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**WELCOME TO
YOUR VOTE**

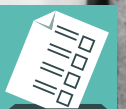
The
Electoral
Commission

A guide to voting in Scotland



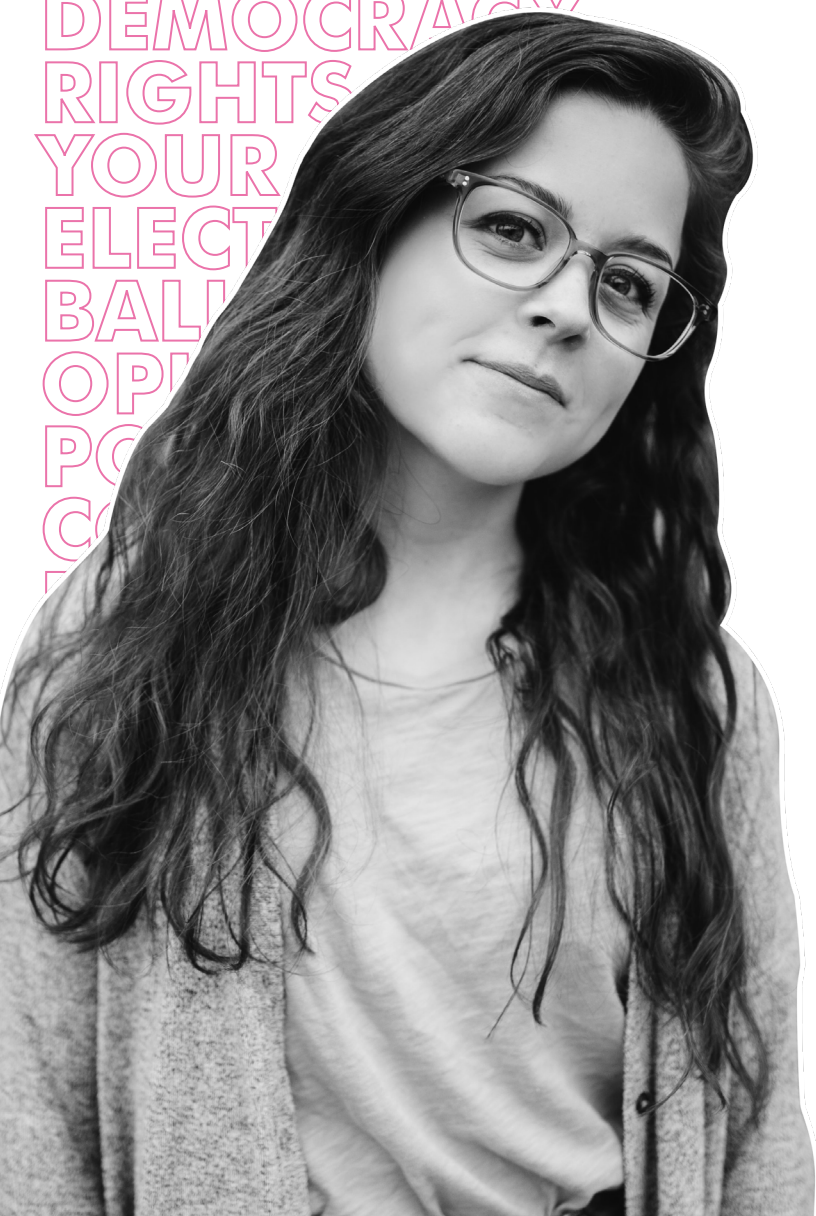
YOUR VOTE MATTERS

DON'T LOSE IT



CHOICE
DEMOCRACY
RIGHTS
YOUR SAY
ELECTIONS
BALLOT
OPINION
POLITICS
COMMUNITY
DECIDING
YOUR FUTURE

CHOICE
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A guide to voting in Scotland

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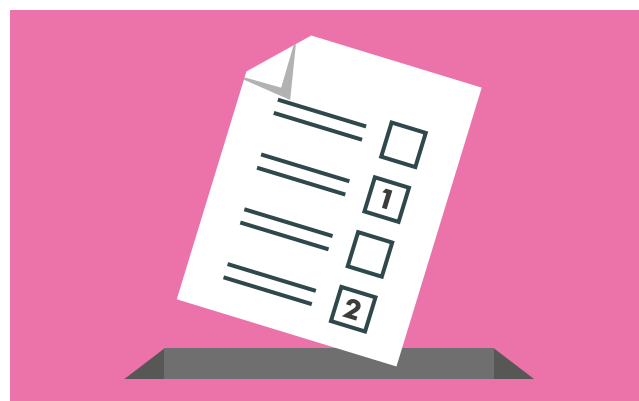
Complete our feedback survey to let us know your thoughts on this handbook. Scan the code to go to the

survey. It will only take a few minutes to complete. We won't identify you if we share any feedback. Thank you for your help.



INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO YOUR VOTE



Politics impacts everything around you. From how long you stay in education, to the rules of renting, from 5G availability, to how often your bin is collected.

To make a change in your community and society, you need to do your bit for democracy. One way to get involved is by voting in elections, so you help to choose who represents you and makes decisions on your behalf.

Right now, more people can vote in Scotland than ever before. It doesn't matter where you were born or what your nationality is, as long as you are resident in Scotland, you can vote in some elections when you turn 16.

But voting and politics can sometimes feel confusing. There can be a lot of unclear and old-fashioned words and explanations, and it's easy to feel a bit overwhelmed. This guide will help you to feel more confident and knowledgeable about elections in your area.

Politics can sometimes be difficult to talk about. There are a lot of different views on big and small subjects. It can sometimes feel that you're the only one who thinks a certain way and you may feel worried about sharing your opinions.

It's easy to avoid talking about tricky topics but the more we talk about them, the more we can learn and the bigger impact we can make.

When talking about politics it's always important to be respectful of other views. You may think differently to your parents or carers, brothers and sisters, or your friends. Having a free flowing discussion about politics is great and it's ok to try and persuade someone to your way of thinking. However, remember to respect the person you're speaking with, and to listen to what they have to say too. It's good to feel passionately about something, but it's also good to remember to treat people fairly.

This booklet will help you to understand what you can vote for, what to expect in elections, and how to actually cast your vote so you feel confident to take part in upcoming elections in your area and know that your vote matters.

Pass on what you've learned to your friends and family so you can encourage as many people as possible to get involved, get informed and use their vote.

You can learn more about voting by watching short videos and taking part in quizzes at electoralcommission.org.uk/learning



1. YOUR VOTE

WHAT CAN YOU VOTE FOR?



There are different things that influence which elections you're allowed to vote in. Generally, these are your age, your nationality and where you live. And rules are different in different parts of the UK.



Find out which elections you can vote in at [electoralcommission.org.uk/voter](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voter)

They include:

- health
- education
- training
- local government
- housing
- tourism
- economic development

The Scottish Parliament, as we know it today, was set up in 1999, but the first Parliament in Scotland was created over 600 years ago.

Who represents you in the Scottish Parliament?

The people who represent you in the Scottish Parliament are called Members of the Scottish Parliament, or MSPs for short. There are 129 elected MSPs and every person in Scotland is represented by eight of them.

Who does what?

Scottish Parliament

You can vote in Scottish Parliament elections when you're 16.

What's your local hospital like? How are you finding your school or college course? Are you thinking of running your own business one day?

The Scottish Parliament makes decisions about all of these issues.

Responsibilities held by the Scottish Parliament are called 'devolved matters'.



Each MSP looks after a particular area in Scotland. 73 MSPs are constituency MSPs, representing local areas. 56 are regional MSPs who look after a much bigger parliamentary area, known as a region. You are represented by one constituency MSP and seven regional MSPs.

Your MSPs divide their time between work at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh and local work in the area they represent. You elect your MSPs every five years.

Your MSPs might:

- look at the work and policies of the Scottish Government to check that they are serving the people of Scotland
- take issues forward on behalf of the people they represent
- respond to letters and emails from local people
- respond to an issue in their area by asking an official question in the Scottish Parliament
- hold regular open meetings with constituents to discuss the problems in their area, known as a surgery
- debate issues
- vote on changes in the law
- sit on committees to look at issues in more detail

You can contact any of the MSPs who represent you to ask questions about issues that are important to you. You can speak over the phone, by email, or face to face when they hold an open meeting in your area, known as a surgery. You can find their contact details on Scottish Parliament's website at parliament.scot/msps

You can visit the Scottish Parliament website for information on visiting.

You can also watch debates and committee meetings on Scottish Parliament TV at scottishparliament.tv



Local councils

You can vote in local council elections when you're 16.

