40 ft

Floor to Ceiling Balloon Banner Location?

110 ft

Banner Location?

20 ft

Security Guard Station?

Public Protest Outside?

Main Entrance - 7 doors. Blockade Location?

70 ft

Lower Level. Handheld Banner Location?

Hours of Operation?

28 ft

47 ft

Parking Garage. Delegates Entrance?

Three Revolving Doors. Two Double Doors. Four Cameras.

SCOUTING MANUAL FOR ACTIVISTS

THE RUCKUS SOCIETY

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

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The Ruckus Society provides environmental, human rights, and social justice organizers with the tools, training, and support needed to achieve their goals, through the strategic use of creative nonviolent direct action.

Visit **www.ruckus.org** for more online tools and resources, direct action community news, upcoming training opportunities, or to request training or action support for your group.

A resource by The Ruckus Society, written by Matt Leonard, Jack Downey and BW.

WHAT IS SCOUTING?

Put simply, scouting is the process of acquiring information needed for an action to be successful. It is the gathering of site-specific information that enables the action coordinator to evaluate a potential direct action. A scout is meant to provide information that will help the action coordinator(s), campaigner(s) and participants determine what their options are for a given location or direct action tactic, and evaluate the potential for success and safety. The more relevant information the scout can provide, the better. Often, the person doing the scout may be the only one who gets a good in-person look at the site before the decision is made to devote potentially substantial amounts of time and money to an action, so it is important that the scouter gather information not just for herself, but for others as well. Can an action successfully take place safely, and how? Is the "payoff" of using a particular tactic worth the resources that it would require? What is needed to make this work? How do we take an action idea and make it a concrete reality?

Some of this information may be primarily physical and logistical: "What is the best route for the march to take?," or "How will we get access to this company's offices?" "Can people actually climb off that, while meeting safety standards?" Some information may be more useful in conceptualizing an effective action, such as "Does the demonstration make more sense at company headquarters, or at their factory?" Scouting generally involves getting up off the couch and taking a trip into the physical world—though there is plenty to be done with a computer and telephone as well.

This manual is meant to be a basic overview of scouting techniques. No two actions are the same, and there is no way to comprehensively "teach" scouting in a manual. It takes practice and creativity to become a good scout—but we hope this manual will help get you started, and provide some tips and ideas from the experiences of action coordinators across the Ruckus Society network.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR WHEN SCOUTING?

Like much of the action development process, scouting is a combination of the technical and artistic/visual. With practice, a scout will be able to pick up on the subtler physical qualities of a potential action site. A scout should provide information that will allow her (or the coordinator, if different) to evaluate site access, security, the kind of image the action will provide (especially relevant if visual messaging is important), safety concerns, and probability of success. Thinking about weather, lighting, finding useful symbols or signage, and understanding traffic and security patterns are all concerns that are critical for action planning. Experienced scouts and action coordinators can look at the site and visualize the action unfolding. They need to anticipate the reactions of other participants in the action—which might include curious bystanders, workers, police, and the media. A primary purpose of a scout is to flesh out as much information as possible, in order to minimize unknown factors during preparation for an action.

The technical side of the scout identifies the physical constraints and possibilities for a direct action—measurements, access points (if needed), information relevant to set-up and deployment. The artistic side of the scout addresses the visual quality of the action and the action site as a political performance space—what impact the action can have and what stories it can tell. Most of what Ruckus focuses on in this section is the practice of scouting. There is a method to it which we can learn from each other. Developing scouting abilities depends on a lively discussion of techniques and experiences.

Depending on campaign priorities and concerns, a scout may be asked to find an appropriate location for a specific tactic, or she may be asked to focus on a specific location, and determine what tactics are feasible at that location. Different tactics accomplish different objectives, and a scout may want to catalogue the different options that a location provides. This allows for some flexibility and alternate possibilities, in case it turns out that the initial action idea won't fly. A good scout will give you a sense of what is possible, and allow you (and those you work with) to make informed decisions regarding how to maximize your probability of success in a manner that is safe and controlled.

WHEN DO WE SCOUT?

Every action will have a different set of needs for scouting, and some actions may require multiple scouting trips. Sometimes you have a specific location or tactic in mind that might be fairly concrete—and your scouting trip is to figure out how to make that specific plan successful. Other times you might be doing a general scout just to see what types of actions are possible, or what locations might be strategic and effective.

