I nstead of hoping for a bureaucratic organization to do something for us, we can take our ideas into our own hands by self-organizing. The formation of a crew is a step in this direction. A crew is a collection of close friends that trusts one another enough to organize together. This means having shared intentions, ideas, and practices, having each other’s backs, and never talking to police. In other words, this means sharing affinity. Some people refer to crews as affinity groups. While who is in your crew can be somewhat flexible depending on what you’re trying to do, it does imply having people with whom to consistently participate in social struggles and develop a more long-term strategy. It often involves sharing your day-to-day life and knowing people well. This means knowing what is shared, but even more importantly, knowing where real political differences exist.

A crew is a small group of people who organize without hierarchy – there are no leaders or followers, and everyone chooses how to take part in the activity. Crews can form anywhere: in school, on the street, and on the job. This is an effective way of organizing because, in a small group, you are making decisions and setting goals with people that you already share affinity with, without needing to vote or use formal processes. Doing so sidesteps the alienation and stagnation that happens as a result of the bureaucratization of the student movement – however, self-organization requires a lot more initiative and creativity; since nobody will put your ideas into action for you. Another benefit is that the decentralization of action planning renders repression of social movements more difficult.

Larger endeavours that are beyond the organizational capacity of a given crew, such as occupations or demonstrations, may require assemblies or other means to coordinate with others. This larger coordination structure based on autonomy stands in contrast to the standard idea of general assemblies, which require voting or consensus, whose ultimate function is to control and limit the struggle.

As people realize their own power as individuals and communities, the poster of those in authority (e.g. the administration, the politicians, the police, and the bosses) will be withering away. This is what happens in any community garden, any occupation, and any riot. Individuals see that they can grow their own food and help others do the same; they see what they can do with just a few others. They see that they can take and hold space, and make entirely new ways of interacting together possible, while fighting off the institutions that stand in their way. When space is liberated, when we fight authority, we see that capitalism is not absolute. We realize that most of the things around us that we value are of our own creation. Contrary to the widespread myths, authority is in fact unnecessary and harmful.

When more people realize their actual capacity to determine their own lives, they, along with others, become a material force. One of a physical nature, unlike the voting polls that only act as a means to confuse where our true power lies – in our own hands. Those who wish to play puppet master know this. The people who fancy themselves our rulers and keepers – politicians, bosses, police, judges, and many others – long ago organized themselves into a force that can in actuality change things, move things, and control things. Crews act as a counterforce to those whose goal is to profit by dominating us.

Crews, then, serve a role in protecting ourselves from those who would like to exploit us for the sake of the economy. From those who would like us to continue working for scraps and piling up huge debts. Crews can come to demonstrate prepared and with clearly formulated ideas and plans about what they want to see happen, opening up interesting possibilities in otherwise ritualized processes from point A to point B. Crews can organize to disrupt the functioning of the economy, both on campus and off, through blockades, sabotage, occupations, and other forms of action. Crews can get together and articulate their ideas on the walls of the campuses and city streets with graffiti and posters. They can make sure that advertisements never stay up for long, and that police stations, banks, and gentrifying apartments or restaurants are never safe. Crews can steal from big businesses, such as by expropriating grocersies to pass out for free in their neighbourhoods. They can take money from capitalism and give it to social projects autonomous from the state, or initiate those projects themselves. Crews form to act as a force against those who would rather see us subservient or behind bars.

Crews can form to approach the police when they are harassing someone on the street or in the métro. They can attack the immigration machine that deport and imprisons. They can stop the landlord trying to evict their neighbours. They can steal from capitalism and give it to social projects autonomous from the state, or initiate those projects themselves. Crews form to act as a force against those who would rather see us subservient or behind bars. Crews can form to approach the police when they are harassing someone on the street or in the métro. They can attack the immigration machine that deport and imprisons. They can stop the landlord trying to evict their neighbours.

Crews can de-arrest someone at a demonstration without hesitation, even if they don’t know them. They can smash banks and other spaces which exist to reproduce capitalism. They can build up their communities through solidarity, so that the police hesitate before following someone into a neighbourhood or a campus.

On campus, crews can extend the reach of the strike. Open up the universities as social spaces for students and non-students alike to come in and use freely. Appropriate the copy machines and spread news of the revolt to other sectors of society. Take over the cafeterias and bars and begin preparing the communal feast. Burn the debt records. In short, create not an “alternative” that can easily be accommodated within capitalist society, but rather liberated space in which power is built to destroy capitalist society.

The point of acting is to gain control over our lives and to further our own power, as well as the power of those who have always been dispossessed in this society.

