



register

Voting is an easy and important way for all citizens to speak up and have a say in government and the political process. While each state has its own rules and deadlines about voting, in every state a person must be registered to vote before he or she can cast their ballot on Election Day. A voter registration drive is a planned effort by a person or group to register potential voters.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

So you've decided to reach out and help get your community involved and voting—that's fantastic! Depending on how much time and effort you want to put in, there are several ways for you to get involved with voter registration efforts in your community:

YOURSELF

Are you old enough to vote? If so, then your first step should be to make sure that you are properly registered.

In the “how to” section below, you will find tips on locating your state’s voter registration rules to assist you in getting registered. Once you’ve registered yourself, it will be even easier to help explain the process to others!

YOUR SCHOOL

A great place to start a voter registration drive is with your school. Be sure to get permission from school officials before undertaking any kind of effort like this on school property. The school may be able and willing to help in your efforts!

At elementary or middle schools you can do your drive with teachers and staff, or consider setting up a table when parents will be coming to pick up kids after school.

High schools are great places to reach out to students who will be turning 18 on or

before Election Day. With these voters, it would be best to have on hand both voter registration applications as well as information on where people can register to vote (or get more information) online.

FAMILY & FRIENDS

Whether you're old enough to vote or not, a great place to start any voter registration drive is with your own family and friends. Talk to your parents, other family members, and your neighbors and have your friends do the same.

It can be very simple-- telling people that you want to make sure everyone is registered to vote, or you can go a little farther—talking about issues that are important to you, candidates that you support, or providing information to people on how to get registered and where to vote.

HELP OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

There are many national and local organizations that work on voter registration efforts in the months leading up to Election Day.

The League of Women Voters, Rock the Vote, College Democrats, or Young Republicans are just a few of the many groups you could volunteer your time with.

Helping an organization such as these allows you to have all the fun of helping people become active, engaged citizens while someone else gets to handle all the planning!

COLLEGE CAMPUSES

College campuses are often overflowing with new voters and with voters who have moved and may need to update their registration information. These are great places to run a full-blown registration drive.

In fact there are many college and community groups that focus on those types of efforts. The “how to” section below will help you get a registration drive up and rolling on your local college campus

LOCAL COMMUNITY

Setting up tables in the community where you can provide information to potential voters can also be an effective way to register people.

Grocery stores, banks, community centers, and other frequently visited local businesses are good places where you may be able to talk to a lot of people in a short amount of time.

Be sure to get permission from business owners before setting up a table on their property.

Additionally (especially if you're not old enough to vote yet) be sure to talk to your parents or other adults who will be able to help you get permission and plan for a safe and fun event for everyone!



How do I get the party started?

Whether you're planning to register just your neighborhood or reach out to the entire community, you will need to follow the same simple steps to get started.

BECOME EDUCATED

Start by doing some research so you are familiar with the voter registration laws and deadlines in your state or county, before you begin your plans for a drive. Almost all states have mail-in registration and many even have online registration now.

However many states have different guidelines for voting, such as the deadlines for registering and the types of identification voters will need to provide. You can find the particular guidelines for your area by contacting the state or local bureau of elections.

You can also find voter registration information online at the Project VoteSmart website, found at www.vote-smart.org/voter_registration_resources.php.

PREPARE

Contact your local election officials to request the necessary materials for voter registration. You should request voter registration cards, mail-in voter registration application forms, and informational supplies regarding voting procedures.

If you explain what you're trying to do, the election's officials will most likely be very happy to help you get the necessary materials.

Don't forget to also ask about how people can request an absentee ballot if they are going to be away from where they are registered on Election Day. You may be able to provide absentee ballot applications for people at the same time they register!

Another excellent source for promotional materials and a place where you can register to vote online is Rock the Vote (www.rockthevote.org).

In addition, ask your local board of elections to give you a list of polling places that you can copy and hand to people when they register or a link to a website or phone number where people can look up their polling place.

Inquire about the process after voter registration forms are submitted. For example, how long until a newly registered voter is notified that they are registered and given their polling location? Does the local Board of Elections mail out a voter registration card? What kind of identification does a person need to vote on Election Day?

FIND SOME BUDDIES

Contact a local chapter of the League of Women Voters, College Republican National Committee, the Young Democrats of America, or any other community organization active in the political arena to help you get set up and to work during the drive.

Set a goal for the number of new voters you want to register by the deadline. Keep this up in a visible place so that the entire community can support you in achieving your goal.

Make sure that you have secured any needed permissions for the drive and that you have all your materials ready. Instead of buying any new materials, you could borrow a table or two from a school group or local organization and even pens and pencils could be collected from friends.

And don't forget to line up plenty of help! If you are holding your drive on multiple days or

it is going to last for more than a couple of hours, consider having people sign up to work shifts. It is always best to have at least two people working your drive at a time, even if you're just going around and talking to your neighbors.

Remember to meet with your volunteer help before the drive to make sure that everyone understands what they are supposed to do!

START MOVING

Register new voters!

When someone registers ask them to fill out an “I pledge to vote” card or sign-up sheet with their name and email address or phone number. This way you can make a telephone call or send an email reminder close to Election Day.

Give them a flyer or leaflet reminder, which lays out the next steps on the back.

CELEBRATE

Make sure that you mail in forms as you complete them to ensure that people have an opportunity to vote.

Turn your “I Pledge to Vote” sheets into lists and call or email people to remind them to vote on Election Day.

Tally up your new registrations after each event (or day or week of registrations)—did you meet your goal?

When it's all done, get your group together to talk about how things went. Even if you didn't meet your goal, every vote counts and every new voter is an important addition.

Take some time to thank everyone for their hard work and don't forget to celebrate a job well done!