In general—doing an initial scout far in advance is preferable—it gives you the most time to truly think through all the possibilities and issues, and having good preparation usually means a better chance of success. It also usually means lower costs—doing things last minute often means paying full-price for materials, more expensive travel logistics, or at least having a harder time utilizing free/community resources if you are rushing to secure them. After you've done an initial scout, maybe you can return to the rest of your group, discuss what you've found, refine your plans, identify further questions you need answered, and do a 2nd (or 3rd) more detailed scout, where you really nail down the details and nuances. It is ideal that your scout mimic as closely as possible the conditions of the action itself—so if the action is going to take place on a weekend, scout on a weekend. This will give you the best sense possible of traffic conditions, security, etc.

SCOUT PREP

Before you can prepare for the scout it's good to revisit some of your assumptions regarding the action. What are the goals of the action and the day—and do they effectively relate to the goals of a campaign or movement? Is the potential action appropriate to the campaign at this particular time? Is it proportionate to the seriousness of the issue? Will the action speak to the problem? Will it be visible and understandable to its target audience? It is likely we will have to ask ourselves these questions several times during the scouting process. Having a clear sense of what the campaign goals and context are is important. Are you scouting to look for any action possibility? More likely there are some campaign parameters to work with—whether that means a particular budget, expected numbers of people who would be involved, or a tone for what the action needs to convey.

Essentially, scouting is research. Good background research can reveal hidden possibilities. Often, your potential action site is far away and you won't be able to make repeated trips. So if you haven't been to the potential action site try to visualize it, using any images you can acquire remotely. What have you heard about it? What do you know about similar sites or facilities? Do any of your colleagues have experience or particular skills to offer that would be useful to your project? Ask yourself what will enhance this creative process. Scouting can be done solo, or in groups of various sizes—depending on your resources and the site itself. Who should be on the scouting team?

PRE-SCOUT RESEARCH

Depending on your action ideas, a fair amount of your research can be done remotely. This can help both your scout and the actual action prep itself. The internet is your friend, and can give you a head start on your scouting. Mainstream online services like Google Maps, Google Earth, and Microsoft's Bing Maps 3D are user-friendly ways of assessing access points, mapping out deployment, and searching for potential attachment points (if the action involves climbing and/or rigging). Topographical satellite images and "street-view" functions will help you get a sense of your target location before you ever set foot on site. Among other things, they may help you get a jumpstart on measurements: for instance, if you're planning a street intersection blockade, knowing how many lanes a street has, and what (if any) possible lockdown attachment points are available, are basic, but critical, pieces of information that will get the ball rolling in your action planning.

If you're looking to access a building for your action, internet searches may help you get information about the structure's internal layout (floor plans, images, etc.). They will also allow you do some research regarding the surrounding area, and help you prep for otherwise unforeseen issues—e.g., is there a federal building across the street from your action

site? General searches related to your area can also provide useful information—particularly if it's a location that you don't have previous familiarity with. Companies, individuals, and organizations post all sorts of things on the internet these days, and someone's travel blog can easily become your scouting tool. It may be time consuming and frustrating, but can also be extremely helpful.

There is also a whole sub-culture of "urban explorers"—people who like to get access to less-than-public places just for the fun of it. There can be a wealth of information and techniques found from these communities. Check out http://www.infiltration.org/ or http://urbanexplorers.net/. Also, there are a few good books on the subject too, such as "Access All Areas".

Also… ask around! It may turn out that you have allies with local connections, who can give you information you hadn't previously considered, or who may even have scouted your site already. It's not unreasonable to consider that other activists may have targeted (or at least considered targeting) your target in the past, so you may save yourself time and resources by checking around. Maybe you'll even get some new ideas.

LIST OF QUESTIONS TO BRING TO THE SCOUT

While there are likely to be plenty of things that just "strike you" about the site once you're actually on the scout that you haven't foreseen, for the sake of being comprehensive and efficient, it's in your best interest to go into the scout with a concrete list of questions you want answered. What exactly are your objectives in the scout? These cover a broad spectrum, from the very general to very specific. Here are a few examples:

✶ What is the ideal time and day of the week for this action?

✶ What is the minimum number of people you will need to pull the action off successfully and safely?

✶ How can the activists access the target location? What are the different needs (cover stories, costumes, equipment, etc.) for the different options? What are the potential drawbacks/obstacles?

✶ What kind of security does the target location have? Cameras? Patrol cars passing my on rotation? Security guards? Given these concerns, is your action plan realistic?

