

# Tips and Tricks for Riots



## **Tips and Tricks for Riots**

### **Original text in German**

Tipps und Tricks für Riots and Stuff

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[autonomesblaettchen.noblogs.org/files/2016/05/nr24web.pdf](http://autonomesblaettchen.noblogs.org/files/2016/05/nr24web.pdf)

### **Translation and layout**

No Trace Project

[notrace.how/resources/#tips-and-tricks](http://notrace.how/resources/#tips-and-tricks)

We think riots are great, but this is not a contribution to the debate on whether rioting here and there makes sense every time, must be communicable and so on, but rather based on the observation that both some people have been arrested lately, as well as sharing the observation that not everyone involved in riots have exhausted their preparation options. In order not to be misunderstood: we think it's absolutely okay if comrades riot without any preparation, and we certainly don't want to be patronizing here, nor can we always avoid getting caught. Nevertheless, we think that the times that we have been involved in a mayhem have brought us some valuable reflections and experiences and we would like to share them with everyone here, because both the likelihood of getting caught and the negative consequences of getting caught can be reduced. Both are worthwhile, so that together we can continue to give our a powerful expressin of our hostility to the state, the cops, Nazis, capitalism, patriarchy, etc. into the future.

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## Before the Riot

We take this approach: we pay attention to the way we act not only during a riot, but also during the time when we go about our normal everyday lives. We ask ourselves: what behavior can help make it easier for the cops and prosecutors to catch us in their investigations? This adds up to a number of things, of course, and some of them turn out to be totally impractical, but here are a few very general suggestions that we consider important.

Let's start with the cell phone. No question about it, phones and cell-phones are generally useful things. However, they multiply the possibilities of surveillance. There are already very useful texts on this that explain the technical background, we do not want to go into that here. In practice, this simply results in the following: the cell phone stays at home as often as possible, even on ordinary excursions, visiting friends, etc. A few of us have done away with them altogether, because every now and then a conversation arises by chance which unintentionally brings up illegal things and then the fiddling starts. Who has a cell phone with them, is it off? Is it enough that it's off? What to do with the devices? This is annoying and always carries the risk of forgetting that there is still a cell phone in your pocket. By consistently leaving them at home, everyone can contribute to ensuring that no one gets into trouble, at least because of carelessness.

In addition, it is particularly interesting for the investigative authorities who meets with whom, when and where, and this information is provided by the countless cell phones, even if they are then switched off at the meeting point or put in a box and put aside. We find this aspect particularly important: suppose one of us is caught. The follow-up question that even the dumbest cop can ask is: who was he/she traveling with? Where was he/she at what time? We don't want to give out the answer voluntarily, but cellphones and their Google and Apple accounts deliver this information on a silver platter. Paying attention to this is certainly cumbersome, but it is even more cumbersome to sit in a prison cell at some point. The way we see it, there is neither irrelevant data ("oh who should care, it doesn't matter if they know that"), nor any truly safe use of cell phones. You should also not trust apps that claim otherwise (e.g. through encryption).

What applies to cellphones also applies to the Internet and computers. If you don't pay attention to how you use them, then you will provide a lot of clues about who you are and what you like to do long before you even participate in a riot. We therefore ensure that communication through computers is encrypted, that we do not use any particularly insecure operating systems (Windows, macOS) and that we are as anonymous as possible on the Internet. The latter always means balancing ease and security, and even if we do not take security considerations into account every time we use the Internet, we try to stay up to date. This applies to any technology anyway: those who use it should keep themselves up to date. The technological capacities are currently growing at an insane pace, and at least we don't want to have the regret at some point that we should have done that earlier (which of course can still be the case). At least for research, reading articles that are questionable under criminal law and the like, we recommend the use of Tails. For daily needs, we recommend the use of an encrypted Linux system, for surfing the use of Firefox (or ideally Tor), as well as forgoing the use of any kind of Google service. An absolute no for us is the use of Facebook and we advise anyone who likes to riot to refrain from using it.

Why not use Facebook? Well, Facebook is unfortunately the last straw. It would be beyond the scope of this article to talk about it, but the analysis possibilities offered by Facebook (and google) are beyond our imagination and therefore its use is at least as bad as running your mouth at the bar.

