



How to write attention-grabbing

STARTING A PETITION

View the full toolkit at kit.riveractionuk.com

This guide aims to provide an overview of petitioning as a campaigning strategy, and signpost to useful resources.

Petitions are a good way to gather widespread support for our rivers and get your campaign noticed. Launching a petition provides a platform for individuals to express their support and solidarity, amplifying a collective voice behind your campaign.

To get a good idea, have a look at [Save Teddington Thames' petition](#), or you can look at [our petition here](#).

The most effective petitions focus on a straightforward issue that lots of people can relate to and understand quickly. The best way to do this is by writing a punchy title. You want to clearly explain the change you are advocating for in a short and snappy sentence. Use powerful, actionable words to head the petition.

For example, instead of “Stop releasing untreated sewage in our rivers” say “Protect our rivers: ban the release of untreated sewage”

You should address your petition to the person, people, or organisations with the power to make the changes you want to see, or responsible for the damage you didn't want to see.

For example:

- The government
- Water companies
- MPs
- Businesses
- Regulators

In the main body of your petition you should explain the issue and its importance in two or three short paragraphs. Emphasise the extent of the impact of the issue, highlighting any human interest stories to give it a personal touch that people can relate with - this makes them more likely to sign. Keep it succinct and professional, but allow room for emotive and provoking language.

You should conclude with your demands. What is your petition calling for? Clearly outline the changes you are pushing for so it is clear why people should sign. For reference, see the demands of River Action's own petition, '[Rescue our Rivers](#)', which gained over 100,000 signatures.

To get started, websites such as [38degrees](#) and [Change.org](#) are great platforms to launch a petition and can be easily shared on social media. When creating your petition, be sure to include:


- A signature count
- Petition benchmarks and targets
- A deadline for submitting your petition
- Who you are
- How to find out more about the issue or campaign

NEXT STEPS

The close of your petition is a key opportunity to make an impact and keep the momentum going. You should consider:

- **Handing in your petition:** Plan an occasion to deliver the petition to your target as a symbolic act to add impact. You might even consider coordinating a stunt to accompany the hand-in, which might generate additional interest or even media coverage.
- **Publishing the results:** Choose a strategic time to release your results to maximise impact. You could even write a press release to inform local media about the results and what this means, and the next steps in your campaign.
- **Keep your supporters engaged:** use your list of supporters who signed the petition to keep them up to date with your campaign and invite them to upcoming events and opportunities to get involved.

TIPS FOR COLLECTING SIGNATURES

-  **Social & Local Media**
These days everyone is on social media - it's a great way to reach a huge number of people and let them know about your petition. It's also easy for people to share further. Local media is also really useful - contact your local newspaper or radio station to include a shout out to your cause!
-  **Utilise useful contacts**
Brainstorm any useful contacts you have; getting influencers, local celebrities or prominent figures to share the petition can boost awareness significantly.
-  **Ask signatories to share it onwards**
Be sure to ask everyone who signs it to share it with their family and friends to boost the reach of your petition. Provide them with easy ways to share such as QR codes, leaflets, or website links.
-  **Combine with other campaigning strategies**
Using other campaigning strategies such as public demonstrations or community events is a great way to reinforce the importance of your petition and its demands and is a good focal point for a campaign.

Useful resources:

- [Organising a petition](#)
- [Tips on writing a great petition - 38degrees](#)
- [How petitions work - UK Government and Parliament](#)