Crews strike back.

**THE FORMATION OF CREWS:**

**A Tactic in Expanding Our Strength and Autonomy**

**OCCUPATION: a do-it-yourself guide**

This is a modified version of a text which originally appeared in After the Fall, a publication that came out after the wave of student rebellion in California in 2009.

**Preface: Why Occupy?**

T HE REVOLT IN NORTH AMERICA has been too timid for too long. We are afraid of the cops. We are afraid of losing our jobs or getting expelled from school. No one wants to take risks; no one wants anyone else to take risks. Protests are boring, poorly attended, and ineffective. Peaceful marches or rallies reduce us to passive observers of what is supposed to be our own activity. We are told to express our anger and frustration by shouting or chanting, but otherwise, we are asked to exercise restraint.

At the general assembly, participants are asked “what do you want to do next?” But they are never asked the obvious question – “what do you want to do right now?” When we decide from those who would like us to continue working for scraps and piling up huge debts. Crews can come to demonstrate prepared and with clearly formulated ideas and plans about what they want to see happen, opening up interesting possibilities in otherwise ritualized processes from point A to point B. Crews can organize to disrupt the functioning of the economy, both on campus and off, through blockades, sabotage, occupations, and other forms of action. Crews can get together and articulate their ideas on the walls of the campuses and city streets with graffiti and posters. They can make sure that advertisements never stay up for long, and that police stations, banks, and gentrifying apartments or restaurants are never safe. Crews can steal from big businesses, such as by expropriating grocersies to pass out for free in their neighbourhoods. They can take money from capitalism and give it to social projects autonomous from the state, or initiate those projects themselves. Crews form to act as a force against those who would rather see us subservient or behind bars.

Crews can form to approach the police when they are harassing someone on the street or in the métro. They can attack the immigration machine that deport and imprisons. They can stop the landlord trying to evict their neighbours. They can de-arrest someone at a demonstration without hesitation, even if they don’t know them. They can smash banks and other spaces which exist to reproduce capitalism. They can build up their communities through solidarity, so that the police hesitate before following someone into a neighbourhood or a campus.

On campus, crews can extend the reach of the strike. Open up the universities as social spaces for students and non-students alike to come in and use freely. Appropriate the copy machines and spread news of the revolt to other sectors of society. Take over the cafeterias and bars and begin preparing the communal feast. Burn the debt records. In short, create not an “alternative” that can easily be accommodated within capitalist society, but rather liberated space in which power is built to destroy capitalist society.

The point of acting is to gain control over our lives and to further our own power, as well as the power of those who have always been dispossessed in this society.

Crews strike back.
Plan ahead
- Whether we occupy as a small group of clandestine adventurers or at the head of a large and organized crowd, it is a good idea to plan ahead.
- Scope out the building. What sorts of doors do we need to open? Where are the escape routes? Are there materials to defend against police?
- Draw a large crowd in an occupation
  - A large crowd, especially of "ordinary, everyday people", is our first line of defense against a police attack.
  - But our best chance of holding the occupation is to be together as a large crowd. That’s why it is essential to have as many people as possible on our side—enough to deter police and ensure escape outlets upon our own activity. We have to take matters into our own hands. A huge demonstration is not a means to better bargaining; it is nothing if it is not an end in itself. A huge demonstration becomes an end in itself only when people at the demonstration are aware of their own; when they reject the leaders, who acting on their own interest, tell people to be "reasonable" or to wait for the right moment. When things get hot, the self-elected of the student movement are waiting with their trusty fire extinguishers ready in hand because they know that when people act on their own, as their self-interest, their authority crumbles and everyone can see how bankrupt their strategy of containment actually is. We must denounce and destroy the repressive, the paramilitary, the thing that seeks to escalate the movement and integrate it back into politics.

The representation of the student body has become an enemy of the body.

This is a guide to immediate action. It explains how to occupy buildings, with particular attention to universities.

That is not because we believe students at the university have a special role to play, or because occupations are the only actions that will be of value which we believe are not possible—are at the university, we have occupied a building here, and we begin with what we know.

Occupations are a common tactic used at universities and other workplaces around the world. In 1999, students occupied the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the largest university in Latin America, to ensure that university education would remain free. In 2006, students occupied universities throughout France to repeal the CPE act, which would have made it easier for bosses to fire young workers.

We have been criticized for having acted as clandestine "adventurists", for ignoring the democratic process. We have seen the results of that process far too many times. It is not that we have rejected the failures of writing campaigns or teach-ins, they decide to try something else. They are disheartened that their hard work has come to nothing, and they return to their normal lives. We believe the student movement is not involved and democratically decide to make the same mistakes.

