



**BUILDING
BARGAINING
POWER**

Picket Captain Manual

Local _____

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Thank you

The union is only as strong as the collective strength of our members.

Your role as Picket Captain is the most important role in running effective picket lines and making gains for our members.

The union will depend on you to run a well-organized picket line, be the link between the Strike Committee/Picket Coordinators and the picketers and present a positive face to the public and the media.

The members on your line will depend on you to share information, boost morale, solve problems, support them in the tough moments, and celebrate their solidarity.

Thanks for taking on this important role.

The role of the Picket Captain

The Picket Captain is:

- The representative of the union on the picket line
- The “leader” of the picket line – inspiring picketers, solving problems, listening, answering questions, speaking with visitors
- The link between the Strike Committee/Picket Coordinators and the picket line
- The media liaison (direct them to the union spokesperson)
- The liaison with police, security guards and picket line monitors

Picket Captain duties before the strike:

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- ✓ Help get the message out to the members. Tell your members that you were at picket captain training and share the message the Executive/Bargaining Committee/Strike committee wants to get out.
 - ✓ Talk about the issues with members. Bring in newspaper articles to spark discussion, encourage members to write letters to the editor or call in to radio shows.
 - ✓ Build support for the possible strike by knowing what the bargaining issues are and what the employer is asking members to give up.
 - ✓ Connect with the members who will be on your picket line. Or if the plan is that you recruit members, recruit people in their workplace.
 - ✓ Explain that members have the option to picket at their work location or at a location close to their home.
 - ✓ Develop and test the contact list and telephone tree for your picket line.
 - ✓ Distribute, collect and hand in Strike Pay Application Forms.
 - ✓ Encourage members in your workplace to avoid helping the employer prepare for a strike/lockout. Working overtime to complete work before a possible strike/lockout doesn't help our cause.
 - ✓ Get people together to prepare creative picket signs, banners, etc. for your picket line. Make sure messages are positive and consistent with the messages the union wants to get out.
 - ✓ Attend rallies organized by the Local and/or our allies

- ✓ Get to know your picket line location. Map out places to eat, toilet facilities, parking, shelter, local business contacts that might offer good deals to picketers, nearby community and labour support.
- ✓ Listen to members' concerns and answer members' questions about going on strike and picketing.
- ✓ Have private conversations with members who are saying they will cross the picket line. Remind them of the social consequences of scabbing, that they won't be covered by the Collective Agreement while working during a strike, and that it won't win them special status with management once the strike is over and the Collective Agreement is back in place. Report potential scab activity to the Picket Coordinators.
- ✓ Depending on the bargaining committee's plan, you might be asked to help mobilize support for a strike vote.

Taking it Outside!

Before the strike starts, it can be helpful for picket captains to experience what it's going to feel like to be on a picket line. Notice the following:

Picket line site:

Where will the picket line be, where will it move from and to? Where would you put a fire barrel or shelter? Where will you keep your supplies? Are there potential hazards? How can you keep the site safe and clean?

Traffic flow:

How could you delay traffic? Where would vehicles line up? How would vehicles stuck in the delayed traffic deal with the delay? Where would you hold the vehicles? How could you group vehicles? (For example, hold 3 at a time) How would delaying traffic affect the area? Would it interfere with traffic lights? How could you deal with these issues?

Sight lines:

Are there blind spots? Would delaying traffic create blind spots?

Hazards:

Would delaying traffic create a hazard for drivers, picketers or passersby? Would delaying traffic block any crosswalks? How could you deal with these issues?

Picketers:

Where will they park? Where is the closest washroom? Where can they get coffee, water, food? How many picketers will you need to safely and effectively picket at this site? (assuming they will keep moving)

Picket Captain duties during the strike:

- ✓ Arrive at your picket line 15 minutes early to get information from the Picket Captain you're replacing.
- ✓ If you have the first or last shift of the day, make sure you know who is responsible for bringing and picking up supplies, forms, etc. This will be decided by the Strike Committee before the strike begins.
- ✓ Always wear your picket captain vest/button while on duty.
- Greet all picketers and solidarity picketers who arrive on the line.
- ✓ Pass on any new information from the Strike Committee, Bargaining Committee or Local Executive.
- ✓ Complete the Picket Captain's Daily Report Form – make sure all members sign in, sign out and remain on duty for the length of their shift.
- ✓ Make sure the picket line is safe.
- ✓ Identify and assign roles for picketers to play (see below).
- ✓ Identify natural leaders on the picket line, especially those who might be interested in getting more involved in other actions to support the strike or lockout.
- ✓ Confirm the identity of scabs who are crossing the picket line. If possible, take a photo and give the information to the Picket Coordinators/Strike Committee.
- ✓ Let the Picket Coordinator know about people, other locals, community groups, etc. that have supported the picket line (so the union can thank them).
- ✓ Problem solve as needed.
- ✓ Let the Picket Coordinator know if you need more or fewer people on your line.
- ✓ Stay on the line until the next picket captain arrives.
- ✓ Make sure all forms are completed accurately and submitted right away.
- ✓ Pass on all forms to the next picket captain (or the Picketing Coordinator if you are on the last shift of the day.)