How often is your rubbish collected?
What are the roads in your area like?
Do you like your local sports facilities?

Your local council makes decisions about these issues and many more that affect you on a daily basis. It deals with matters that directly impact your specific local area and is responsible for local services.

You might also hear local councils be called 'local government' or 'local authorities'.

Your local council is responsible for:

- education services
- youth and leisure facilities
- planning decisions, for example, if your neighbour wanted to build an extension
- council housing
- managing parks and other public places
- social services such as foster care, help for disabled people, or care for the elderly
- local roads and footpaths
- rubbish and recycling
- libraries
- checking up on and regulating local businesses
- running elections

In most councils, a small number of councillors form a group called a cabinet or executive. This is the top decision-making group of the council.

Their decisions are guided by broad policies or plans that have been agreed by the council as a whole.

If you want to make a complaint or bring up an issue with your elected representatives, you need to know which council is responsible for your area.



Who represents you in your local council?

The people elected to represent you in your local council are called local councillors.

The geographic area covered by your local council is divided into smaller areas called wards. Your ward could be represented by up to four local councillors.

Your local councillor might:

- be involved in working out how much to spend on local services
- develop future plans for your area
- help you to deal with any concerns with local services the council provides

Many councillors work full or part-time in other jobs on top of their work as a councillor.

You can contact your local councillors to ask them questions about what's happening in your area, or express a concern you may have. You can contact any of the councillors who represent you, and you'll usually find their contact details on your council's website.

You could also attend a council meeting in the public gallery at your local town or city hall and watch how decisions are made. So you know what to expect, it might be useful to ask your local councillor to explain what happens in a council meeting before you go.



UK Parliament

When you turn 18, you're able to vote in UK Parliament elections.

The UK Parliament makes some decisions which affect Scotland. These are called 'reserved matters' and include things like defence, foreign affairs, immigration and anything to do with the monarchy.

The UK Parliament is made up of two chambers – the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

The public vote for the people who sit in the House of Commons.

The UK Parliament makes decisions about how the UK is run and makes laws that affect everyone's lives. Its roles include:

- providing the funds to do government work by voting for tax
- protecting the public and the rights of individuals
- looking closely at government policy and actions – this is known as scrutinising
- debating the major issues of the day



Who represents you in the UK Parliament?

The person who represents you in the House of Commons is called a Member of Parliament, or MP for short.

Every person in the UK is represented by one MP who covers a large area, called a constituency. The UK is divided into 650 constituencies, and Scotland is represented by 59 MPs. You elect your MP every five years.

Your MP splits their time between work at the Houses of Parliament in Westminster in London, and local work in your area.

Your MP might:

- support a campaign to change the law
- help address the issues of people living in your area by holding regular open meetings
- help make a law by speaking in a debate in the House of Commons or sitting on a committee in the UK Parliament
- ask an official question in the House of Commons
- find out what the people in your area think about a particular issue

As with MSPs, you can contact your MP to ask them questions. You can find out how to get in touch by visiting the UK Parliament's website at parliament.uk

You can also watch debates in UK Parliament, either from the public gallery or via a live stream on Parliament Live TV at parliamentlive.tv/Commons



Remember to register to vote

If you're not registered, you can't vote. It's as simple as that.

In Scotland, you can register to vote when you're 14. But you can only start to vote in some elections when you turn 16.

Luckily, you don't need to register before every election.

You need to register if:

- you've never registered to vote before
- you've become old enough to register

You need to register to vote again if:

- you've moved house recently
- you've changed your name for any reason

You'll stay registered to vote as long as you live at that address and don't change your name. When you become eligible to vote in different elections, your record will be updated automatically.

Registering to vote takes just five minutes if you do it online. If you're 16 or older, all you'll need is your National Insurance number. If you're under 16, you won't be asked to supply a National Insurance number.

Register to vote now at [gov.uk/registertovote](https://www.gov.uk/registertovote)

Once you've registered, you'll appear on the electoral register. This is a list of everyone in your area who is registered to vote. These lists are managed by your local electoral registration office.

If you have any questions about the electoral register, you should contact them. They'll be happy to help. You can find their contact details by visiting **[electoralcommission.org.uk](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)**, searching for 'your election information' and entering your postcode.



