

Trashing

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Weapons for Street Fighting
Knife Fighting
Unarmed Defense
General Strategy Rap

If you are going to be involved in trashing, you should remove yourself from high-profile activism, resolve old warrants and speeding tickets, and otherwise arrange to appear to be a law-abiding citizen. You should be able to glide through a routine traffic stop without occasioning any suspicion. Anyone can engage in everyday resistance, but if your chosen approach to subversion includes serious illegal activity, you'll do well to make things as difficult as possible for those whose job it is to catch you. As they say, sometimes you have to obey the small laws to break the big ones.

2011 is different from 1968 in many ways, not least of which is that the culture of law enforcement is simultaneously more organized, less volatile and more by-the-book. On the other hand, the culture of our government has put groups like the FBI, the NSA, the CIA and law enforcement in general on a very dangerous path. It's not unreasonable to see this path as one leading towards something like full-on martial law. So, while we're not there yet, that's definitely one of the cities on the route, so we should be prepared.

We can learn a lot from our ancestors in revolutionary brotherhood, who had to deal with riotous cops much more suddenly than we're likely to have to deal with them.

Examples

- Firebombing buildings, See Molotov Cocktails.
- Uprooting Genetically modified crops.
- Graffiti buildings, See Wall Painting.
- Vandalizing vehicles.
- Tree Spiking.

Brainstorming

Before you even consider trashing a place, you presumably have established your general goals as a political activist or subversive. The possibility of trashing comes up when you move on to working out a strategy to achieve those goals. Perhaps you need to draw the public eye to an injustice that would outrage everyone, if only they heard about it; perhaps you want to destroy the means by which a corporation or institution is carrying out its misdeeds, or at least provide it with a deterrent; perhaps you want to inspire your fellow activists or dissidents, and demonstrate a model for resistance in the process. If trashing seems like it could be an effective element of your strategy, consider the possible targets, the actions you can take against them, and the means by which to do so.

Your action should be in proportion to the seriousness of the issues, the importance of the target, and the means at your disposal, and you should be prepared to handle all the potential consequences. If the effects of your action will be publicized, take into account the ways different tactics will play out in the public's eyes. Think hard about how to minimize risk, expense, and difficulty while maximizing effectiveness; through every step of the planning, consider if there is a simpler, safer way to achieve the same ends, and whether you are prepared for the risks you will run.

Consider the effects of your action in a broader context. Who will it inspire, who will it intimidate? Will it provoke more surveillance or repression of your community, or infighting within? If so, is it worth it, and how will you deal with these consequences? Don't draw attention to an important target with a small action if you or others may desire to do something more serious with it later. Recognize that the authorities can use your acts of trashing as propaganda to their own ends; think about how to offset or undercut this.

Reconnaissance

From the time you begin considering a target to the moment before you strike, you will be doing reconnaissance, and the quality of this preparatory work will determine whether your action is a success or a failure. First, research the target and everything related to it — from a computer in a public space, for example, or by stopping by a tourist centre or signing up for a guided tour. Be sure that anyone who does such investigation cannot be connected to the act of trashing later.

Gather maps; if possible, get aerial photographs of the area and floor plans of any buildings. You can often obtain these on the internet. Make your own maps, combining the features of the maps you assemble with the information your scouting missions provide. Carefully check these maps against reality on subsequent scouting missions. Don't risk conspiracy charges by keeping maps of or notes about potential targets in your home.

To the extent that it's possible without attracting attention, become intimately familiar with the site of your intended action and the area surrounding it. It may be most advantageous for the people who do the bulk of the scouting not to be involved in the action; all the same, everyone who will be on the site in the action should spend time there, not just the scouts. Ideally, conduct a dry run, with everyone who will engage in the action participating. If need be, take photographs to study, but do so very subtly, and don't develop them in such a way that there is evidence of your reconnaissance.