✶ What are the options re: attachment points (if you're doing a lockdown) or anchor points (if you're doing a climb action)? Keep safety standards in mind, and remember that, in all likelihood, it will be someone else who's going to put their safety at risk according to your scout assessment.

✶ What is the relevant measurement data for each potential action tactic, at each potential target site (remember that some locations will provide multiple target options for the same tactic—e.g., many buildings have multiple entrances that can be blockaded). Make sure to keep your measurements in order, to avoid later confusion (don't just rely on your memory either; take notes).

✶ What kind of equipment will be required to accomplish this action? What other resources would be needed to pull this off?

✶ What are concerns re: accidental property destruction, trespassing, or other potential legal charges?

✶ If you're planning a legally permitted action, what different jurisdictions (city, state, federal) will need to be contacted for permits?

✶ If one of your action objectives is to produce a quality publicity image, is your action scenario sufficient? From a potential photographer's perspective, is there good light? Are there obstructions that would get in a photographer's way? For some actions, getting a good photograph is a major concern, and the success of such an action will depend on the ability not only for the activists to deploy, but to deploy at a time and way that presents an enduring photographic image.

✶ What other tactical options does this site present?

✶ What is the probability of success for each possibility?

EXAMPLES OF CERTAIN TYPES OF SCOUTS:

Road blockade:

★ So, you've decided that blockading a road (or a driveway, or a doorway) is the action that makes strategic sense for your group. Here are some tips and a checklist of possible information you might need to gather or questions you might need to answer:

★ Is the goal to really bar any sort of traffic in and out, to just be a disruption, or more symbolic? Do you need to go for ALL entrances, or just a primary one?

★ What makes the most compelling location for the action goals? Front doors? Under their big sign? In the driveway? Road in front of a driveway?

★ Where can support people and media be? What are the legal property lines, and where do you think police would logically cordon off the area?

★ Will the area be publicly viewable - or will activists be "invisible" to the public and media? (both a concern for safety and moral support, as well as for getting good media coverage)

★ What are the exact dimensions of the area you need to blockade? Are you planning to just stop vehicles, or foot-traffic as well?

★ How will the activists get access to the site (car drop-off point, parking for the car, route they will walk etc)?

★ Is it likely you will run into security, workers, or bystanders? Where would these people come from? How can you mitigate these concerns?

★ Can the blockade be moved easily? What if police push you out of the way? Do you need to lock to a structure to be unmovable? What structures are there, or what could you bring (and how would you bring it)?

Banner Hang

There are a million variables involved with hanging a banner —whether it's a highly technical action involving trained and experienced climbers—or tossing a banner over the edge of a parking garage. Either way—anything done at height usually involves some bigger safety concerns—for the participants, or for people who might be underneath. Banner hangs involving climbers are beyond the scope of this manual - so we'll primarily focus on scouting for less-technical (though still potentially tricky or dangerous) banners that don't involve people hanging from ropes. PLEASE don't go down this path without proper training and expertise. And of course, if you want to get that training and experience, Ruckus is here to help.

★ What is the best visual framing for your banner? Will it look like a tiny postage stamp on a giant background? Can you get an image that includes your background for context? Is there a nearby location (Across the street from your target? Along a traffic route?) that might be a better visual?

★ How will lighting (sun angle, front/back lighting etc) affect the readability of your image? Most banner fabric is fairly transparent, and front-lit is generally better than back-lit.

★ What are the dimensions for your banner? Try to get detailed measurements—using a tape measure, or marking a string etc.

★ What is the wind like at your site? Which way does it blow? Look up historical wind patterns online, and anticipate your banner will get blown around more than you think.

★ What are suitable points to rig the banner from? In general—try not to rely on people to hold a banner— safely anchor it off to a solid structure.

★ In high wind - would the banner potentially damage features of the structure it is on (like slapping metal grommets against windows)?