Living at two addresses

Some people split their time equally between two addresses. For example, you might be a student living away from home, or split your time between two parents' homes. If this is you, you may be able to register to vote at two addresses, as long as your addresses are in different council areas.

This doesn't mean you get two votes though. You must only vote once in Scottish Parliament elections and UK elections but you can choose which area to vote in. It's against the law to vote more than once in the same election.

Armed forces

If you're 14 to 17 and one of your parents is in the armed forces, you will be able to register to vote as a service voter.

This means that if your family is posted to a different country, or if you move around a lot, you'll still be able to vote in elections in Scotland. You'll just need to remember to renew this every year.

Living abroad

If you're thinking about living in another country outside of the UK one day, even for a little while, you'll still be able to vote in UK Parliament elections.

As long as you've been registered to vote in the UK, and have been eligible to vote in UK Parliament elections in the last 15 years, you'll be allowed to continue voting to choose your MP.

If you leave the UK before you are old enough to vote, you'll still be able to register to vote if one of your parents has been registered to vote in UK Parliament elections in the last 15 years.



2. CAMPAIGNING



So you know there's an election approaching, but how do you choose who to vote for?

The most important thing to remember is that your vote belongs only to you. It's up to you to decide how you want to use it. No one should pressure, blackmail or bribe you to vote a certain way – this is against the law.

For all elections, you should choose the candidate that you feel would be the best person to represent you. They might share your views or prioritise issues you think are important.

The list of candidates standing at an election in each local area is published by the Returning Officer (person who runs elections) at each local council and is usually available on the council's website a couple of weeks before the election.

To help decide who to vote for, you should research the candidates standing for election in your local area and what they are standing for. Voting is a serious business and you should be able to access all the information you need so you can make an informed decision about your vote.

In the run up to some elections, it can feel like information overload and it's normal to feel a little overwhelmed when choosing who to vote for.

During this period, you'll probably see a lot of adverts from political parties and their candidates, trying to get their messages out and encouraging you to vote for them. This is called campaigning. You should take note of campaigning, ask questions, and do your own research into candidates' policies.



What is campaigning?

Political campaigning is where political parties and their candidates try to persuade you to vote for them, normally by talking about their policies. This is most noticeable in the run up to elections, but campaigning can take place all year round.

Campaigning is a really important and useful part of helping you choose who to vote for.

In higher profile elections, such as Scottish Parliament or UK Parliament elections, the larger political parties can spend a lot of money on their campaigns. They have large teams working for them to make sure they reach voters in the best way possible.

Although campaigning is mostly done by election candidates, political parties, and their teams, you might see other groups campaigning for a particular political party or candidate.

This could be because the group cares about a single issue, such as climate change or the NHS, which they know is a key policy for a particular party or candidate. They want a certain candidate or party to be elected, because of their policy on this issue, and they will support them in different ways.

Campaigning can be a whole range of things. You've probably seen posters on lamp posts or in your neighbour's window. Or maybe you've noticed leaflets being posted to your home or handed out in the street.

But there are lots of other types of campaigning which you'll see in your area and around the country.

Types of campaigning

Newspapers will run lots of stories during the campaign period, including interviews with candidates. Many newspapers publicly support one of the main political parties. This means you may see a newspaper publishing more positive stories about one political party than any other.

There are different rules for journalists who work in TV and radio. Generally, they are not allowed to encourage voters to vote a certain way. They are asked to give an independent view of elections and campaigns.

You might also see large posters in your local area. Political parties often spend money on large billboards or digital posters at train stations and bus stops.

In the UK, political parties are not allowed to advertise on TV. Instead, the main political parties are given a set amount of time on TV to put their policies to voters. You're likely to see these on the main TV channels – these are called party election broadcasts.

Supporters of political parties and their members might also put small posters in their windows or placards in their front gardens to show their support.

You'll also see adverts from political parties and groups of supporters on social media. Sometimes, political parties know who they want to speak to so can easily contact these people through these adverts. This means you might see more adverts for one political party or cause than any others.

Talking to your candidates

You shouldn't be afraid to ask your candidates and their teams questions about issues that are important to you.

Candidates might knock on your door, or may have a stand on your high street. This is called canvassing.

You're welcome to approach them to ask questions so you can understand their views.

It's why they're there – they want to tell you what they're all about, and they'll want to hear what's important to people in your area so they know what to focus on if they get elected.

