

Answers to Your Questions About Voting

Am I eligible to register and to vote?

Yes, if you are:

- a citizen of the United States.
- a resident of California
- at least 18 years old by Election Day.
- not in prison or on parole
- not declared mentally incompetent by a court

Must I read or write English in order to register or vote? No. You may register and vote even if you cannot read or write. You may take to the voting booth a literate and registered individual who can assist you in the voting process, but not actually vote for you.

How can I register? Fill out the short voter registration-by-mail form. Sign the form. Mail it. No postage stamp is required.

Where can I find the registration form? Voter registration forms are generally available at the post office, library, fire station, Department of Motor Vehicles, welfare department and Registrar of Voters. Also, many social service agencies have forms.

When can I register? Register anytime, but be sure to do it October 24th if you want to vote in the November 8th special election.

Does it cost anything to register? No. Registration is free.

Am I registered once I fill out and mail the registration form? No. You can't be sure you are registered until you get a voter notification card from the county. If the notification card does not arrive within three weeks of mailing your registration, call the Registrar of Voters and ask if you are registered.

Do I ever have to re-register? Yes. If you move, change your name, want to change your political party, or have completed all conditions of a felony charge, you must register again.

What if I move right before the election? You may vote by returning to your former precinct or by requesting a vote-by-mail ballot.

Will I remain a registered voter even if I fail to vote? Yes.

Can I register for someone else? No. You can only register for yourself. However, you may help others fill out a form, but they must sign the form.

Do I have to choose a political party in order to register and to vote? No. You may check the "decline to state" or independent box on the form if you do not wish to belong to a political party.

What is a political party? A political party is a group of individuals who try to determine public policy by organizing to win elections and operate government.

How do I join a political party? It is as simple as checking the box for the political party of your choice on the registration form. There are no requirements to join a political party.

If I declare a party of preference when I register, can I change later? Yes, you just have to re-register.

Am I required to work for the party or contribute money to it? No.

What is a Sample Ballot? Before each election, each registered voter receives a packet of information including a Sample Ballot, which is a replica of the ballot the voter will see at the polls. The packet also gives the time and date of the election, the location of your polling place, and an application to vote-by-mail.

What if I do not receive a Sample Ballot? If it doesn't arrive two weeks before the election, call and request one from the Registrar of Voters.

Where will I vote? Your polling place will be in your neighborhood. If you receive a Sample Ballot, the exact address will be shown on the back. Polling places may change from one election to another. It is important to go to the correct polling place because your name will not be on the roster of voters anywhere else.

What if my polling place is not accessible to the disabled? You may vote by absentee ballot. If you prefer to vote in person, get as close to your polling place as you can and a precinct board member will bring you a ballot for you to cast.

When are the polls open? The time polls are open on Election Day varies by state. However, usual hours are from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Can I vote by mail? Yes, anyone may vote by mail. You do not need to say why you want to vote by mail. Contact the Registrar of Voters for information on obtaining an absentee ballot and about deadlines.

Do I need identification when I go to vote? No. You will just be asked to state your name and address and to sign the roster of voters. Bring along your voter registration card.

What if I need help in marking my ballot? Ask Elections Officials at the polling place.

How long may I stay in the polling booth? Take your time. Some states limit voting to ten minutes, but will extend that time if no other voters are waiting. You may take your pre-marked Sample Ballot into the polling place with you.

What if I make a mistake on my ballot? You may request another one.

Can someone help me when I go to vote? Yes, you can bring a friend, a relative, a teacher, a parent or anyone else. This person can help you read the ballot or use the voting booth to vote.

Do I need identification to register to vote? If you are registering for the first time, you must provide either a California driver's license or state ID card number. If you do not have either of these, you can use the last four digits of your Social Security number.