

SHUT IT DOWN

STORIES FROM A FIERCE,
LOVING RESISTANCE

Tools of the Police

The police have a wide array of tools at their disposal to command and control people. While some are considered nonlethal, we know the people can be harmed, injured, or killed by many of them.

VOICE. The first tool of control is the use of their voice with aggressive and loud commands. In this situation, it is important to calmly ask, “Am I being detained?” If you are not, walk slowly away.

BATONS. If batons are held horizontally to push you, use your hands as a soft shield, or turn your back if you’re wearing a backpack or cushy coat. Banners and signs can also help break the impact. Simply sitting down is a great way to shift the energy and thwart their ability to push you. If police are using the batons to jab, use a pack, sign, or banner as a shield. If they are swinging the batons and you’re not wearing protective gear, you may want to get the hell out of there or cover your head with your arms. If you are hurt and can’t get away, curl into a fetal position and protect your head, stomach, and genitals. Lie on your right side to protect your liver.

PROJECTILES. These include rubber, plastic, or wooden bullets, beanbags, paint balls, concussion grenades, and more. If the police open fire, turn your back to protect your face, throat, and stomach. Depending on the situation, you may choose to slowly walk away, sit down, or run. These nonlethal projectiles can be lethal and several protestors have been seriously hurt, especially when hit in the face or eye area. Some have been killed from impact.

AUDITORY WEAPONS. Concussion grenade explosions are loud and scary; they can also harm our bodies and damage our hearing. LRAD machines (Long Range Acoustic Devices) send a high-pitched wave and are used to disperse protestors. Earplugs can help with both of these, but construction earmuffs provide greater protection.

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HORSES. Police horses are used to scare people and disperse crowds. Police may move them alongside you or drive them into the crowd. They are big, strong, and frightening. If you're in a large, organized group and trying to hold the space, one technique is to sit down and sway with everyone's hands in the air like a moving human carpet. This scares the horse into rearing back. If you're in a small group, it might be necessary to move to another location when the horses show up to avoid being trampled. Never go behind a horse, as they can kick you. Watch your feet, which can be injured if they step on you. If you're sitting, pull your legs in close.

DOGS. Dogs are used for many things by the state. In the streets they're used for fear, capture, or crowd control. If the police bring dogs near you, it's important to keep your hands, arms, and legs close to your body. Move slowly away from them. Do not give them anything to sink their teeth into. Their leashes are longer than you realize, enabling them to lunge. Do not make eye contact with the dog, but make eye contact with the cop, and in a clear voice tell them to restrain the dog.

PAIN COMPLIANCE. These are physical techniques to force compliance through pain, kind of like torture. These are used if you're linked up with other protestors and refusing to move. Officers will apply pressure where the nerves are close to the surface, like under your ears or jaw. Or they might bend your fingers or manipulate your body in the opposite direction than it's meant to go. Depending on the situation, you might let go, or you may choose to stay and risk what might come.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS. The two most frequently used are tear gas and pepper spray. They can vary in strength and intensity, so there's no predicting what you'll get. Tear gas canisters are shot from big guns or thrown like grenades. Pepper spray comes in both small canisters and big fire-extinguisher-sized versions that douse crowds. Both of these have similar effects on the eyes, skin, and respiratory tract. They make it difficult,

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if not impossible, to see. Tear gas has you crying while pepper spray has you moaning with burning pain. Both cause difficulty breathing and create a feeling of agitation and pain. Protective gear like masks or goggles can help mitigate harm. Be careful about bringing contaminated clothes into your home.

WATER CANNONS. These are used to keep crowds from moving forward, and the pressurized water may contain chemical agents. If you're paying attention, you can often track the trajectory of the water in order to get out of the way. Tarp banners can be used to mitigate the water's force. Remember that in cold weather, getting wet can cause hypothermia.

LIVE AMMUNITION. In today's age I'm as concerned about unstable people with guns as I am with the police. Gun violence is a scourge on our communities. If you're in a situation of live fire or hear gunshots nearby, get low to the ground and look for cover. Keep breathing and stay focused. If someone has a gun that you can see, where is it pointed? If it's pointed up in the air, move quickly to find cover—cars, utility boxes, walls, anything you see that might shield you. If it's pointed at you, move slowly, with your hands up, backing away, scanning for cover, and calmly asking the person to put the gun down. If there are other people around you or nearby, call for support. Someone else providing a distraction can create the time you need to get to a safer or protected space.

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