★ What would happen if the banner broke loose? What is below? Where would wind take it? TIP: to weight the bottom of the banner—fill several hemmed pouches across the bottom with something like rice that adds weight, but if it falls or spills would be soft and not a solid mass.
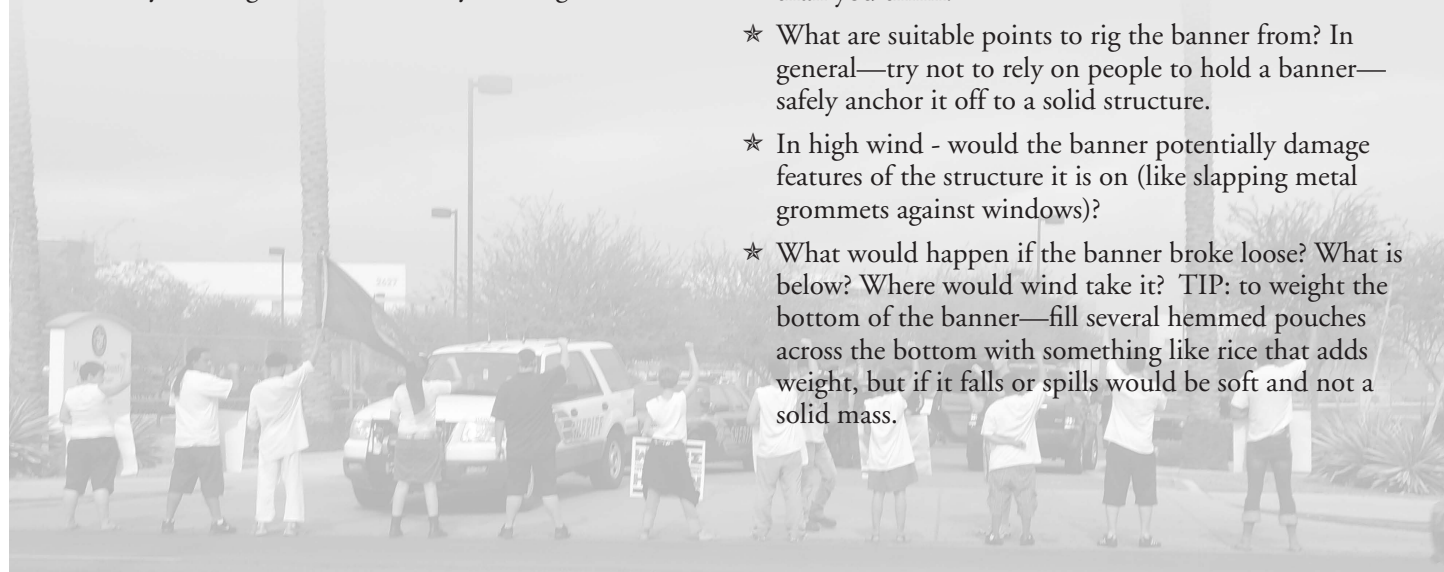
SCOUT TEAM ROLES

On most scouts, it's nice to at least have a partner. Beyond having some company, the idea that "4 eyes are better than 2" generally holds true. Also, having a partner can create more potential for plausible cover stories (lovers, co-workers, confirming each other's stories, or just being deep in conversation with someone). And having two different minds to interpret, remember, and report-back on what you scouted is usually more accurate than a single person's recollections.

On more complicated scouts, there may be several people that are involved in the process, even if it's only 1 or 2 people actually on the scout site. Having someone off-site by a phone can be valuable in case of emergencies and safety. Make a plan to have regular check-ins to confirm that everything is going as planned—maybe a phone call or text message every 30 minutes, or schedule a time you intend to return by. While this might be someone back at home or at an office, it might make more sense to have them close enough to the scouting site to respond quickly if a problem arises, but far enough away that if a problem arises, they are 100% certain to not be caught up in it.

If you are doing a scout that involves greater legal risk, having someone prepared with legal support might be a good idea too. This could be an actual lawyer (who may be a good resource to determine what legal issues you might want to avoid), or possibly someone who has legal information ready (such as a legal support form for the scouters), as well as bail money.

COVER STORIES

When scouting, you may not want to interact with anyone at all. Sometimes to get the information you need you are going to have to interact with people. Either way—it's safe to assume that "Hi, I'm an activist who is planning a demonstration here next month" won't be your best opening line. Having a well-thought out cover story can be great to get you out of a potential jam, not arouse any suspicions, or just help you get access to information that you might not get otherwise.

Cover stories can be complicated or simple, depending on how you intend to use it. Think about the kinds of people that might be around your target location—people who are supposed to be there, or that wouldn't raise suspicions. The important thing is to think through plausible roles beforehand—so you pick a story that is appropriate for your location and that is credible. Be comfortable enough in your story to pass the "BS detector" if you are questioned. Have the accessories that match your story - sometimes these accessories are actually quite useful to your scout!