While scouting, make note of schedules, security, random traffic, and the nearness of and travel time from locations such as police stations that may launch a response. Staff hours, garbage collection, janitorial service, and the times at which trains pass by — anything pertinent should be known to you. Trash can often provide important intelligence on a corporation or institution (see Free Food#Dumpster Diving). Keep an eye out for items in the area that can be applied in your action; the less you have to take in and out on the big day, the better. Survey the surroundings: are there heavy woods that could provide cover or consumer outlets where people can be camouflaged as customers? Pay attention to changes in the area over the course of successive scouting missions, to minimize the chances that any significant ones will occur unexpectedly between the last scouting mission and the action. Scout at various times of day and night, but especially at the time of day when your action will take place; if need be, post a full-time watch. You may need to test whether and where there are security systems, and measure the speed and scale of the response; be careful not to give anything away in the process. Since your action likely depends on the element of surprise, you should probably cancel your plans if anything compromises this at any point during reconnaissance.

Finally, consider precedents for your action. Chances are someone has attempted something similar; learn what you can about how it went, and lay your plans accordingly.

Recruiting

Sometimes you can carry off a simple act of trashing or subversion on your own. In other cases you will need a team to do so. This team should consist of the smallest number of people necessary to accomplish all of the tasks involved; the fewer people involved, the smaller the risk of misunderstandings and individual mistakes, and the stronger each participant's sense of personal responsibility. In larger groups, some people may drop out of the project in the course of your preparations, so be sure there are enough of you to provide for this possibility. If only a few people are needed, your affinity group (See Affinity Groups) should suffice; if more are called for, consider inviting other affinity groups to collaborate with you. Any large group working together should divide into smaller sub-groups, to simplify organization and decision-making.

You should only invite people to work with you that you have reason to trust deeply. Every person you invite who opts not to participate is another needless security risk, so choose with care. Approach people with general questions first, in a private environment, and only make your proposal if they express concrete interest in doing something. Individuals who aren't going to be working with you shouldn't even be aware of your interest in illegal activities; innocent speculations as to who carried out a well-known action can be extremely dangerous. The team that forms should be capable of cooperating amicably in the most harrowing of situations.

Bringing in others means respecting them as equal participants in the project, with equal say in how it will be earned out. Don't invite people to work with you unless you respect their judgment and are willing to adjust your plans according to their perspectives. Inevitably, some individuals will have more experience in a given field than others, and will be able to offer more pragmatic advice. At the same time, avoid a dynamic in which everyone in the group counts on one or two members to get the dirty trashing work done; this centralizes skills that are better developed by all, and can result in your group developing an unhealthy, hierarchical structure.

Security

Planning and carrying out acts of trashing requires tight security; before even considering such an action, a group should be thoroughly versed in Security Culture. From the very beginning, you'll need to establish safe meeting places to lay plans. Ideally, these will be outside or at least in a safe space not under any kind of surveillance or connected to any known activists. You may want to develop a cipher for communicating about the action, or a pretext for getting together; but beware, a clumsy code is worse than none at all, and saying you're going to a wedding when no wedding is taking place can arouse more suspicion than it dispels. Keep your interactions with long-term companions in illegal activity to a minimum; go to see them in person when necessary, so there is no record of your association. It can be surprisingly easy to keep certain relationships and meetings secret simply by never mentioning or connecting to them over email or telephone lines.

If everyone is really concerned about information leaks and has great confidence in a small team of organizers, this team can withhold the identity of the target until the last possible point in the planning phase. The drawback to this approach is that it centralizes important information, which can unbalance group dynamics, increase risks, and put off possible participants. It is most useful for low-risk actions that are open to many participants, or high-risk actions to be carried out by a tight-knit team; for newer groups carrying out actions of mid-level risk, it can be important that everyone involved participate in every stage of the discussion and planning.

Planning

As soon as the core group of participants is established, you can begin holding meetings. Make sure everyone is happy with the format you choose for these (see Affinity Groups#Facilitating Discussions), and that it is efficient and goal-oriented. At the first one, you should establish the target, goals, security culture, and maximum level of risk, and work out how you will continue to get together. In the following meetings, scouts can share intelligence, and individuals can make tactical proposals for the group to amend until they comprise a plan with which everyone is comfortable.