Picket line politics

Be prepared, be flexible, be fair

Expect the unexpected!

A strike is an intense time. Your leadership style will set the tone for what happens on the line and how members are engaged in the strike/lockout.

Be well prepared, flexible and fair. This kind of approach will help you deal with all the unexpected issues that will happen every day. Here are some tips:

- Use common sense to solve problems.
- Dress for the weather so you're comfortable on the picket line.
- Talk with the members – listen to their ideas, keep them informed and involved.
- Be empathetic – many members will be stressed about being on strike, being in conflict with the employer, coping without a pay cheque. Different members will be stressed about different things. Be sensitive to how this plays out on the line.
- Encourage trust and solidarity with the bargaining committee. Discourage criticism and questioning of the bargaining committee.

Picket Captain Kit

Item	✓ Have
Picket Captain Manual, additional information	
A notebook and pens, clipboard and paper, etc.	
Picketing protocol	
Extra copies of the Picket Captain's Daily Report Form	
Extra copies of leaflets to be given to people crossing the picket line	
Extra copies of the latest bargaining bulletin	
Extra copies of information sheets for picketers (Frequently Asked Questions, Strike Pay, letter to financial institutions, etc.)	
Extra copies of Incident Report Forms	
Picket signs (that reflect the union's key messages)	
Buttons, etc.	
Traffic cones (to slow traffic crossing the picket line and limit the chances of picketers being hit by a car)	
Contact list/phone tree for members on line	
Cell phone with numbers for everyone on your picket line/shift, Picket Line Coordinator, Strike Committee members, the union media spokesperson, strike headquarters, police, etc.	
A camera/video camera/phone to record problems as well as positive moments	
Map of the area	
Receipt books	
First Aid Kit	
Flashlight with fresh batteries	
Matches	
Toilet paper	
Garbage can and garbage bags	
Duct tape	

Picket Line Essentials

Why picket?

- To put pressure on the employer by slowing or stopping their ability to operate
- To build public support by letting the public know we're on strike (or locked out), and what the issues are

Does the law restrict what we do on the picket line?

Make sure you're familiar with the law in your province/jurisdiction and whether it restricts picket line activity. This is covered in Picket Captain Training. Follow the direction of the Picket Coordinator who can get answers from the national servicing representative and CUPE's legal branch.

Guidelines for picketing:

Distribute Information Sheet: Picket Line Guidelines to the members on the picket line:

- The picket line belongs to the union. Follow the direction of the Picket Captain.
- Sign in and out at the beginning and end of your picket duty.
- Keep the line moving!
- Stay safe and healthy. Don't put yourself at risk, especially with hostile drivers.
- Dress for the weather. Bring snacks and water.
- Follow the Picket Captain's directions for what to do and what to say if someone tries to cross the picket line.
- Conversation with the general public can be very positive. Remain polite, listen to them, and focus on one or two of the union's messages.
- Don't obstruct the general public from using the sidewalk or roadway in front of the picket line. Offer them information and wish them a good day.
- Never argue or debate with scabs or people passing by. Refer problems to the Picket Captain.
- If someone is abusive or violent with you, disengage. Fill out an incident report.
- Keep the picket line clean at all times.
- Never show up to picket drunk or stoned. No alcohol or drugs on the picket line.
- Bring family to the picket line at appropriate times. It's important that they understand what you're going through, what you're doing and why.
- Do not speak to the media. If approached, bring them to the Picket Captain.

How many picketers do we need on each picket line?

The Strike Committee will create the first plan for the picket lines. When the strike starts, you might notice that you need more or fewer picketers. Let the Picket Coordinator know so that the local can make sure each line has the number they need. The number needed depends on things like this:

- Some buildings might be closed during a strike. They would only need a small presence to monitor activity.
- Other picket lines might have more people and/or vehicles attempting to cross the line. The union needs to assign more picketers there.

