



# mock election

Mock elections are designed to mimic real elections and are often used to teach students or new voters about the election process. Mock elections can be held purely as a teaching or practice exercise, but they can also be a great tool to help non-voters have a voice if held alongside the real election. You may be familiar with a program called Kids Voting USA which works to hold elections in schools and to have kids' ballots at actual polling places on Election Day.

At the most basic level, a mock election event should spend some time talking about the candidates and their issues but focus primarily on walking through the actual voting process at the polls. For a longer event or educational series, you can spend more time looking at how campaigns are run or setting up pretend candidate speeches, etc. Always have a discussion about why voting is important and stress that every vote (and every voice) does matter.



## ORGANIZING A MOCK ELECTION

**Define the purpose of your mock election.** Think about why you are holding a mock election and who your audience will be. If you are hoping to have a realistic experience to help prepare potential voters for Election Day, it may be helpful to have your mock election very realistic. On the other hand, if your primary goal is simply to teach classmates or peers about the electoral process, feel free to be more creative.

**Research the candidates.** If you are intending to hold a realistic mock election, then using the actual candidates' information is important. Contact the campaigns to see if they have literature or position information they could provide for you to use. You could also consider showing clips of an actual candidate debate and a mock-up of the official ballot to further the experience

**Create your own candidate.** In a school, consider having classes nominate classmates to play the candidates or use teachers and staff at their school. With a longer term project you could have kids join teams behind each candidate and make posters, flyers, and position statements ("I support pizza 5 days a week in the cafeteria!" etc) and have a candidate debate or rally.

**Walk through the voter registration process.** It is important to register your participants using real registration forms if they are of voting age or mock forms if the participants are under age, and to walk through the deadlines and rules about voting. Since many states have different guidelines, you can find out the specifics for your state by contacting your local Board of Elections or looking online at websites such as Project VoteSmart (<http://votesmart.org/elections/voter-registration>).

**Recreate an actual polling station.** Consider setting up your room to resemble an actual polling place. Have young participants use their school IDs or state-issued IDs as their form of voter identification. Don't forget to have everyone cast their ballots and tally the results!

**Identify existing resources in your community.** Don't hesitate to ask student, community, or nonprofit groups that conduct election activities to be your partners or assist with your event. Candidate's campaigns and the local Board of Elections may also be able to provide you with registration materials, sample ballots, campaign literature, and other educational materials.



## ON ELECTION DAY

Holding elections for non-voters alongside the official election can be a very powerful type of mock election, especially for young people. These use realistic ballots and the official candidate information, and the results are tallied and reported by your group along with the official election results. These can be a very clear way for those who are not quite of voting age to speak up and have their say in the process. Groups such as Kids Voting USA hold these types of mock elections in schools and even at polling places on Election Day. You can find out more information (and how to get involved or tips for your own event) at [www.kidsvotingusa.org](http://www.kidsvotingusa.org).