

Advocacy vs. Activism Quick Reference

Both matter. Know which tool you're reaching for — and why.

The Core Distinction

	Advocacy	Activism
Primary Action	Persuasion — changing minds one conversation at a time	Disruption — forcing visibility of an issue
Audience	Individuals and small groups	Systems, institutions, the public
Energy	Patient, relational, long-game	Urgent, confrontational, immediate
Risk	Slow progress, invisibility	Backlash, alienation, burnout
Strength	Builds lasting alliances	Creates unavoidable awareness

When to Use Which

Scenario	Better Tool	Why
Your neighbor shoots feral cats	Advocacy	One person, one conversation
City council voting on a TNR ban	Activism	Need visibility + political pressure
Family dismisses factory farming concerns	Advocacy	Relationship, not a campaign
Slaughterhouse dumping waste illegally	Activism	Needs public exposure + regulation
Coworker says "animals don't feel pain"	Advocacy	One conversation, one reframe
Bill to ban puppy mills stalled in committee	Both	Advocacy with legislators + activism for public pressure

How They Work Together

The best movements use both tools in coordination:

- **Activists** create the opening — they force an issue into public consciousness
- **Advocates** walk through that opening — they convert awareness into alliance

You don't have to choose one forever. But in any given moment, know which tool you're reaching for — and why.

Know Your Default

- My natural mode is: Advocate / Activist (circle one)
- My strength in that mode: _____
- My blind spot in that mode: _____