

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions for New American Voters



VOTING ELIGIBILITY

1. WHO CAN REGISTER TO VOTE?

To register to vote in U.S. elections, you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen
- Live in the state where you are registering
- Be at least 18 years old by Election Day (some states let 16- or 17-year-olds pre-register so they are ready when they turn 18)

Check your state's election website to confirm the rules where you live.

2. I RECENTLY BECAME A U.S. CITIZEN. CAN I VOTE?

Yes! Becoming a citizen means you have the right to vote. As long as you meet your state's requirements, you can register and vote. Welcome to the process.

3. CAN I VOTE IF I HAVE A GREEN CARD?

No. Only U.S. citizens may vote in federal, state, and most local elections. Voting before you are a citizen is a serious legal violation that can affect your immigration status. If you are not yet a citizen, please wait until after you have naturalized.

4. CAN REFUGEES OR PEOPLE WITH ASYLUM VOTE?

No, not until you become a U.S. citizen. After naturalization, you can register and vote just like any other citizen.

VOTING REGISTRATION

5. HOW DO I REGISTER TO VOTE?

There are three ways to register, depending on your state. You only need to do one:

- **Online** — through your state's election website
- **By mail** — using a registration form you mail in
- **In person** — at your local election office, DMV, or other government offices

Visit [Vote.org](https://www.vote.org) or your state's election website to get started.



6. HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM ALREADY REGISTERED?

You can **check your registration status** on your state's election website. It is a good habit to check before every election registration records can change when you move or if your information needs updating.

7. I MOVED RECENTLY. DO I NEED TO DO ANYTHING?

Yes. If you moved, changed your name, or have a new mailing address, you need to update your voter registration. If you do not update it, you may not be able to vote in your new location on Election Day.

8. IS THERE A DEADLINE TO REGISTER?

Yes, and the deadline is different in every state. Some states allow you to register right up to Election Day. Others require you to register weeks ahead of time. Check your state's deadline as early as possible, do not wait until the last minute.

PREPARING TO VOTE

9. HOW DO I FIND OUT WHAT WILL BE ON MY BALLOT?

Most states offer a sample ballot before Election Day so you can see exactly what elected offices you will be voting on. Visit your **local election office's website** and enter your address to find your sample ballot.

10. HOW DO I LEARN ABOUT THE CANDIDATES?

You have many options:

- Visit candidates' official websites
- Read your state's official voter guide (many states mail these to registered voters)
- Attend a community forum or candidate debate
- Talk with neighbors or community members you trust
- Use nonpartisan resources like [Vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org)

Take your time. You do not need to decide everything at once.

11. DO I HAVE TO VOTE IN EVERY RACE?

No. You choose which races you want to vote in. If you do not feel ready to vote on a particular race or question, you can skip it and move on. Only the choices you make will be counted.

12. HOW DO I KNOW WHERE TO VOTE?

Your polling place is based on your home address. Look up your polling place before Election Day, it can change. Visit your state's **voter information website** or call your local election office to confirm your location and the hours it's open, as these vary.

VOTING



13. WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS FOR VOTING?

Depending on your state, you may be able to:

- **Vote early in person** — at designated locations before Election Day
- **Vote by mail** — request a ballot sent to your home (rules and deadlines vary by state)
- **Vote on Election Day** — at your assigned polling place

Check your state's rules to find out which options are available to you.

14. DO I NEED TO BRING AN ID?

It depends on your state. Some states require a photo ID. Others accept different forms of identification, or none at all. **Check your state's rules** before you go so you are prepared. If you are unsure, bringing an ID is always a safe choice.

15. CAN I GET HELP IN MY LANGUAGE?

Yes. Federal law requires many polling places to offer language assistance in areas with large non-English-speaking communities. You can also bring someone to help you understand the ballot (see question 16). If you need language help, contact your local election office ahead of time to ask what is available.

16. CAN SOMEONE HELP ME VOTE?

Yes. If you need help because of a disability or a language barrier, you may bring a person of your choice to help you with some exceptions (for example, your employer or union representative usually cannot assist you). Ask an election worker if you have questions about who can help.

17. WHAT IF I MAKE A MISTAKE ON MY BALLOT?

If you have not submitted your ballot yet, tell an election worker right away. They can explain how to get a new ballot or fix the mistake. The process is different depending on whether you are voting in person or by mail, so **ask before you do anything.**

18. WHAT IF MY NAME IS NOT ON THE VOTER LIST?

Do not leave without asking for help. **Tell an election worker.** In most states, you have the right to cast a provisional ballot, which will be counted once your eligibility is confirmed. Always ask, do not assume you cannot vote.

19. IS MY VOTE PRIVATE?

Yes. In the United States, voting is by secret ballot. No one, not your employer, your landlord, your family, or the government has the right to know who you voted for, but records of whether someone voted is publicly available information. However, your vote history can only show whether you voted or not; it does not show which candidates you selected on your ballot.

20. CAN I BRING MY CHILDREN WHEN I VOTE?

In most places, yes. Many families make voting a tradition that children can witness and learn from. **Rules can vary** by polling place, so check with your local election office if you are unsure.

AFTER VOTING

21. WHAT IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG WHILE I AM VOTING?

First, **speak with an election worker** at your polling place. You can also call the nonpartisan Election Protection Hotline for free help:



866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683). This line is available in multiple languages.

22. I AM NOT ELIGIBLE TO VOTE YET. CAN I STILL GET INVOLVED?

Absolutely. There are many meaningful ways to participate in your community even before you can vote:

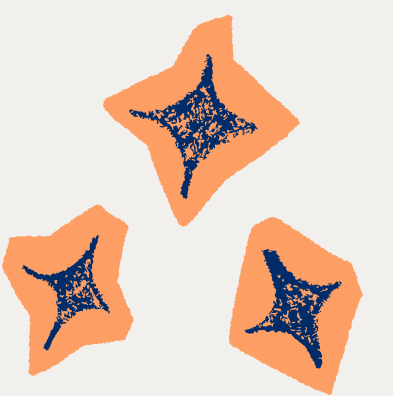
- Volunteer with a civic education or voter outreach organization
- Help register US citizens to vote
- Help translate materials for other community members
- Attend public meetings and community forums
- Serve as a poll worker (eligibility requirements vary by state)
- Encourage eligible friends and family to register and vote



23. WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT VOTING IN MY STATE?

Visit your state's official election website. You can find information on:

- Registration deadlines
- Early voting locations and hours
- Polling place locations
- How to request a mail-in ballot
- Sample ballots
- ID requirements



24. I AM STILL LEARNING HOW THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WORKS. IS IT OKAY IF I DO NOT KNOW EVERYTHING BEFORE I VOTE?

Yes, and you are not alone. Many first-time voters feel this way. Voting is a learning process, and it gets more familiar every time. You do not need to be an expert. Start by learning about the issues that matter most to you and your family. Use nonpartisan resources like your state's voter guide or community civic programs to help you prepare. No one expects you to have all the answers. What matters is that your voice is heard.

QUICK TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME VOTERS

- ☐ Check your registration before every election do not assume it is current
- ☐ Look up your polling place and hours ahead of time
- ☐ Find your sample ballot and review it before Election Day
- ☐ Bring a valid ID if your state requires one
- ☐ Make a plan to know when, where, and how you will vote.
- ☐ Ask for help if you need it. Election workers are there to assist you
- ☐ Take your time there is no rush while you are in the voting booth