Cover stories aren't just good ideas in case you get caught—they can also help you gain access to information or areas. Maybe you need to see what is behind a locked door, or you need access to shift schedules. Creative stories may get someone to open that door for you voluntarily, or divulge information that isn't typically public. Never underestimate how boring some jobs can be—and having friendly enthusiasm and interest in another person's job can get him or her talking - perhaps further than s/he should. Posing as the head of security for a well-known actor might get a hotel to show you their whole security policy—in hopes of gaining some business. Being a movie location scout might get you a full tour of a facility. And of course, a flirtatious smile can also go miles (which leads us to.....)

While we may want to fight against cultural stereotypes, gender roles, race assumptions, or for the freedom to have as many piercings and creative haircuts as we want - the reality is that in scouting, these things need to be taken into consideration. And sometimes, we can use them to our advantage. Think about what you look like, what you are wearing, and what your demeanor is—and what assumptions about you people you might interact with on your scout will make. If you have facial piercings, is posing as a businessperson your best cover story? That doesn't mean you can't scout—but posing as a bike messenger might be more realistic, and might actually allow you further access to an office building anyway! Will security respond differently to a 6'6 man dressed in black, or a young woman in jeans? Sometimes sneaking around is less effective than being painfully obvious—"hiding in plain sight."

COVER STORIES

Here are a few ideas for creative cover stories that can be used in a variety of situations.

IN OFFICE/URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

* Job applicant (bring a fake resume, or file folder)

* New intern (maybe have a name of the office on the next floor)

* Bike messenger (have a messenger bag, or dress in bike clothes)

* Maintenance technician (have a clipboard, tool box/belt, invoice etc)

* Architecture student (camera? notepad? Tape measure?)

* Smoke breaks ("what are you doing on this roof?")

* Lovers looking for privacy for a tryst (this can cause embarrassment for the person who catches you, which can work in your favor)

OUTDOORS (INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES ETC)

* Hiker/jogger

* Lost dog owner (you can wander all over, just have an empty leash)

* Bird watcher (bring some binoculars, notepad, bird chart)

* Amateur photographer (justifies your fancy camera or tripod)

* Movie location scout

ON-SITE SCOUTING

Ok, finally. You are on-site, doing a scout. You've done your research, you've got a list of questions and ideas bouncing around your head, you've got a cover story, and you've got absolutely nothing in your pockets but lint and some holes. Wait—what? How will lint help you scouting? It probably won't but—but there are plenty of toys that might make your scouting more effective. Some of these might be tools (ways to measure distance, or a notepad to take notes), and some might be props (costumes, or distractions). It all depends on what you are scouting of course—but here are some materials that are often brought on scouting trips and some ideas on how they can be useful. Many scouters agree that a cell phone is indispensable—for cover stories, for safety, as a tool, and as a prop.

* **Addresses.** Maybe you memorized the location of where you are scouting, but knowing what's nearby might be useful. Maybe having the address of a building next-door can help explain while you are wandering around looking suspicious (err, confused).

* **Aerial Photos.** Knowing the layout of a location can be really helpful. GoogleMaps (and GoogleEarth), as well as Microsoft's Maps (Bing / Live Local) are good, free sources for these, but the resolution varies—check them all. You can also try paid services like TerraServer, or EarthExplorer.

* **Baby Wipes.** Sometimes getting dirty is fun, but sometimes it isn't. And sometimes looking dirty can raise eyebrows..

* **Baseball Cap.** A baseball cap can be more useful than you first think. In brushy country it can help keep stuff out of your eyes. They are also particularly useful at night when you can use the brim of the cap to screen out unwanted light allowing you to peer into those dark areas with more effectiveness.

* **Binoculars.** Often very useful, Binoculars are described by two numbers, 8 x 35, for example. The first number is the magnification and the second is the width of the field of view. For land-use, magnifications of 8 to 10 times are good. On the water, where it's hard to keep the binoculars stable, a seven power magnification is often used. Top of the line binoculars may have a built-in compass and reticule (an etched scale useful in estimating heights and distances).

* **Camera, with correct lenses**. An essential tool for most scouts. A picture can be worth a thousand words. In some cases the camera catches detail that the eye misses. It helps you remember detail. Take lots of photos. If necessary, do a sketch map of the different shots and angles. A 50mm lens together with a zoom is a good basic kit. Make sure you have extra batteries for the camera.

* **Cell Phone**. Modern smartphones can provide a ton of information on the fly - from a map, a quick photograph, or a voice recorder to take notes on. Phones are also great props - wandering aimless while on a phone doesn't tend to raise eyebrows. And talking on the phone can make others less likely to approach you—if your call is clearly more important than they are.

* **City Maps.** Especially if you're scouting in an unfamiliar city. It will help you in planning the action. Look for a map that allows you to take notes easily!

