

## An Action is Nonviolent if

Purpose: In a workshop about active nonviolence, this exercise helps people to clarify their understanding of what exactly nonviolence means to them. It also can be used as a follow-up exercise to the Nonviolence Spectrum to have more focused discussion on what we mean by nonviolence.

For groups planning a nonviolent direct action (NVD) together, this exercise is a good way to help people should reach some consensus on what attitudes and actions are acceptable for them.

Time: 20 minutes (and can run for as long as the facilitator thinks is useful; if short on time the minimum time would be 20 minutes)

Preparation: This exercise works best if preceded by the nonviolence spectrum, the nonviolent quotes or some other exercise that has stimulated people's thinking about nonviolence.

### Description of Exercise:

- Ask people to get into threes or fours and to complete the two sentences:  
'An action is violent if ...'  
'An action is nonviolent if ...'
- Allow about 10 minutes for small group work.
- Bring the group back together and list the results on two flip sheets, taking one idea from each small group in turn until they are all up.
- Mark the disputed ones in some way, and guide the ensuing discussion.

Follow-up: Summarise the areas of unity and disunity. Emphasise that TTT does not have a definition of nonviolence, but we do believe it's important for a group to know what its basic understanding of these issues is.

Destruction of property is often something that people disagree on. Violence can be attributed to the intention, the context, the action or the result. It helps to draw out these different approaches. Differences between people who choose nonviolence on principle and those for whom it is a pragmatic choice should become clear.

This is one of the trickiest exercises from the point of view of whether you are trying to draw out their ideas and help them think it through, or trying to plant a 'correct' understanding of nonviolence (or violence). Asking questions is one way to get people to consider, for example, that nonviolence can encompass the destruction of property, or you can be upfront about it and just tell them what you think.