Roles that picketers can play:

- creating and leading chants (that are consistent with the union's key messages)
- writing and singing songs (that are consistent with the union's key messages)
- distributing union materials
- talking to people in cars
- talking to people passing by
- tending the fire
- taking pictures (of problems as well as positive scenes from the picket line)
- videotaping (of problems as well as positive scenes from the picket line)
- counting the number of vehicles crossing the line
- keeping the area safe and clean
- organizing social events

Picket line protocols

In some provinces and with some locals there is a practice of negotiating written protocols. A protocol contains the rules that both sides agree to for picketing. In other places, there is no protocol. The Picket Coordinator or the Strike Committee will let you know if there's a protocol and what's in it.

If there isn't a protocol, the Strike Committee will tell you what the plan is for:

- How long to delay people or vehicles, if you do
- Picket schedules
- Picket locations
- Logistics for each picket line

Talking to the public

Our goal is to gain public support and have the public join us in putting pressure on the employer. It's easier to win public support if we have positive messages on the picket line and on our picket signs.

For example:

- we want to work for you
- we want a fair, negotiated agreement
- we're your neighbours
- we're part of the community
- we respect and support the citizens of our community
- we believe in...

We want to show the public that we want to be part of the solution.

Watch for members on your picket line who are good at talking to the public about the issues – people who are friendly, calm and communicate well.

The Strike Committee will provide information that you can share with the public when you're picketing.

If people don't want to talk or take a pamphlet, make sure they still get a smile and a "have a nice day!"

If someone is angry or confrontational, remain calm. Don't escalate the situation.

What about scabs?

A scab is a worker who engages in any strike-breaking activity or works for the employer during a legal labour dispute. Doing this is the worst form of anti-union activity. Crossing a picket line shows complete disrespect for co-workers and the democratic decision that the membership has made to go on strike.

Ideally, no one will cross your picket line. In some provinces, legislation bans scabs.

But it's important to have a plan for what to do and what to say if there are people who do want to cross – whether they are members who want to keep working, managers, other workers making deliveries, or members of the public.

You will get guidance from the Strike Committee about what to do in these situations. It's possible that the local will negotiate a picket line protocol with the employer or with

other unions. In some situations, the employer gets a court injunction to limit our picketing. Whatever the situation, here are some tips:

- Give clear directions to the picketers about what to do and what to say if someone wants to cross the picket line.
- Get the name, position, company (if external) and licence plate number of everyone who crosses and to take a picture if possible. Pass this information on to the Strike Committee.
- In the case of a lockout it's especially important to report workers who cross the picket line because it could then be argued that the employer has ended the lockout.
- Ask picketers to refer problems to you.
- Encourage picketers to stay calm and avoid debating or arguing with people.
- If you know someone who is scabbing or considering scabbing, talk to them in private. Listen to their reasons for crossing the line. Make sure they understand the impact it will have on their co-workers and that the union will track their actions. Depending on the local's policy, explain any consequences. Ask them to reconsider their decision.

How long can we hold up traffic?

Ideally, vehicles won't cross the picket line.

Find out if provincial law allows you to slow or stop traffic. If it does and vehicles want to cross your line, it's good to get them to stop long enough for a conversation about why workers are taking job action. Sometimes the local and the employer negotiate a length of time. Sometimes the police are involved in the negotiations.

Make sure everyone on the picket line knows what the plan is and stops each vehicle for the full time allowed.

Can we set up picket lines or stand on the employer's property?

It depends. Sometimes, the employer's property is public property, and we can set up picket lines on public property. When it's private property, some employers don't mind, and some do. Sometimes, this will be part of a negotiated protocol.

Do I have to obey security guards and the employer's picket line monitors?

No.

The picket line belongs to the union. Picketers take direction from the Picket Captain and Picket Captains take direction from the Strike Committee.

Employers often hire security guards to “protect their interests”. They work for management and have no authority over us.

Sometimes security guards try to intimidate picketers by taking pictures or videotaping the line, not respecting protocols, and by escorting management staff or scabs through the picket line without waiting.

Watch out for security guards who try to provoke incidents on the line. They are trained to do so.

Some employers also assign “Picket Line Monitors” – managers who monitor the picket lines. Some might take a friendly approach and try to talk to picketers they know. Some even wear the same vest as the Picket Captain to try to confuse members. Others might be aggressive and intimidating and try to interfere with picket line activities.