We have lived through too many cycles of failure and seek to try something else.

We wager that when people see what we are doing, they will get involved. So, far, that has proven true. Once enough people are involved, we will no longer have to act in a clandestine fashion. We will openly decide what to do next. Will we march immediately to the administration?

GET CONTROL OVER A DOOR
- When we scope out a building, we want to get a sense of how we can open up the space to everyone once the occupation is under way.
- Choose a door, an accessible window, or some other method of getting people into and out of the space.
- When outside barricades are built, make sure people know not to barricade this one entrance too.
- For this entrance, set up a lock that can be opened and closed easily, so when the time is right, we can let more people into the space.

OPEN THE SPACE TO OTHER PEOPLE
- People often want to debate who should let people in the space, is it safe to open the space when the occupation is under way?
- The risks of diluting the group or letting in people with nefarious intentions can be guarded against by the group that is acting open to everyone.
- When the occupation reduces the risks taken by the original occupants. It’s also the point of occupying—to build a movement through action.
- This is why we place more on the presence, having a crowd inside police barricades allows people in and out of the occupation via the crowd.

TRANSFORM THE SPACE
When we occupy spaces, we never use them as they were "intended to be used": libraries are no longer only for reading books. We take over spaces to transform their uses: we organize to occupy more spaces and build a social movement, but we also have fun.

Throw a sick-as-fuck dance party!

Do not make occupations into arrest actions
- Occupations are tactics within a broader struggle. There is no reason to get arrested just to be good. When all else fails, run away!
Building barricades

When possible, build barricades both inside and outside the doors.

For the inside:
- Use as much heavy furniture as possible.
- Distribute the furniture evenly among the doors.
- Nothing too complicated or precarious.
- Do not excessively barricade the door without more than two doors.
- Do not stack up furniture that can be easily pushed aside, once doors are breached.
- We need to be able to apply pressure to keep the barricades in place (e.g., by pushing on it).

For the outside:
- Have a large crowd surrounding the building and especially against the doors.
- If police are erecting barricades, we want to do so inside the barricades.
- A separate, outside team should roll in and build outside barricades and then dispense.
- Use dumpsters, trees, water-pails, chain- and fire-hoses, garbage cans filled with rocks.
- Make sure the outside team knows which door we want to control, so they do not barricade it too heavily.

Outside support: Legal support

Before the event takes place, write the name of a known lawyer on your body. The lawyer should have some experience with similar situations.

Have a legal support team:
- Have someone outside to note or record any information police officers and their badge numbers.
- Have someone at a leadline to contact for jail support. This number should be able to accept collect calls.
- Anything you post in the event can be confiscated by police.

Know your rights:
- The only thing you legally have to tell the police is your name, your date of birth, and your address. You have the right to remain silent - use it (even though they will try to use all sorts of tactics to try to get you to talk).
- Releasing arrest raises the stakes, if a police officer stops you, ask if you are being arrested, and then, if they are not being detained, walk away.

Outside support: Medical team

Have assigned medics both inside and outside.
- Medics should know about the needs of specific individuals involved in the action beforehand (medical allergies, medications).
- They should have a medical aid kit.
- Bring with you: water, latex gloves, duct tape, band-aids, gauze and tape, hydrogen peroxide, iodine, aspirin, bandage.

Wear or bring with you:
- Comfortable clothing, running shoes, long-sleeved, eye protection, clothes to change into, a mask.

Do not wear:
- Contact lenses, oil-based makeup, things which can be easily grabbed. Do not use tampons if you may end up in jail.

For pepper spray: clean out eyes with a mixture of milk of magnesia and water.

For tear gas: cover mouth with a cloth soaked in vinegar or lemon juice; use eye protection.

Outside support: Media team

This is not a symbolic action, but it is still effective within a media team. Have one or more people designated as media contacts, on the outside of the occupation:
- Remember to emphasize the people as delegates, not representatives of your group.
- Send articles to different news outlets; alternative media such as Salsable and Mediascope offer letters of support for publication of events.
- Set up an email address and website associated with the occupation; make this information easily available.
- Do not use the email addresses of anyone involved in the action.

Security awareness

Security awareness is a set of practices designed to keep everyone involved in social struggle safer by systematically reducing risk. The simple reality is that governments target those who participate in social struggle. They will use all sorts of tactics to try to get you to talk. The police are not there to protect you, they are there to target you.