Candidates might also take part in public debates with other candidates in your area. These are called hustings. They usually take place in a local community building and you're free to go along. Hustings are often advertised in local newspapers and on community Facebook groups.

Depending on the type of election, political parties and candidates might have teams working for them who you can contact to ask your questions. You might want to email or call them, or message them on social media. Different candidates will have different options, but a quick online search should give you the details of how to get your questions to candidates and their teams.

Manifestos

In Scottish Parliament and UK Parliament elections, political parties will publish a document outlining all of their policies and priorities. This is called a manifesto.

Manifestos are usually published in the weeks before polling day. They will be available on political parties' websites.

Political parties also publish their manifestos in different formats to make sure that everyone can read them, whatever their needs. If you'd like a manifesto in a different format, check the party's website or get in touch with them directly.

How to know what to trust and what is fair

Campaigning should be transparent. You should know exactly where information is coming from and that it is trustworthy, so you can make an informed decision about who to vote for.

The money spent on election campaigns is regulated by the Electoral Commission to make sure they are fair and open. There are limits on how much political parties are allowed to spend during campaigns. If political parties break these rules, they may have to pay fines.

Following an election, you can go online and see how much money political parties spent on campaigning. You can also see where parties' larger donations of money came from. This also applies to campaign groups who may not necessarily be linked to a specific political party.

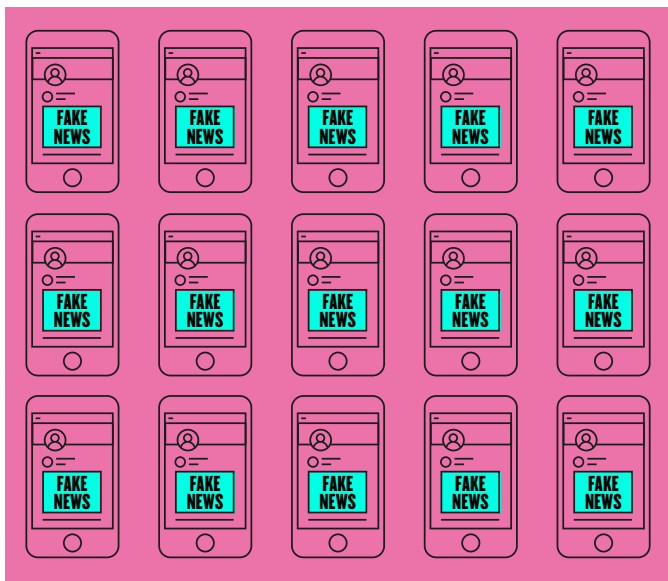
Printed campaign adverts have to clearly say who paid for them on the advert. This is the law. Social media platforms also have their own rules to encourage transparency. For example, when you see campaign adverts on Facebook, you'll see that it states who paid for it.

There are rules about what is and isn't allowed in campaigning, and these are shared with political parties and campaign groups so they can keep within the rules. For example, a candidate can't try to get you to vote for them by promising to buy a chocolate bar for everyone in your town if they win, and candidates can't tell lies about another candidate's character or behaviour.

And campaigning can't take place in some places, such as inside polling places on polling day.

You might also notice that the TV and radio stop reporting on campaigning on polling day. This is because if it's reported that a party or candidate is in the lead half way through the day, those who haven't voted yet might be put off from voting at all. This would damage the whole process.





Fake news

Unfortunately, there can be a lot of information during election periods which can be misleading or just plain untrue. These stories are usually on social media. If they're not fact-checked, they can quickly be shared thousands of times without anyone questioning whether they're factually accurate.

Some of the time, you'll be able to easily spot when something isn't true. For example, 'the Prime Minister admits they are an alien' is likely to ring some alarm bells. But other mis-information or 'fake news' isn't as easy to spot.

If you see a headline, a list of facts or an article on social media, you should check that it is true before taking it on board or sharing it with your friends.

You can fact-check by:

- ✓ Looking at where the information or article has come from. Have they got a motive for saying something a certain way? Are they a known source of news, or have you never heard of them before? Is there a reference or weblink provided? Is it a screenshot of messages? Could something true have been easily changed to appear a certain way?
- ✓ Finding another trusted source which confirms the information. If a reliable news website is also sharing this information, it makes it much more likely that it is real
- ✓ Asking for more information. If your friend has shared a screenshot of messages or an article, ask them where they found it and if they can send you any more information. Remember to be respectful. It's easy to miss fake news
- ✓ Using a reliable, impartial and trusted fact-checking service. There are a number available for free online. Remember to do your own research on these sites too



Don't let all your research go to waste – remember to register to vote at [gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)



3. HOW TO VOTE



You've made up your mind who to vote for and you want to vote - great! But how do you go about casting your vote?