Such a plan must cover the full range of scenarios from best to worst case; the group should establish in advance under what circumstances they will call off the action. Don't underestimate your power — small numbers of people with light funding can accomplish tremendous objectives — but be realistic. You should also establish structures to meet the needs of the action group; these can include communications, scouting, legal support, supplies, food and housing, and media work. Individuals can choose roles within this framework, and sub-groups can form to focus on bottom lining specific tasks. Avoid letting routines develop in which the same individuals always take on the same tasks; the more skills each participant develops, the better.

If the group organizing the action is composed of people from different regions, the locals will bear a larger portion of the responsibility to carry out reconnaissance; it may consequently be easier for them to compose plans, as well. Locals should be conscious of the potential imbalance of power this can create, and take care to extend to others whatever information and control they can. For security reasons, it can be wise to establish an exchange program, in which one group organizes an action in its local area for another to carry out, and vice versa. Repression will be directed at those activists closest to the target area, but they can have airtight alibis in place.

Action Camp

In the last few days before a serious action, there is often a lot to do. This is particularly challenging when security concerns dictate that you and your companions should not be seen together during this period, especially not hard at work on some mysterious project; it may even be necessary to hide the presence of participants who have arrived from far away. To solve these problems, you can organize an action camp: in a secure location, such as the private lands of a trustworthy individual who can be counted on not to notice anything, or a forgotten zone suitable for squatting or camping, get together for a short period of intensive preparation. In urban areas, the home of a vacationing trustworthy friend may suffice. Everyone should have an alibi going into the action camp — and not the same one! Organizing food and shelter for a group over a period of time can be taxing in itself; individuals who desire to play support roles can take responsibility for delivering food and other resources. Make sure that traffic in and out of the camp does not attract undue attention.

Legal Preparations

During the planning phase, establish the potential legal repercussions of every action you are considering, so you can weigh these as you make decisions. If you're not ready to do the time, don't do the crime. Before carrying out any serious illegal act, you should have a legal support structure in place in case anyone is arrested (see Legal Advice). Be sure there are people not directly involved in the action who can provide legal support to arrestees, so no immediate link between them, the people supporting them, and the action can be made.

Conditions

Sometimes weather will be integral to your plans — you might need a full moon for cross-country travel, or a new moon for cover of darkness or a rainstorm to soften noise. Snowfall can make it impossible to pass through an area without leaving a track, while hot weather might make you look more suspicious in your disguise. Schedule accordingly. Stay abreast of other developments; if there's a manhunt on in the area of your target the night of your action, you'd better know about it before you head out.

Communications

Unless your action is to be carried out by one or two isolated individuals, you will need a secure and reliable system for communication and counter-surveillance. This could range from simply having the option for an emergency cancellation to be announced at the last minute, should something go awry, to several groups staying in close contact throughout the action. The more elaborate your communications structure, the more coordinated your activities can be; on the other hand, the more you rely on communications technology, the greater the chance that your transmissions can be monitored, and the greater the confusion should communication breakdown. The simpler your communications structure is, the safer it is, and this goes for your plan in general.

Scouts can be posted at entry points to await and announce police response, or can patrol the area to keep tabs on security and passersby. A police scanner can be used to monitor police interactions, though it is illegal to use them from vehicles. A communications centre can be established, to which scouts and action groups report, and which is responsible for contacting other groups to pass along news and announcements; alternatively, information can be distributed by means of a "phone tree," in which each person or group that receives a message is responsible for passing it on to a few others.

Communications technology is constantly evolving, as are police surveillance techniques; keep up to date on your options. Two-way radios come in varying ranges; they can be monitored easily enough, especially if police are prepared to do so, and often fail to work when they are most needed, but they can be used to contact a number of different people instantaneously, and if unmonitored they leave no record of use. Cell phones work more reliably and over much longer ranges, and are not quite as easy to monitor, assuming they are not already tapped; on the other hand, they leave a permanent record of where, when, and to whom calls were made. A cell phone borrowed from a non-combatant or registered to a fictitious owner is much safer than a personal cell phone. This is the only kind of phone you should use in a serious action.

Action

On the day or night of the action, go over every step of the plan together, with each participant describing his or her role. This will provide crucial clarity and reassurance.