Two exceptions

There are only two possibilities that are acceptable to speak about specific actions and involvement.

1. If you're planning an action, with the people you're going to be with. However, these discussions should never take place over the internet (email), phone lines or in proximity of a cell-phone, through the mail, or in an accomplice's home or car, as these places and forms of communication are frequently monitored. The only people who should hear this discussion would include those who are actively participating in the action. Anyone who is not involved does not need to know and, therefore, should not know.

2. After a person has been arrested and brought to trial. If they are found guilty, they can freely speak of the actions for which they were convicted. However, they must never give information that would help the authorities determine who else participated in illegal activities.

The reason for these security precautions is obvious: if people don't know anything, they can't talk about it.

Also:
- Don't gong in or brag in order to impress others or try to “fit in.”
- Beware of alcohol/drugs and lose lips.
- Know your limits: don't do anything if you couldn't handle the worst possible consequences.
- Lying to the police is a crime, but you have the right to remain silent - use it, even if you can try to get yourself arrested.
- You don't have to let CSIS or the police into your home unless they have a legal warrant.
- Balance the need for security with the need to be accessible to potential friends.

Some people just don't know about security awareness, so if someone is behaving in a security-violating way, it's really important to tell them and ask them to stop. Silence

It needs to be strong throughout our movements that no one is under any legal obligation to provide the police with any more information than one's own name, address, and birth date, and only if one is under arrest. That is it! Saying anything more guarantees exposure. Even reporting seemingly insignificant questions can assist the police in developing personal profiles. It may not be “evidence” but it is used to give police “leads” on other suspects and construct interest during legal proceedings. The only principled response to the police questioning when under arrest is to say nothing more than your name, birth date, and address. If questioned further, you can simply say “I have nothing to say.”

Adapted from an article in the January 2005 edition of the “Practical Security Handbook for Activists & Revolutionaries,” “Security Culture: a handbook for activists” (with special permission from the Canadian context).

What not to say

To begin with, there are certain things that are inappropriate to discuss. These things include:
- Your involvement or someone else's involvement with illegal activity.
- Someone else's desire to get involved with such activity.
- Asking others if they participate in illegal activity.
- Your participation or someone else's participation in any action that was illegal.
- Someone else's advocacy for such actions.
- Your plans or someone else's plans for a future action.

In short, don't ask and don't tell.

It's fine to speak about direct action, in general terms. It is perfectly legal, secure, and desirable that people speak out in support of direct action and all forms of resistance. The danger lies in linking individuals to specific actions or groups.
While people can participate in demos with their crew, sometimes it makes sense for crews to act together in a contingent or a bloc. The form chosen should fit the context. Here is a collection of tips for acting within demos – some are applicable more broadly, others are more specific to a bloc.

• The way a demo moves can determine its outcome. While there are situations where moving quickly can be strategic, running blindly in a panic is the worst thing people can do. The police often attempt to disperse rowdy demos, and being able to hold our ground, not panic, and fight back is crucial.

• A make march – weaving up and down different streets and changing directions often and unpredictably (but strategically) – is a good way for spontaneous demos to evade police. Marching against traffic on one-way streets makes it difficult for the police to control the march.

• It is important to pay attention to what’s happening around you. Stay aware of your surroundings. Notice any police lines that are being reinforced. Kettleing is another tactic police use in mass arrests wherein they try to surround a demo from all sides, either in a street between intersections, or inside an intersection. This is why, if the demo is large enough, it should always try to hold two intersections at a time to allow an alternate route open.

• Structures for quick communication need to be developed. People can spread messages and plans quickly by going from crew to crew.

• Never take photos of anything that can be incriminating. If putting media online, block out faces – police routinely use footage posted online as evidence. Placards, banners, and paint can be used to block unfriendly cameras.

• Don’t come to a demo as a passive observer, hoping others have a plan. Come prepared to participate actively and have your own goals and plans.

The purpose of the bloc as a tactic is to have everyone look as similar as possible, so that no single individual can be identified within the anonymous mass. Blocs are not necessary for acting in the street – people can also self-organize into contingents, or act as individuals – but they can help to keep everybody safer. If only some people within a bloc take these precautions, the cops can more easily spot and target individuals and groups, which is dangerous both for those who are acting within the bloc and for those who are not. Those who make the effort to stay anonymous can draw extra police attention; those who don’t can’t be more easily identified, which can make them easier targets. Neither of these situations is desirable.