There are three different ways you can vote. You can choose the way that suits you.

These are:

- 1. Voting in person at the polling place**
- 2. Voting by post**
- 3. Asking someone you trust to vote on your behalf (by proxy)**

Before the day of the election, known as polling day, you'll receive a card, called a poll card.

Everyone who's registered to vote in your household will receive their own poll card.

Your poll card tells you where and when you can vote. Unless you've arranged otherwise, it will be assumed that you want to vote in person at the polling place.

Remember to register to vote at [gov.uk/registertovote](https://www.gov.uk/registertovote). You don't need to register to vote for every election, only if you've recently moved house or changed your name.

At the polling place

On polling day, you'll need to go to your polling place. It's usually a public building like a nearby school or village hall, but polling places have popped up in all kinds of places like pubs and lifeboat stations.

Polling places are open from 7am until 10pm. As long as you're in the queue to vote by 10pm, you'll be allowed to vote.

You can't choose which polling place to vote at - you have to go to your assigned polling place. You can't choose to vote at a polling place near your college or workplace, for example. Your polling place might not be the closest polling place to your house, so it is important that you double check on your poll card. If you're unsure, contact the elections team at your council and they will be able to help. You can find their contact details by visiting [electoralcommission.org.uk](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk), searching for 'your election information' and entering your postcode.

Inside the polling place, there will be people who are working for the council. There's usually one person in charge who is called the Presiding Officer, and one or two other people called Poll Clerks.

When you enter, tell them your name and address so they can check that you're on the electoral register.

You can show them your poll card if it helps, but you don't need your poll card to vote. They will cross your name off their list so they know who has voted, and hand you your ballot paper.

Take your ballot paper into a polling booth. These are private, screened areas designed so that no one else can see how you vote. If it's busy, you may have to wait for a free booth. Make sure you give people plenty of space, so everyone can cast their vote in secret.

Mark who you want to vote for on the ballot paper. Different elections work in different ways so it's important that you understand how to fill in your ballot paper correctly. Some elections ask for one cross in one box. Others might ask you to rank candidates with numbers.

There's a chance that you'll be voting in different elections on the same day, so you may be given more than one ballot paper. Take your time to read everything carefully. There will be instructions on the ballot paper and on posters in the polling place.

If you make a mistake and need a new ballot paper, don't worry – just speak to a member of staff and they can give you a replacement ballot paper, as long as you haven't already put one in the ballot box. Don't write anything else on your ballot paper, or your vote may not be counted.

There will be a pencil in the polling booth, but you can use your own pen or pencil if you prefer.

When you've filled in your ballot paper, fold it and put it into a ballot box. These are large boxes which will be clearly labelled and obviously placed.

At the end of the day, the ballot box will be taken away for the votes to be counted.

Your vote will be kept safe and will always stay secret.

And that's it.



Asking for help

Just ask a member of staff if you're unsure about anything or if you need assistance. They will explain the process and will be happy walk you through it before you vote.

If you have a visual impairment, you can ask for a large print ballot paper, or a special voting device to help you cast your vote.

If you can't fill in the ballot paper yourself, you can ask polling place staff to mark the ballot paper for you, or you can ask someone you trust, like a parent or carer.

Taking photos

Taking photos inside a polling place is not allowed as you may accidentally reveal how you or someone else has voted.

You're very welcome to take as many photos and videos as you like outside the polling place and share these on social media, but remember to be respectful of other voters.

Campaigners at the polling place

There might be people outside your polling place who belong to a political party. These people are called tellers.

They are allowed to be outside the polling place, and may ask for the number on your poll card. This is so they can check who has voted, and remind people who haven't voted yet to do so. You do not have to give them any information if you don't want to.

Other campaigners may be near the polling place, which is allowed. But there must not be any campaigning taking place inside the polling place.



By post

If you know that you won't be able to get to your polling place on polling day, you might want to consider a postal vote.

This could be because you're away on holiday or because your work, school or college schedule makes it hard to get to the polling place when it's open.

