

BLUE SANDFORD

CHALLENGE EVERYTHING

AN

**extinction
rebellion**

YOUTH GUIDE TO
SAVING THE PLANET

CHALLENGE BIG BUSINESS

A lot of environmental devastation can be traced back to corporations not caring about sustainability or the pollution from factories and power stations. These businesses aren't being held accountable for the damage they're doing to our planet.

Big businesses have a lot of power, because much of our world runs according to whoever has the most money... and they have a lot. This power could be used to change things for the better, both from the inside - becoming more ethical and eco-friendly in their production processes and practices - and also in the influence they have with politicians, the media and other big companies.

So how can you make big businesses want to wield their power in the right direction? You could begin by writing to the owner or main decision-maker, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO - you can find out who they are and contact details online), explaining the dangers of the climate crisis and the role their business has in it. You could ask whether they are parents and highlight how much their children will suffer just as much as the rest of our generation. You could communicate with the workers about the dangers of the climate crisis and ask them to put pressure on the company from the inside. It's possible that, by understanding that their customers care about the climate crisis,

businesses will make them want to do something about it, even if only to make sure that people will like their image and carry on buying things from them.

But while these things would be great, they're hard to accomplish and take a lot of effort. The simplest way to get businesses to change their behaviour is to disrupt their sales - and therefore their profits - and the easiest (and most legal) way to do this, is by boycotting them. Single out a whole brand or a specific product and refuse to buy it.

Boycotting has a long and successful history in a lot of social movements, most famously in the civil rights movements of the USA. In the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955 and '56, African American people (including Rosa Parks) refused to use the city's buses, because of their segregated seating for blacks and whites. The boycott lasted for 381 days and attracted so much interest all over the country that eventually the case was taken to court and the civil rights movement won.

Boycotting is effective, and it's also something easy that you can persuade others to do; your friends; your class; even the school. What's more, it's a really media-friendly story that'll show you in a good light. You're the good guy, taking a stand, and you're not disrupting or inconveniencing anyone.



KEEP ON

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The most important thing is publicity – you can't get people to join you if they don't know about you. Put pressure on well-known companies by naming and shaming, and organize protests with banners and slogans, either outside their headquarters or in really public and busy places. Remember though, if you choose an individual problematic

brand to focus on, it's the company you're objecting to; the people who work for these companies have families and lives outside of their jobs and no one deserves to be publicly abused.

Create a Facebook event and blast it out on all the other social media platforms. Call the local newspaper and

tell them what you're doing; if you can get an interview, you get your message out to so many more people. Write articles about the negative impacts of whatever you're boycotting, publish them wherever you can, even if it's just online on a website you've made, and tell EVERYONE you know about what's happening.

Be really clear about:

- what you're saying,
- why you're saying it,
- and what people should do about it.

Start a pledge to boycott whatever you're focusing on and get signatures! Don't be afraid to canvas on the street, even if it's scary the first time. You might get a climate change denier – I did my first time, and I tried to talk to him for about a minute before I just decided it was a lost cause, crossed the street and started canvassing there. It's a learning curve – it's nowhere near as scary the second time, and you don't need to get it right every time. Just don't be fake with the people you're stopping, try to engage them and have a real interaction with them. You might make them stop and really hear what you're saying and inspire them to change their behaviour too. Give people a really clear message, backed up by science and facts but stay friendly or they'll just become hostile and won't listen to you anymore. You can't force people to change; all you can do is show them the facts and let them know the impacts of their actions.

You could try to come up with original content – make a meme, something that's funny, that'll grab people and make them share it even if they don't fully understand the message behind it yet or even agree with it! The point is to go viral!

Even – or especially – if you're starting a new boycott, ally yourself with people who are already fighting. Even if you don't agree with their whole message, they may be able to give you a lot of advice and help, and we're all in the same fight, we all basically want the same things. The environmental community can be a really supportive and amazing space to be in; you can learn a lot. Being in XR, surrounded by people who know what's happening to the world and are actually doing something about it has been really good for me – especially in XR youth where we're all going through the same climate grief and we can support each other.

It doesn't matter if you get something wrong as you can always start again, try a different tactic, or ask someone for help. The point is that you keep on trying, and whatever change you make, even as small as causing one other person to go vegan, will make a difference to the world.