Your plans should specify the order in which activities are to be carried out; they should take into account the amount of time each activity will require, providing for transportation time as well. Everyone whose actions are to be coordinated should have synchronized watches. A full route, including alternate escape routes (see S.E.R.E.), should be charted for everyone involved — not just in and out of the target site, but all the way from the starting point of the day's events to their conclusion when everyone is safely dispersed. This route should be planned so as <http://wiki.stealthiswiki.org/wiki/Trashing> 5/8 to leave as little record as possible of the movements of those who participate in the action; avoid toll roads, for example, and surveillance cameras at gas stations.

If there are getaway drivers, it's better for them to return at a predetermined time or when called for than to wait around attracting the attention of neighbours or passing police. Have your time budgeted in advance, and adjust your plans as you go in order to avoid awkward situations. If you have a time established in advance to be picked up, and it takes longer than you'd expected to get onto the site from your drop-off and pick-up location, set aside the same amount of extra time for getting back, and subtract that from the time you had planned to have on the site.

You should have backup plans worked out, in case something goes wrong, and establish what conditions will prompt you to switch from one plan to the next. Everyone should have an alternate mode of transportation available in case they cannot leave the area by the planned means, and should carry cab or bus fare if applicable.

Make sure you have the necessary tools for the job, but take nothing extraneous with you — nothing potentially incriminating, nothing needlessly heavy, nothing you might accidentally lose. After the action, destroy all the tools you used, or, if you're sure the action trashing was not dramatic enough to provoke a serious investigation, keep them far away from any space associated with you. Make sure all other evidence is destroyed — every last map, every scribbled note, every piece of clothing you might have been seen wearing.

Have an alibi prepared: arrange to have been seen in public, or to have a record — such as a parking lot ticket, movie stub, or campground receipt from a location you are certain is not under surveillance — of your activities away from the scene of the crime. Don't ever speak of the action again, except within the group with whom you accomplished it, and even then only under secure conditions. There are two exceptions to this: if you are caught, tried, and sentenced for an action, you can speak about the actions for which you were convicted, on the condition that you not give away anything about anyone else; and if you succeed in overthrowing the government and all other oppressive institutions, you and your friends and everybody else like you will finally be free to own up to having participated in subversive activities back in the bad old days. Imagine the stories we'll all have to tell then!

Communique and Press Coverage

You may want to disguise your strike as an accident or a random act of vandalism, so as not to help investigators by narrowing the pool of suspects. On the other hand, if one of your goals is to attract public attention, you will do well to take publicity into your own hands. The best of trashing actions can go unnoticed or even be deliberately covered up, unless they are accompanied by compelling and wide-ranging media campaigns.

The simplest way to do this is to issue a communique. This is essentially a press release (see News Services): it should begin by covering the who, what, when, and where of an action, then explain why it was carried out and elaborate on the broader goals behind it. It should be written simply and precisely, in a generic writing style that will not give away the identity of the author or authors. Mainstream press coverage will include a sentence or two of the communique at best, so make sure every line of it is eloquent and capable of standing alone. Sometimes humour can be helpful for getting your point across and maintaining readers' attention; this is most useful if your communique is going to be published in full somewhere, such as on an independent news website. Include a link to an informative webpage or two, if possible, keeping in mind that this can also bring attention or repression to those who host them.

Sending a communique can be one of the riskiest parts of an action. It should go out from a one-time-only email account on a public computer, and the person who sends it should be careful not to be detected approaching, using, or leaving the computer. At best, it should be sent from an area far away from the action and the homes and haunts of those who carried it out. Alternatively, it can be sent through the mail— but the text should not be composed on a computer tied to any of the participants, and the paper, envelope, and stamp should never be touched without gloves on.

A simple text communique is often not enough to capture attention or convey the magnitude of an action. If possible, include photographs or video footage. One or more of the individuals involved in the action can be responsible for taking these during or after the action (see News Services). Be careful that such footage doesn't provide investigators with any useful information about your group. Independent media outlets are more likely to provide thorough and sympathetic coverage than mainstream media; if you don't know any independent media journalists you can trust to approach, you can anonymously tip them off or otherwise solicit their coverage.