When you come on the line, ask the previous Picket Captain whether there are security guards and picket line monitors and what they’re up to. Brief the picket captain who comes after you on the line.

Record incidents and report concerns to the Picket Coordinator.

Are we allowed to have a fire on the picket line?

Yes.

The Strike Plan will include locations for fire barrels. The Fire Department may check on the fire barrels on the line.

Put some bricks under the barrel so that the bottom is off the ground. This will create more heat. Use a fire starter log to get the fire going.

You can use a fire barrel as a barbeque – but make sure you burn clean wood!! Wood that is painted or treated releases toxic fumes.

Report any problems to the Picket Coordinator.

Are we allowed to make noise on the picket line?

Picket lines should be energetic -- and that means noise.

On the other hand, our picket line is covered by municipal by-laws. Noise by-laws might restrict noise, for example, in early morning and late-night hours in residential areas.

Remember that our goal is to build public support for our cause, not make possible allies angry.

What if a picketer is under the influence of drugs or alcohol?

Make it clear that there will be no drugs or alcohol on the picket line, and that picketers should not come if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

If a picketer is under the influence, speak with them in private and ask them to leave the picket line. If necessary, make travel arrangements for them.

Report problems to the Picket Coordinator.

Injunctions

Employers will often try to intimidate picket captains and picketers by threatening to get an injunction to limit where we can picket, or how long we can delay people or vehicles before they cross the picket line.

To get an injunction, the employer must make a formal application to either the Labour Relations Board or a Court.

Report any threats of an injunction to Strike Headquarters immediately.

Incident reports

Complete an Incident Report Form and pass it on to the Picketing Coordinator whenever the following happen:

- An incident with the police, security guards or picket line monitors
- Medical emergencies
- Encounters with hostile members of the public or vehicles
- Other incidents that the Strike Committee should know about

Dealing with media on the picket line

The Strike Committee will designate official spokespeople. Only those people should give statements to the media. They are the ones who know the key messages and have the most up to date information.

Refer all calls and requests for interviews to Strike Headquarters.

The press will visit the picket lines.

When they do:

- Introduce yourself as the picket captain
- Refer them to Strike Headquarters and refer all calls and requests for interviews to Strike Headquarters.
- Look well-organized, high energy and positive. Encourage chants and singing when the media is there.
- Make sure the area is clean, safe, and orderly.

Let the Strike Committee know which media outlets came by.

As picket captain, you are a source of possible positive stories from the picket line. These stories can be used for both internal and external communications.

Get to know the picketers on your line and listen to their stories. Identify people with stories that will help build support for the strike. Let Strike Headquarters know about the stories you find. Example: a single mom who can cope with the strike because friends and family are supporting her. Also pass on positive stories about things that happen on the picket line.

Positive stories will give everyone a morale boost and help build support for the strike.

The police

We have a legal right to belong to a union and a legal right to strike and picket. The police are there to enforce criminal law (i.e. assault) and provincial law (i.e. traffic/highway laws). **Find out if there are laws in your province that restrict picketing.** If people break them, the police can tell them to stop and they can arrest people who don't.

As long as no one breaks the law, the police have no direct authority in the actual labour dispute. They will want to limit picket line violence and have minimal disruption of traffic. But they should play a neutral role, protecting everyone involved, including picketers.

At the same time, the union wants picketing to inconvenience the employer as much as possible.

Many police detachments have a person who is a "strike liaison". The Strike Committee meets with the police when they are developing a plan for picketing. This is where the ground rules get worked out. Trust that your Strike Committee has worked out rules that maximize our ability to have an impact on the employer.

Having an agreement with the police means that they are less likely to arrest picketers and more likely to help mediate when disputes happen.

Good practices:

- Introduce yourself to duty officers as the picket captain.
- Ask the duty officer to talk to you and only you, especially if they have any concerns.
- Have a witness with you, if possible and feasible.
- Be polite and answer questions.
- If there is a protocol, always have a copy with you .
- Ensure picketers refrain from using abusive language with the police.
- Record all police activity (or lack of activity in protecting picketers).
- Report concerns to the Picketing Coordinator on the Strike Committee. Or fill out a Picket Line Incident Form.
- If needed, remind police that it's legal to strike and that their role is stay neutral and protect everyone involved.

Problems on the picket line

In the case of a medical emergency, call 911.

If a member is assaulted, call the police.

For all other problems, talk to the Picketing Coordinator on the Strike Committee.

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