist and the record company before doing so. If you don't, you may be in violation of copyright laws and we don't want that.*