In addition to seeking mainstream and independent media coverage, you can also arrange to have news and explanations of your action presented directly to the public through autonomous means (See Banners, Wall Painting, News Services and Guerrilla Broadcasting). Consider how these can be used to communicate the necessary information without implicating those who apply them in greater crimes.

Afterwards

Immediately after an action, make sure that everyone is safe and emotionally cared for, and that anyone who was arrested or injured receives support. Aside from taking care of this, split up and get quickly back to the business of being unremarkable law-abiding citizens. Resist the urge to rush to find each other and compare notes. Eventually, you may want to meet again, either in small groups or all together, to trade perspectives on what happened, but this will require at least as much security as your planning meetings did, since you may now be under suspicion. Consider limiting your involvement in above ground political activities, but don't make any sudden dramatic changes in your lifestyle or commitments. It is less incriminating to maintain a visible routine than to drop out of sight completely. Keep your secrets to yourself and your wits sharp; often, the authorities won't strike until months or even years after an action, when they've had enough time to gather intelligence and prepare a case.

Tips

- You can use a small and easily concealed pair of tin snips, available at all hardware stores, to most cut barbed wire, razor wire, and chain link fences; use bolt cutters for larger locks.
- You can clean fingerprints from an object with hot water and soap, or, in an emergency, by rubbing vigorously with a cloth. Don't forget the details: even if you clean the outside of the flashlight, there may be fingerprints on the batteries within.
- You can slip a plastic bag over each shoe to obscure your footprints and prevent tell tale soil from clinging to your soles.
- You can hinder logging in the last of our forests by spiking trees in woods that are to be cut. Using a big hammer, drive a nail at least six inches long into each trunk, above the level of your head, and cut off the heads of the nails or cover them with bark; repeat this process randomly throughout the woods, working in the rain if necessary to muffle the noise. Inform the forest service that the trees have been spiked.
- You can put a blue filter on your flashlight: this will enable you to use it in the dark without ruining your night vision, and with much less chance of being seen by others.
- You can use cotton work gloves to keep your fingerprints off places they don't belong. Leather gloves should be avoided, as they leave their own unique fingerprints, and latex gloves are good for light work, but retain fingerprints on the inside — so be very careful how you dispose of them.
- To avoid having your footprints used against you in court, keep an extra pair of shoes stashed in a secret place outside your home to use for night work; wear extra socks, so you can use shoes a couple of sizes bigger than your feet.
- If you have to pass fences, consider going through them rather than over them. If you have bolt cutters, this may take no longer than scaling them, and involves less risk of being spotted. With chain link fences, just cut the same thread of wire in the fence top, bottom, and three or four places in between, then pull out the wire with your pliers. The fence will then just fall into two. Keep in mind that a cut fence, if discovered, will immediately alert an otherwise unsuspecting person.
- If you have to walk, try to stay off roads. If you need to drive, be aware of all the ways your vehicle can be tracked, including traffic cameras.
- If you have to cross a wall, you may need extra equipment. The simplest way is to bring your own ladder; if you leave this at your point of entry, however, it can attract attention, and if someone removes it you may be trapped.
- Ditches and rivers can provide good cover, but it's always better to work dry, so plan on exiting through one rather than entering, if possible. Remember that mud records footprints and other signs of human passage.

- If a gate is padlocked, use bolt cutters to remove the lock. If you have the option, it is easier to cut a chain than a lock, and easier to disguise. Never leave a cut padlock or chain in view — it's a sure sign that someone's inside. If need be, replace a cut lock with an identical padlock of your own.
- You can cover a window or a portion there of with duct tape before breaking it, if you want to do so quietly and without making a mess.
- Doors are often protected by alarms. If in doubt, you can always try going through the door itself, but the cutting operations will be noisy.
- Often metal sheds and warehouses can be cut open with a pair of sheet metal snips, exposing the insulation and soft inner wall which can be cut with a razor knife or sheetrock saw. The doors can probably take a severe beating while the walls are soft and probably not well protected by security systems and cameras.
- Roofs can provide numerous access points. Watch for heating and air conditioning ducts, ventilation fans, attics, and crawlspaces.
- Avoid open areas, especially around factories and offices: they are likely to be under camera surveillance.



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