While we're on the subject, another aspect that we pay attention to is that we don't talk about riots and our possible involvement at inopportune moments. That makes you seem a little strange to people at times. Almost everyone is curious, and if your secrecy becomes all too obvious that is counterproductive, but you have to be able to navigate that. In any case, we think it is important not to talk to anyone about our participation in riots, except with those where an exchange is useful and essential. Of course, it happens every now and then, but we try to keep it to a minimum, at least when there is not a very explicit intention for being open about it.

Such secrecy can also be quite difficult for you, because we experience some not exactly unspectacular things when we are out and about. We actually like to share something like that, and maybe it's also a question of

getting a little recognition for the deeds that demand so much from you. But despite everything, we recommend that you deal with this in your affinity group rather than blindly giving in to it. Because as with everything we write about, it is better to be safe than sorry.

Do you have a tidy room? Of course, everyone has to handle this as it suits them, but what is important is that it is never really clear when a house raid will be carried out, nor what they will be looking for. That is why we regularly make sure that our room, regardless of whether it is tidy or chaotic, is at least always tidy in the sense that there is as little harmful material lying around as possible. What shouldn't be lying around, for example, are: fireworks, slingshots, too many pieces of clothing of one kind (e.g. gloves, balaclavas, black hoodies), communiques, texts like this one, and so on. It is not always the single incriminating item that matters, the sketchy collection should also be avoided. If the cops get the order to knock on your door with a "Good morning, house raid", then they definitely want to take something away with them. And you should simply be well prepared for this, even and especially if nothing specific is going on, but you are generally active. If they can't find what they're looking for, they'll see if there's anything else they can use against you.

Let's get to another point: riots cost money. No, we don't mean the property damage in the x-digit range that is always talked about, we don't have to pay that, we mean the money that preparation costs us. This aspect should not be underestimated. One might ask, why, stones don't cost anything? That's true, of course, but gloves cost money, changing clothes cost money, fireworks cost money, travel costs money, lawyers cost money, etc. So it is always important for us to talk about money and we try to distribute the money in a way that nobody gets into financial difficulties. Security has priority for us. That means that we also give each other money so that no one has to use the same clothes too often, because we attach great importance to looking different as frequently as possible. There are some people who love to wear their very practical Northface jackets, and a few of them tape off the lettering when they riot or demonstrate. For us personally, this is not enough, we make sure that if possible we have things with us that don't cost us a moment's thought to throw away, and we just get new ones regularly. And we would recommend that for clothes in all

respects, i.e. shoes, pants, jacket, gloves and so on, everything but socks and underwear. As a result, sometimes we don't seem that well dressed when we show up at a demo. But for us, such matters are not a question of style.

Is that it for the preparation? Almost actually, the only part that remains is the arrangements and concrete preparation. What we have written so far was still quite general, now we come to the time immediately before a riot. Here we give ourselves enough time to talk through everything. Where are we going and what is it like there? What are the options there? Do we have everything we need? Who will provide what? Are comrades we know coming? Are any of us sick or ill? Is anyone afraid, does anyone have worries and concerns?

The last question is always particularly important for us. It contains a critical point. On the one hand, we can all become stiff and obsessed with such fears and concerns, and then it actually becomes impossible to do anything. On the other hand, fears and concerns can also point to mistakes in planning or inadequate preparation, and then improvements can be made. To deal with one's own fears from time to time is a good thing. Of course, it is important not to condemn anyone for fears or not to take them seriously, but it is just as important not to let fears incapacitate us. The better we deal with fear, the freer our minds are and that is always a good thing.

One more thing about the preparatory talks: as far as riots are concerned, almost everyone seems to be an expert. "It's always like this", "It's clear, the cops will act like this and like that", "In any case, this and that will work". That there is this exact knowledge is amazing, when in fact most of us have very sparse riot experience, because it is unfortunately the case that there are hardly riots in Germany. To say 'it will definitely go exactly this way or that way' is unwise. We always try to not to talk to each other like that, but to have an openness to what will happen. It is less important for us to answer the question 'will it happen exactly like this or like that', but the following question: are we prepared for what we want to do, are we clear what our personal goals are, and do we have everything we need, so that when the opportunity presents itself we can act? It's a really stupid feeling when we suddenly find ourselves somewhere where an



opportunity definitely presents itself that we were previously told “there's no way that's going to happen”, and then we don't have what we need with us. Such a would-have-been chain quickly leads to the fact that we then might get carried away doing something thoughtless that might go well, but we prefer to be well prepared. Therefore, we try to talk everything through beforehand and off we go.