* **Duct Tape.** No explanation needed. Fixing things, keeping doors from closing/locking, or marking things. I keep some wrapped on my water bottle.

* **Electronic measuring tapes.** Sometimes it is just too damn obvious when you pull out that honkin' hundred foot tape and begin measuring the senator's office. The solution is an infrared tape measure—they actually don't cost that much and are very unobtrusive. Point and push the button. The more money you spend - the more precise they are—but even a $20 unit is pretty reliable.

* **Headlamp**. Hand-held flashlights can be frustrating, even dangerous, to use. A headlamp is a much better choice. Some also have red lenses to save your night vision.

* **Identification.** Whether to carry identification on a scout has been endlessly debated - but here's some food for thought. If you get caught and you probably can talk your way out, you don't need ID. If the cops or company security become involved, you probably will need it. They tend not to release you until they are satisfied they know who you are.

* **Measuring tape.** How big is the pipe? How wide is the gate? The steel tape 25 foot model works well. Also, some string to measure circumferences might be handy.

* **Money.** Each person in the scout team should carry a little in case they get separated or picked up. A few bucks for a cab fare should be the minimum.

* **Notepad with pencils or pens.** You can also purchase waterproof paper and pens for inclement field work.

* **Proper Clothing.** Many a scout has been cut prematurely short by wet or frozen activists. Conditions can change, be ready.

* **Raingear.** Like we just said—proper clothing. The theory goes that rain gear is actually rain prevention gear. If you have it with you it keeps the rain away. If you don't bring raingear, expect it to rain.

* **Tape Recorder.** If quiet isn't a requirement, speaking your notes into a tape recorder is a good, fast way to get a lot of data. The small Radio Shack models with voice-operated (VOX) microphones are good. Again, modern cell phones can often cover this.

* **Video recorder.** A picture can be worth a thousand words, and video can be a thousand pictures. Even the small FlipCams can be discrete, and offer great quality.

* **Watch.** Another part of the basic scouting tool kit. Time is relative to your adrenaline level: measure, don't estimate. If it has a stopwatch, timer, and alarm all the better.

TIPS ON HOW TO GET THE IDEAL MEASUREMENTS

A big part of scouting is measuring things. How tall is the building? How wide is the roadway? How big of a banner can we fit in there? How many people can sit inside that office? How long will it take to walk from one place to the other?

Obviously, you can get the most precise measurements using a tape measure. But sometimes this isn't that feasible—maybe you would draw too much attention to yourself, or the distance is too great. What are your other options? Hardware stores commonly sell digital measuring tapes—you just point and aim at a distant object (a wall, the ground etc), and a little laser tells you your distance. The more money you spend —the higher the accuracy and greater the distance, but even basic units (~$20) an be fairly accurate. These are great—if there's a solid object that you can use to bounce the laser.

Finding patterns in something can also be a fairly accurate method. Look for patterns on sidewalk bricks, building architecture, window patterns, bridge trusses etc. If you can measure the measurement of one, you can then multiply the rest. For instance, if you know a concrete pattern in the sidewalk is 3 feet, you can easily walk by a building and count the number of sidewalk blocks discretely. If you know a window is 6 feet tall—you can fairly well estimate the distance of several stories. Knowing the distance of your walking pace is useful too. Most people average around 2.5 feet in a pace, but it varies. Use a measuring tape to mark out 100', then walk that distance, counting your paces. Do it 2 or 3 times to get a solid average, divide 100 by your count and voila—you know how much distance you cover with each pace you take.

What about the diameter of a railing, pillar or trees? Take a piece of string or tape and mark that. Then measure it when you get home and can be more discrete. A sewer's tape also works if being discrete is less of a concern. How wide is your armspan? (hint: for most people it's pretty darn close to their height!). Go hug a tree, and see where your arms end up.

How tall is a building? Well, count how many stories there are. A story can be anywhere from 10-15 ft on average—so this will only give you a very rough idea. But if you can get into a stairwell, you can measure the exact height of 1 story, and get a much better estimation that way. You can also try taking a picture of a building with a person standing in front of it. If you know the height of the person (let's say 6'), you can study your photo and see how many "persons" stack up. Remember that the angle (pointing up) may skew the image a bit, but this is usually a decent gauge.

SCOUT REPORTS

What and why?
Every successful scout should be documented in a scout report. A scout report is a summary of all of the relevant information gathered during the scout and has several purposes. First and foremost, it is an easy point of reference; as time passes, memory of specific details (such as measurements) fades and having a detailed report to refer to helps ensure that future events are based on accurate information. In some situations, events can be postponed indefinitely and having a reliable source of information for easy recall is important.

