

STUDENTS' GUIDE to Protest

This guide to the First Amendment will help you exercise your rights at a public college or university.



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

You have the right to protest peacefully for your cause. But your public university can limit **when, where** and **how** you say it to **avoid disrupting university activity**. These are called **time, place and manner** restrictions.

WHEN

WHERE

HOW



3 a.m.



Directly outside a dorm while people are sleeping



With a loudspeaker



During a scheduled class or final exams



In a lecture hall



By creating an encampment



During graduation or similar school event



A reservable space



By shouting over an invited speaker



A weekday afternoon



On designated university grounds



Holding signs

These are only examples and may not apply to all instances. Specific university policy would address each situation.

RIGHTS THAT CAN'T BE LIMITED

Under the First Amendment, government and public university officials CANNOT:

- Restrict protests for only certain viewpoints, even accidentally. This is called viewpoint discrimination.
- Limit protests more than is needed to ensure safety and others' rights.
- Introduce restrictions to protest that are so burdensome that any protest becomes impossible.

FREE EXPRESSION ON CAMPUS

Generally, there are certain areas at the university where student protest rights are more protected than others.

MORE PROTECTED

Places where speech and protest have traditionally occurred such as open, outdoor spaces.

LESS PROTECTED

Places you don't usually expect to find a protest because they are dedicated to other purposes like residence halls, classrooms and administrative offices.



WARNING

The university may restrict protest in specific spaces — even where you think protest might usually be allowed — if the school has a compelling reason like protecting health and safety, avoiding damage to important university buildings and sites, and ensuring the educational process is not disrupted. These specific rules can vary by location and change over time. To keep yourself protected, it's always best to check university policy before going out to protest.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS. FIND YOUR VOICE.



Have more questions about your speech and protest rights? Scan here for more resources.

Your essential freedoms.

Brought to you by the First Amendment.*

*Some restrictions apply.



This information is intended solely for educational purposes. It is not intended to serve as legal advice or as a substitute for professional counsel.