• If you’re going to wear a mask, keep it on at all appropriate times. If you are captured on camera or witnessed at any point with your mask off, you can thereafter be easily identified with it on. Don’t just cover your face. Bandanas are popular and convenient, but they don’t conceal enough. Cover your head completely so your hair cannot be seen – especially if it’s distinctive. In a bloc, you can do this by wearing a ski mask or making a mask out of a t-shirt – stretch the neck hole across your eyes and tie the sleeves behind your head, with the rest of the starting covering your head and shoulders.*

• Be extremely conscientious about where and when you change into and out of your mask and other anonymizing clothing; there should be no cameras or hostile witnesses. If possible, explore the area in advance to find appropriate spaces for changing. Remember that police are especially likely to target masked individuals who are not in a crowd that is similarly dressed.

• Wear different outfits layered one upon the other. Ideally, you should have one outfit for getting to the site of the action without attracting attention, your anonymous gear for the action itself, and then another outfit underneath so you can look like a good citizen as you exit the area.

• Do not march in a bloc wearing your regular clothing, especially if it’s distinctive. Cops may be stupid, but they can probably match the pictures of the masked-up person with the purple polka-dotted pants to pictures of the same person in the same outfit minus the mask – even if the pictures were taken on different days.

• Backpacks and shoes are also used to identify people from demos. Rather than using the same ones you wear in everyday life, use different ones. Consider covering shoes with large socks if appropriate.

• Cover or remove anything that can identify you: patches, piercings, and tattoos.

• If possible, cover your eyes with goggles to protect from pepper spray or tear gas. If you wear glasses, wear non-descript ones. Contact lenses are not recommended in situations where you may come into contact with chemical weapons. If in winter your glasses fog up with a mask, you can wear contacts but have goggles on hand.

• Be careful not to leave fingerprints. Wear cloth gloves – leather and latex can retain fingerprints and even pass them on to objects you touch. Wipe down tools and other items with rubbing alcohol in advance to clean fingerprints off them – you never know what might get lost in the chaos.

• Banners along the sides and front of a bloc can function to observe surveillance, and can also help to protect people from being snatched by police.

• Placards and flags made with heavy wood can be used for self-defense in a pinch (and are longer than batons!). Barricades, fireworks, paint bombs, fire extinguishers, rocks, and other creative means can keep enemies at a distance.

• Knowing the terrain can be invaluable – where there are barricades, materials, action targets, and stash spots for tools to be picked up during the demo? Where are local alleys, backyards, hiding spots, crowded areas, cameras, and public transit locations for dispersal?

• Do not let any of this give you a false sense of security. Be careful. Assess your relationship to risk honestly. Make sure you know and trust the people you’re working with, especially when it comes to high-risk activities. Practice security awareness at all times. Know and assert your legal rights when dealing with police. Do not make things better, but failing to do so will certainly make them worse.

Why Wear a Mask?

Individuals cover their faces and conceal their appearances for the simple reason that they have no need to be identified. In this world where cameras sit on every other street corner, where the police, CSIS, and the RCMP use every chance they get to profile us, where participation in social struggle or public demonstrations can compromise our freedom and ability to act in the future, there is no reason to make their jobs easier for them. Just as we refuse to cooperate with CSIS interrogations and police investigations, we’re also going to make it as hard as we can for the systems of social control to crack down on us.

Developing a practice of (partial) anonymity at demonstrations opens up space for participation in actions you should otherwise be risking “too much” – i.e. legal status, potential arrest, loss of employment. Not only does it only make profiling more difficult, it also helps to keep people out of police custody: the Toronto police and community snitches had a much harder time identifying masked faces in their post-G20 Most Wanted list than those without, just as the police would probably have more trouble arresting people in the aftermath of the Vancouver hockey riot if the hooligans had been wearing masks. Wearing masks won’t get us home safely all the time, but it does disrupt routine repression and social control.

Paint Bombs: lightbulbs filled with paint

First, put on your cloth gloves. This will keep your fingertips (and the paint bombs) clean. You should work on a soft surface, like a folded towel, to protect your bush.

1. First, use needle-nose pliers to cut off the metal fitting. You can either cut two vertical slits in the fitting and wiggle it off, or cut around the entire thing.

2. Next, remove the glass tube and flament from inside the bulb. If they haven’t already broken in the process of cutting off the fitting, try gently poking them from the bottom with a screwdriver.

3. Fill the bulb with paint (use a funnel or cloth soap bottle and add some water if the paint is thick), seal the hole with paper, clay, or similar, and seal with electrical tape or melted wax. Moving indoor and outdoor paint makes it much more difficult to remove.

4. Wipe down the bulb with rubbing alcohol to remove any prints.