Two more quick things: don't overplan. We've found that if we spend hours and hours talking about something, we can't do anything with all the conversations because things turn out completely differently. We personally think that flexible preparation is good: think about what we want to do and prepare for it, but also stay open to the possibilities that may arise. Too much planning, taking into account too many details, also leads to the fact that we focus on an overly concrete course of events and then can no longer adapt quickly if it turns out differently, or everything has to be thrown out because a detail in the big plan has changed, which then makes everything else fall apart. Then the disappointment is huge, because so much time was spent on planning. After all, we're not talking about a concrete action in the night where detailed planning can work, but about a riot where a lot of factors develop very dynamically.

The other thing: don't underplan. Don't go off with the attitude that someone else will start it. Don't count on some ominous figure kicking off the riot. The most beautiful thing is to actually be this ominous figure yourself. Be prepared to throw just a firecracker or a paint bag and it's good, it doesn't always have to be the full program. Maybe it's just THE right firecracker or paint bag you need. And for us, it's more convenient to take the bag and the firecrackers home again, or to dispose of them somewhere, than to have had nothing with us at the appropriate moment.

Last but not least, a few concrete tips: have a change of jacket for each riot. A new pair of gloves (never without gloves). A good mask like a balaclava or t-shirt (no cap or scarf, they are suitable for demos but not for riots). A pair of completely black shoes. A change of clothes that your black outer jacket fits over. A pair of black pants. Clean any material you'll be bringing and clean it again if necessary, so that it has no or at least as few traces (fingerprints, DNA) on it as possible. In case you want/need to make a phone call, a new burner cell phone with a charged battery, with a new

SIM card that you have not unlocked from home and both battery and SIM card remain out of the phone at home.

## During the Riot

There is no fixed rule for us when it should start. Sometimes people prepare something, if we know something about the plans, we stick to it or not, depending on whether we find it useful. We think for ourselves: do we want to riot, and if yes, then we take what we need with us (see above). Sometimes we will know beforehand, sometimes not. In any case, it is important for us not to get too focused on the cops before it kicks off. In our experience, a riot is most likely to start where there are few or no cops, and then we also look for these places.

We change our clothes as well as we can, away from the cops, and if there is no other way, we withdraw as far into a mass of people as possible and make ourselves small. The important thing is that the cops don't see us changing. Some of them are good at remembering things, for example how we look before and after we change our clothes, if they catch the moment when we do it. For this reason we also avoid walking around half changed. So either riot outfit on, OR normal outfit, but no mixes if possible. There are also cops who are specialized in finding people afterwards, so this aspect is very important, all the time while something is going on, as well as on arrival and departure. For one thing, they always have a minimum of one person filming, and the filming is pretty good at this point. They evaluate the films while the action is still going on, if they can, and then catch people afterwards. And secondly, they have plain-clothes cops looking for crimes who are there from the beginning to the end, and they watch who is changing, and what the person looks like afterwards, and then they follow after that person until their coworkers come and they give them a sign that they are behind a person who should be arrested. That's why choosing a good moment to change is so important, for both before and after. But of course it is also clear that the better the disguise, that is, the fewer features they can recognize later. Therefore, when masking always pay attention to being thorough. For example, we sometimes use extra wide black jackets, so that it is not easy to identify our body shape. We always bring a mask and check each other for whether there

is still hair peeking out somewhere, or anything else that could be recognized. And that's why it's also important for us to change back and forth as rarely as possible.

A riot like that is a very, very exciting thing. Especially when you're not standing on the sidelines and watching, but are right in the thick of it, so to speak. In any case, this brings with it a number of effects that are generally less common. For example, adrenaline, which has a number of effects that are quite useful for the riot. By the way, the cops also have this effect, which is why they even train specifically to be able to control it. We are not cops and don't train this specifically, even though we don't find this idea reprehensible. But it helps us a little bit to deal with this effect. For example, after a strong adrenaline rush, friendly agreements are no longer so easy and the tone can somehow change, which can be quite annoying, especially because not everyone gets an adrenaline rush at the same time and it does not have the same effect on everyone. Someone wants to leave all of a sudden, the other person wants to go forward again offensively, and then it is additionally difficult to communicate with each other in the appropriate tone. This can be off-putting, and we find it useful to talk about it at another time, but while we are in the streets, it has not yet proved to be useful.

