

Election 2020: Frequently Asked Questions

How is voting in 2020 different from years before?

Voting in this 2020 general election will be different from prior years with more methods to vote than ever before, an expansion only partly due to Covid; prior to the Covid outbreak, in 2019, New York enacted Early Voting.

The purpose of this document is to make sure you are ready to vote, and help you develop a plan to vote in the way that is best for you.

REGISTRATION

How do I register to vote?

- Online through the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV):
<https://voterreg.dmv.ny.gov/MotorVoter/>
- In-person at the DMV, your county board of elections, or a number of other state agencies.
- Paper application (English; Spanish) that you mail to your county board of elections.

PLEASE NOTE: Even if you've ALWAYS voted at the same location, it is best to CONFIRM Your Registration NOW! If you discover you are NOT registered properly, do so [online](#), in person or by mail.

Go to <https://www.vote.nyc/page/register-vote>.

Scroll down to the bottom for a list of key dates.

When is the deadline to register to vote?

In New York, voters must be registered 25 days prior to an election to be able to vote in that election, i.e., October 9, 2020 (postmarked if by mail); if submitted by mail, it must be received by October 14.

What if I moved?

The county board of elections must receive a change of address notice by October 14, 2020 through any of the following means:

- A change of address form to through the United States Postal Service;
- Update your information through the DMV's website;
- Download a voter registration application from [this website](#). Be sure to include both your prior and current address. This is a fillable form, but be sure to sign the bottom.

Note: the registration form is on legal-sized paper. Be sure to scale the form to letter-sized paper if that's all you have. Do not print the form on more than one sheet; your signature must be on the same page as the information you provide.

Be sure to check your registration status in advance of the election to ensure the change of address was processed!

What if I don't submit a change of address (or my change of address wasn't processed)?

You may vote at the polling place for your new address, but you will have to do so on an affidavit ballot. The address you provide on your affidavit ballot will serve to update your address for subsequent elections.

VOTING

Ballots

All options to vote in New York utilize state-issued paper ballots, to mark by pen. Visually-impaired voters and voters with disabilities may vote by using a ballot-marking device.

What are my options for voting this year?

Prior to Election Day, you have two options:

You can **vote in-person by voting early**. Early Voting begins on October 24th and ends on November 1st. Find your Early Voting Site [here](#).

OR

You can also **vote by mail** - which often also is referred to as voting “absentee.” Voting “absentee” requires only a few simple steps:

- You must first submit an application to obtain the “absentee ballot.” We strongly recommend that you proceed online where you can complete an application using an interactive form, which you can do [here](#) (Among [other](#) methods, you can also mail the application itself, which is downloadable [here](#).) Absentee ballot applications first become available September 18 and can be submitted until October 27th (7 days prior to the election); however, if you wait until late October to submit an application, you cannot count on your ballot arriving (sent in the order by when the application is received) by Election Day due to delays with the United States Postal Service. Request your ballot **as soon as possible**. NOTE: Absentee ballots are sent by request only.

- On the application, if what led you to apply to vote absentee was your concern about contracting or spreading an illness (including Covid-19), select “temporary illness or physical disability” as your reason for requesting an absentee ballot.
- Await or obtain your ballot (options are arrival by mail or pick up in person).
- Complete your ballot (permanent ink pen (not pencil) to paper, never online), and sign and seal the ballot (follow instructions on the ballot).
- Return the ballot – typically, by mail. Ballots will begin to be mailed in mid-late September. Return it as soon as possible; it must be **postmarked** by November 3rd. You may also drop it off at any polling place during Early Voting or on Election Day.
- You also may TRACK your application and then your ballot itself: Confirm each step [here](#).

NOTE: It is advisable -- but not required -- to take the additional step of requesting an “absentee ballot,” only to keep open the option of voting by mail because it is permissible to apply for and receive an absentee ballot and then voting in person.

OR

On Election Day, you can vote in-person by going to your polling place and casting your ballot. Polling places open at 6AM and you must be in line by 9PM. Just as with your voter registration, it is advisable to CONFIRM the location of your poll site as far in advance as possible:

- New York City: <https://findmypollsite.vote.nyc/>
- Elsewhere in New York State: <https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov/>

Is ID ever required to vote?

No, except in **one circumstance**. If you are voting for the first time, and you did not register to vote in-person (i.e., you registered online or via mail), you may have to show ID **the first time you vote**. The following may be used as identification: driver's license or other government-issued identification card, current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, or other government document that shows your name and address.

Can I vote in person if I requested an absentee ballot?

Yes. New York law allows a voter to vote in-person (at the assigned polling place) even if the voter requested or even mailed in an absentee ballot (New York is one of very few states that has this quirk in its law). However, we do not recommend voting in-person if you have already mailed in an absentee ballot unless you are concerned your ballot will not arrive to the Board of Elections in time. When the Boards of Elections begin counting votes, they have to sort through who mailed in a ballot and also voted at a polling place (the absentee ballot is disqualified and not counted), which takes considerable time and could delay finalizing the results of the election.

If you have not mailed in your absentee ballot, it is no problem to vote at a polling place, instead.

Is it SAFE/RELIABLE to MAIL my Absentee Ballot Through the US Postal Service?

Probably, if you do it EARLY! We recommend mailing as early as possible (preferably by Oct. 17th) so the post office has plenty of time to process it. Remember: you can also drop-off your ballot at any Early Voting site in your county. Early Voting starts Oct. 24th this year.

Can Someone Else Hand-Deliver My Absentee Ballot?

Yes, so long as the inner envelope is signed, dated and sealed by the voter in advance. We also recommend securing the inner envelope inside the outer, postal envelope as well.

Is There Anything I Can Do to Help with the Election?

- Share this information with friends, family and neighbors.
- Help a neighbor, family member, friend or colleague by offering to DROP OFF their absentee ballot at an early polling location. Be sure they have secured their ballot inside the inner envelope and signed it. Place that envelope in the outer, postal envelope and seal was well (even though ballot is being hand-delivered, not mailed).
- Volunteer to be a PAID Poll Worker! This is a great opportunity for civic-minded people (17 yrs +). Poll workers make \$250/day and can earn a modest bonus if they work at least four early voting dates--or \$2700+ if they work every early voting day starting Oct. 24 through Election Day, Nov. 3. <https://www.elections.ny.gov/BecomePollworker.html>

What are the KEY DATES for voting?

- Election Day is **Tuesday, November 3**
- Registration deadlines:
 - Online: **Friday, October 9**
 - For New York City, [here](#), for NYS, [here](#), in conjunction with the DMV website.
 - By mail: Postmarked by **Friday, October 9**
 - In person: **Friday, October 9**
- Absentee ballot deadlines:
 - To request: **Tuesday, October 27**
 - Completing application [online](#) or via several other methods (see above, “What are my options for voting this year?”)
 - To return (i.e., completed absentee ballot in sealed signed envelope):
 - **Tuesday, November 3** - deadline either for mail (postmark date) or by in-person drop off
- Early voting: **Saturday, October 24 through Sunday, November 1**
(For hours and locations by county, click [here](#))