Scout reports also serve the vital function of informing others. In an ideal scenario, the scouter is also the action coordinator, but that is not always the way it works out. Therefore, a detailed scout report can work wonders for an incoming action coordinator who is not familiar with the action site and target. A scout report also is extremely helpful to others on the action team; specifically campaigners and photo/video folks. A report can give them an idea of how feasible a site is, what kind of messaging would be effective, what the ideal photo would be and where the photographer and/or videographer could place themselves to capture that image. Finally, scout reports can help provide arrestable team members with a sense of familiarity and confidence in a site.

The point here should be clear: the scout is not over until the report has been written.

What to include?

Scout reports can be very simple (a diagram drawn on a napkin) or very detailed (a 30 page manifesto). Sometimes the former can be sufficient, but in most cases, more information is required than can be jotted on the back of a napkin. Here are some things that could be included in a report:

✶ **Photos, photos, photos**. Photos are necessary for every one's sake. They can be used later for measurements, they can help the campaigner sort out what the banner should say and where it should be placed, they can help media folks figure out where they should be on the day of the event and they can inform team members who have not yet seen the action site.

✶ **Basics about the site**. This section can go into great depth, depending on the target. Using an office building as an example, it would be useful to note its street address, the cross streets surrounding the building, the size of the building, what kind of business is conducted there, what times the doors are unlocked in the morning and locked at night, whether the public has open access, what kind of clientele frequent the building, whether there is a convenient 'hang out' spot in the lobby, etc. Perhaps your action site is outside the building, in which case you might provide information about the surrounding foliage, what buildings are next to and across the street, etc. Every action site is different and providing a general introduction to the basics of the specific site can be invaluable.

✶ **Measurements (if applicable)**. How big is the roadway being blocked? How wide is the door that needs lock down devices? How tall is the railing that will host a banner in the near future? Measurements are often the hardest piece of information to get and once you have it, you do not want to lose it. Even though the campaign or media folks may be less interested in this part of scouting, you should include it for later reference.

✶ **Security**. Scouters often are not able to get much information about security the first time they visit a site. But some key considerations for the report include: whether there are security personnel on site; if so, the number on site, whether they patrol regularly or sporadically, and whether they are obviously dressed. A scouter should also document the presence of security cameras, alarms, and restricted elevator and stairwell access, amongst other things. It is also helpful to note the nearest police station and whether the site is private or public, state or federal. Security patterns change over time, but having a record of what it was like at the time

the site was scouted (make sure to note the time and date of the scout!) will help inform the coordinator of whether the patterns are reliable (it is still the same at a later date) or subject to change and, therefore, unreliable (a new pattern has formed).

✶ **Action ideas**. This is where creativity becomes important. Often a scout serves to generate action ideas about a particular site. Even if the scouter is scouting for a particular tactic, documenting other possible action ideas that would be appropriate for the site ensures that the site will be utilized in some way, although perhaps not in the way it was intended (perhaps the site was originally identified as a potential blockade site but, due to security concerns identified by the scouter, it is more useful as a projection site).

✶ **Overall assessment.** These sections are presented here in no particular order and providing an overall assessment at the beginning of the report may make more sense, depending on the success of the scout. In general, the scouter is scouting the site because she is the best one equipped to do it. Therefore, she should include her own impressions of the site, noting the strengths and weaknesses of this particular site that could lead to success or failure of the action. The scouter should practice some diplomacy in this section (after all, it is possible that many people will review what she has written), but still be transparent about things that concern or encourage her.

✶ **Budget.** If the scouter is not well versed in the expense of particular tactics, this section may not be appropriate. However, if the scouter is experienced in the costs associated with different tactics, it always helps to craft a rough budget for the particular site and the particular tactic.

✶ **Logistics.** This last section is often omitted for the sake of expediency. However, some scouters include information about transportation options, the location of hardware stores, grocery stores, city maps, etc.

Perhaps you are beginning to see why a scout report can become a 30 page manifesto. Once this life work has been completed, it might need to get in to the hands of other people in a safe and secure manner. The next section will address a variety of methods of communication.

WAYS TO PRESENT INFORMATION

Here are a couple of possible ways to relay information. This is not an exhaustive list, by any means, but it should be enough to get you started.

