

Campaigning with Kids

by Obama Mamas & Papas

Juggle young children and campaign?

Yes we can! We've filled this page with ideas from the at-home campaign trail. Pick just a few and you'll have made a big impact come election day.

Share your story.

1. You've got your own reasons for supporting the Obama-Biden ticket. Share your personal story; and watch as others open up. Listen & learn what matters to them. Offer to research Barack's position on an issue. Or look it up together.
2. Set up a fundraising page at www.barackobama.com. Send an email to friends asking for their (confidential) support.

Make phone calls.

3. Put those rollover minutes to good use! The Obama Web site has tools from training videos to printable call scripts so you can transform your desk or kitchen table into a campaign office. Go to the site and click on "Make calls."
4. Have a friend or partner who'd love to take the little ones to the park or for a stroll? An hour alone is enough time to make 25-50 phone calls, using the online tools (remember, most will be dial, no answer, next name). Hearty canned soup & crusty bread makes for a quick dinner on nights where you donate your normal meal prep time.
5. Think nobody's home during the day? You are! And, if you live on the West Coast, use your smarts to reach out to an East Coast battleground state. Your little one's 3pm naptime is 6pm in West Virginia and Florida.
6. Only have time to make calls after little ones are tucked in bed? From the East Coast, try using alternate zip codes or a West coast friend's password (with permission) and work to reach Western states. 9pm your time is 6pm for them.

Volunteer with a friend.

7. If you can arrange childcare, make a date with a friend to meet at a local campaign office or house phone banking party. The break from toddlers and "adult" time spent doing something you care about will invigorate you. Plus, you'll be more likely to keep the appointment than if going it alone.
8. No childcare? Try canvassing door-to-door instead. Babies can go along in slings; two parents with strollers can get otherwise skeptics to actually open their doors. Parents have instant credibility! The campaign is focusing on the 5-7 pm time slot in many areas, and as an at-home parent, you don't necessarily have to rush home from another job.
9. While a campaign office or local canvass event host can give you printed maps for canvassing, you can also print your own from the "Neighbor-to-Neighbor" tools on the Web site. Click on "Knock on doors."

Schedule a play date.

10. Too many kids to sling or stroll? Gather 3 or more parents to corral the kids on a grassy patch near some foot traffic. (Can you say XT Play Yard?) Be sure to assign roles so you know who's watching the kids and who's "on duty" campaigning, in case someone gets embroiled in a political conversation.
11. Or just plan to meet at the park to discuss a few issues and come away more engaged and better informed.
12. I invited my husband to a play date at a new, indoor play place this past Friday. While the kids played, our partners, grandparents and friends got to know each other. Meanwhile, five moms volunteered for 90 minutes at the campaign office around the corner. Talk about win-win-win. Everyone got credit for helping.

Get creative.

13. Phone your local campaign office and ask how you can support their volunteers. At the Web site, click on "states," select your state, then click into "find your local office." Do they need people to house new volunteers coming to work your battleground state, for example? Or are they hungry?! Many campaign offices are inundated with sugary snacks, but coming up short on real meals for volunteers working through mealtimes. You can help.
14. Admit it. Your little cutie draws all the attention. Generate smiles with a sign attached to backpack carrier or stroller. Try "I can't vote. But you can. (Ask my mom about early voting.)" Perfect when you're strolling a fall festival.
15. Show off a little one door-to-door on Halloween delivering treats with a creative note. Maybe "I can't eat candy, since I don't have teeth. Please be sweet and give me another treat: Vote Obama." Well, you get the idea ☺.
16. Older kids? Set up a lemonade-stand/campaign table in the neighborhood or at an outdoor event. Or plan a fun kids parade through the neighborhood. This is especially great for simple messages kids can shout or write on homemade signs, like "Vote Early" or "Vote Tuesday." For more ideas for older kids, go to the Web site, click into "people," then "Kids for Obama" - a group specifically for the 12 and under crowd.
17. Post your planned 'mini-events' online at www.barackobama.com. You may find a like-minded neighbor or two that wants to help. Kids can get away with bold moves, like using sidewalk chalk on Election Day. Jennifer Javan of DC has posted the "Chalk for Change" organizing event on the Web site. Sign up to show your support.

Smile. Sure it's challenging. But when you think of your home and everyday surroundings as a mini-campaign office, you'll be surprised at how much you can do, and who is willing to help when they sense your commitment. Good luck!

Send comments/ideas to Anne Brown, anne@annebrown.org -- www.barackobama.com group "Obama Mamas & Papas (kid-friendly)"