Anyway, difficult decision making. Normally, we would discuss everything sufficiently, and everyone would explain their positions. Under stress that is usually not so easy. Therefore, we divide up beforehand who will move around with whom, so that not everyone always has to coordinate with everyone else, which often does not work anyway.

For the riot itself, there are of course some things to consider. For example: if you can't throw far enough to hit something you want to hit, then you have to keep moving forward. If you don't dare to move farther forward, or it doesn't work, then you shouldn't throw, or you have to pick a target within your range. It's as simple as that, but in the heat of the moment, of course, things fly all over the place, and it can happen that your comrades hit you even though there is no good reason for it. That's because they couldn't stick to this simple rule, either because they were too excited or overestimate themselves or maybe they don't like you, so they throw things at you and then blame it on the excitement. We don't

care what the reason is, we try to avoid hitting any comrades as much as possible and advise everyone to do the same.

When the cops charge us, it makes sense not to run completely head over heels, but it is almost always done anyway, even if the numbers are on our side. Sometimes it is useful in such situations to shout something calming, for example “calm down”, but then you should not run away yourself. If you run away, don't run over anyone, and if you do run over someone, stop and pick him or her back up. What we don't like about running is that the slow ones still get caught and in general we don't like running away from cops. This may be said as a matter of course, but it is not practiced as a matter of course and some practice much more: I am happy if I get out of here in one piece. Moral accusations are out of place here, but if you can be careful not to panic and run away too soon during the riot, and if you run while still paying attention to others, then already much is gained.

For our affinity group, we always try to have a common overview of whether everyone is still there. In case we get lost, we always have a meeting point for a time after the riot, away from the action, where we check if anyone has been arrested. During the riot we sometimes lose sight of each other, but so far we have almost always found each other again, afterwards at the latest. So if you have lost everyone, try to stay calm. You probably won't be alone for long, and if you are, there is still the last meeting point.

When the riot is over, it's over. Actually, it's good to note. The cops have created a situation favorable to themselves, all the large gatherings are dispersed, and the people dressed all in black are gradually becoming fewer and fewer. Then it is time for us to retreat for the time being. How far, and whether we go home at this point always depends on the concrete circumstances. In general, the departure is an important aspect for us, which is always completely decided on in advance. We don't like the idea of being stopped on the way home, even if we've already gotten rid of all the awkward things.

After the riot, we dispose of whatever clothes we can. On the other side, the forensics starts, and if you have believed until now that the cops do not secure so many traces at a big riot, then you should discard this belief. Unfortunately, they simply secure traces everywhere as best they can. And for that they sometimes pick up stones and search through all the

trash cans in the area to find your change of clothes, for example. DNA and fingerprints are to be avoided as much as possible in advance, and afterwards it is important to ensure that you dispose of your belongings sensibly. Sensible means that you dispose of it in such a way that a dedicated forensics team can't trace it back to you.

At home we dispose of stuff again. In advance, we keep travel to other cities secret as much as possible, and also afterwards we avoid that much is known about our activity. We have noticed that after a nice riot, the attention to caution decreases for a time, and we try to work against this as best as we can. We talk about what happened only in a trusted circle, if possible, but in detail. What was good? What was bad? What didn't work at all? What would we have liked to do, but couldn't? What do we still have to figure out? Did someone get arrested? Is there a need for anti-repression support? Should we write a report? What's next for us?

## **And Then It Actually Starts All Over Again**

What can be said in summary once again? Perhaps at least that we think that if you want to enjoy riots on a regular basis, you have to change your everyday life a bit. You have to inform yourself about the actions of the cops where you live, as far as investigations are concerned. Be well acquainted with surveillance. Know how to avoid traces. Be able to show solidarity even in a scuffle. Unfortunately, not everything can be secured, a residual risk always remains. Keep it as small as possible, and forewarned is forearmed.

See you!

Advice on how to act prudently and with  
panache in the streets.



No Trace Project / No trace, no case. A collection of tools to help anarchists and other rebels **understand** the capabilities of their enemies, **undermine** surveillance efforts, and ultimately **act** without getting caught.

Depending on your context, possession of certain documents may be criminalized or attract unwanted attention—be careful about what zines you print and where you store them.