PROTEST SAFELY

The right to peacefully assemble is fundamental. Before you commit to a protest, make sure you understand what you’re protesting and why.

- Do the leaders of the demonstration prioritize nonviolence?
- Are you comfortable supporting their demands?

Answering key questions like these can prevent you from being a part of a disorganized, problematic, or unsafe event.

The university encourages all who engage in protest activity to protest safely. Below are some suggestions for doing so.

BEFORE PROTESTING

- Use the buddy system and ask a friend to go with you.
- Let someone you trust know where you’re going.
- Know your rights.
- Make informed decisions. If you choose to engage in civil disobedience and get arrested, know the potential consequences. Review the Student Code of Conduct or contact Student Conduct & Community Standards for more information.
- Bring water, tissues, snacks and your mask!

WHILE PROTESTING

- Follow the lead of organizers. Look to them to start chants, guide marches along specific routes, and notify the group of any concerns. Above all, respect organizers’ requests.
- Don’t damage property.
- Avoid activity that infringes on the rights of others, such as blocking and preventing the movement or access of others.
- Follow the lawful instructions of a police officer or public official, such as staying behind barricades, dispersing from an area declared an unlawful assembly, not resisting arrest. It is against the law to disobey a lawful order by a police officer.
- Leave the area where others are engaging in illegal activities and acts of violence. Your presence may be interpreted as participating in a riot or illegal group action.
- Refrain from speech that incites others to commit acts of violence such as pushing, kicking or spitting on others, or other unlawful actions.
- Mask up and keep your mask on for the duration of the event.
- Social distance as much as physically possible to help slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Stay focused and aware of your surroundings at all times.

AFTER PROTESTING

- Continue to take care of yourself, mentally, physically and emotionally.
- Contact your elected officials. It’s also critical to make sure that your representatives in office continue to hear from you by phone or email.
- There are a variety of ways you can support a cause. Write “Letters to the Editor” or consider volunteering with local organizations and helping to raise funds.
- UNL students in need of assistance after protesting or participating in community events can contact Student Affairs’ Student Advocacy and Support team.

If you believe your rights have been violated by a police officer or other public official, ask for his or her name and badge number (if a police officer) and file a complaint after the situation has calmed down or concluded. Formal complaints or charges may be filed with the University Police Department, Lincoln Police Department, Lancaster County Sheriff’s Office and/or Nebraska State Patrol.

Student Legal Services is also available to students for informal complaint resolution.

These tips were adapted from the University of Michigan Dean of Students Office.