★ Hushmail. This is one possible way to communicate with other team members with some degree of security. Hushmail is a free email service (www.hushmail.com) and user to user email is encrypted. Hushmail guarantees privacy so long as the user does not facilitate illegal action through the use of their email accounts (ie: conspiring to commit a crime). If a scouter is careful about word choice when writing the scout report, she will not violate Hushmail user terms.

★ TrueCrypt. TrueCrypt is a free, open-source encryption program that can be used to lock access to files on a hard drive or USB. It can also hide files and folders, so that they do not even show up on a file scan without an unprompted password login. As TrueCrypt is very proud to note, even the FBI has been unsuccessful in breaking their encryption codes. But a word to the wise: if you use TrueCrypt, don't try to just wing it—make use of the help manual and volume-creation wizard. If you don't set it up properly (or lose your password), your files will likely be gone forever, as there is no retrieval program. So proceed with caution.

★ Dead-drop addy. A quick and easy way to transfer a scout report is to open up an email account through a free service (gmail, hotmail, yahoo, etc) and drop the report in the drafts folder. The recipient of the scout report than signs in to the account, retrieves the file from the drafts folder, and closes the account out.

★ Face-to-face. The old tried and true: get off the computer, go outside, and give the person the scout report.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SCOUTING

This section serves just to remind you that sometimes ethical issues can arise while scouting. There is no way to prepare for all of the possible obstacles that you might have to face, but there are some general boundaries that you might want to establish before engaging in the scout. This will save you from having to make some tough decisions on the fly while in the field.

Experienced scouters tend to have formed firm opinions about whether or not they are comfortable with lying, trespassing, and damaging locks and other entrance points. Other scouters are not opposed to developing relationships under false pretenses in order to obtain information. Some information can be more easily obtained if children are used as props. Other sites require the scouter to present herself in a less dignified manner, or one that runs counter to her personal, political and social orientations.

To give you a better sense of some issues that could arise, here are a few examples of decisions made by other scouters in the past. Please note, we are not advocating that you adopt this same level of ethical flexibility.

★ Befriending a security guard in order to get information, knowing he might lose his job if the action is successful

★ Getting children to open alarmed doors and enter into a restricted area so that there is a reason to follow them there

★ Eating meat at a social function, although the scouter was a vegetarian

★ Using disempowering language, in order to blend in

The point here is not for us to tell you what you should and should not feel comfortable doing, but to remind you that scouting can push your own personal ethical boundaries. Do yourself a favor and establish, in advance, where you draw the line. Scouting a target site should never diminish your sense of self respect and personal integrity.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Like most things in life, getting better at scouting takes practice. But sometimes screwing up a scout can mean screwing up an action—getting caught or having wrong information isn't usually ideal. Here are some ideas for games you can play to build scouting skills—that hopefully entail a minimal amount of risk, have nothing to do with actual campaign targets, and hopefully provide a bit of fun on a Friday night (in that nerdy, 007 sort of way). Of course, all these games can be modified to your heart's content!

Hotel Adventures (This is one my favorites, and can be done by yourself, or better with a partner (or a bunch of friends in teams)

✶ Pick out a semi-fancy hotel or two. Decide on some information that each team must gather. This could be anything, but some goals might include:

✶ Get a photo in the honeymoon suite

✶ Identify all the main entrances and exits, and get dimensions on each.

✶ Identify all the stairwells, and which ones have roof access, and which ones have access to the basement (or parking garage)

✶ Learn the hotels basic security features (cameras? Security staff? How many?)

✶ How to get this information is up to you—but creative cover stories (Newlyweds? Executive assistant? Manager of a VIP?) makes for good practice!

Urban Capture the Flag

✶ Not really Capture the Flag, but you can create some games using industrial areas, parking lots, or even a shopping mall. Keep running to a minimum, but create some scenarios where some people are "security" and others are "activists." Decide on what information the activists need to gather without getting caught, or a certain place they need to access.

✶ Learn how to blend into your surroundings, move discretely, gather information, or take measurements, without getting caught by the "security" flashlights. NO RUNNING!

Sneaking into events (concerts, movie theaters, conferences etc)

✶ Spend the day at a sizable concert or event—watching how the setup crews work, watch what they wear, what types of vendors are common (sound engineers, catering companies, electricians, etc.)

✶ Try to sneak into the concert—either during the setup, or posing as a worker. Practice your cover stories, learn how to act confidently in places you're not supposed to be in, and how to identify patterns in workers' or security behaviors.

✶ Bonus points if you get to enjoy the concert too!