You can also choose to vote by post simply because it would be more convenient for you.

You can apply to vote by post for a single election, a specific period, or until you choose to change it.

You need to apply for a postal vote with your electoral registration office no later than 11 working days before polling day – but the sooner the better.

You can download an application form by visiting **electoralcommission.org.uk** and searching for 'postal vote'. Or, you can ask your electoral registration office to send one to you. You will need to supply your signature and date of birth on your application form, and again when you vote. This is to confirm who you are.

A postal vote pack will be sent to you before the election. Follow the instructions, put everything back in the freepost, pre-addressed envelope and post it to the council to be counted.

If you run out of time to post your vote, it can be returned to a polling place in your council area on polling day. You can return it yourself, or ask someone you trust to return it for you.

Here are some things to bear in mind if you decide to vote by post:

- a postal vote can be sent to your home address or any other address you choose
- postal votes are usually sent about a week before polling day
- postal votes can be sent to other countries, but you need to consider if there would be time for you to receive and return your ballot paper by polling day
- if you have been sent a postal vote, you cannot vote in person at a polling place
- postal votes have to be received by your local council or polling place before polling places close on the day of the election



Someone else can vote on your behalf

You can also ask someone you trust to vote on your behalf.

You could ask a parent or carer, brother or sister, or close friend. This is called a proxy vote and your trusted person is referred to as your proxy.

You'd need to tell your proxy who you'd like to vote for and they would need to go to your polling place to vote for you. This may be different from their own.

If you choose to vote by proxy, you need to register for this no later than six working days before polling day. You can download an application form by visiting electoralcommission.org.uk and searching for 'proxy vote'. Or, you can ask your electoral registration office to send one to you.

Unlike a postal vote, you need to provide a reason to vote by proxy for a single election.

You can usually only apply for a proxy vote for individual elections. However, you can apply to vote by proxy in all upcoming elections for the following reasons:

- physical incapacity
- being an overseas voter
- being away because you are studying
- if you have to make a journey by sea or air from your registered address to your polling place
- being in certain occupations, for example, the armed forces

Someone such as a doctor must sign your form if you are applying on medical grounds, or your employer if on employment grounds.

If you change your mind and wish to vote in person, you can still do so, as long as your proxy has not already voted on your behalf. If your proxy can't get to the polling place, they can apply to vote for you by post. This is called a postal proxy.





You don't have to vote for the same political party for both votes, but you can if you want to.

With the first vote, you choose between candidates standing for election in your constituency by marking 'X' next to your choice. The candidate who receives more votes than any other candidate will be the winner. The winning candidate becomes a Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) and will represent your constituency.

Then you cast a second vote to choose a political party or individual candidate to represent your region. You show your choice of political party by marking 'X' next to your chosen political party. There are seven regional members for each of the eight electoral regions in Scotland.

The formula used to calculate the results of regional seats is complicated, even for people who run elections!

To work out how many regional positions, or 'seats', each party wins, the number of votes each party gets in the regional ballot is divided by the number of constituency seats the party has won, then one is added.

One is added so that parties which have not won any constituencies can be included in the calculation for the regional seats.

After this calculation, the party that ends up with the highest result wins the first regional seat.

How voting systems work

Different elections have different systems to elect representatives. This means you might be asked to mark 'X' next to your chosen candidate in one election, but might need to rank your candidates in order of preference in others. This could even be on two ballot papers on the same day.

Each system has a different name and can seem complicated. The system used to elect your representatives can have an impact on how you are represented, so it's good to get an understanding of how each one works.

How the Scottish Parliament is elected

The Scottish Parliament uses the Additional Member System to elect its members.

There are 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament: 73 constituency members and 56 regional members.

When you vote in a Scottish Parliamentary election you have two votes.



To work out which parties win the remaining seats, this calculation is done again, but each time any additional seats won are added in. As there are seven seats per region, this is done seven times. It can sometimes take a while to get the full results.

The regional seats each political party wins are filled by the candidates in the order they appear on the regional ballot paper. This order is decided by the political party.

It's important to remember that you don't directly elect the First Minister. They are chosen by MSPs. Usually, the First Minister is the leader of the political party with the most seats, but in theory, anyone can be nominated.

How the UK Parliament is elected

MPs are elected to the House of Commons using a system called First Past the Post. You vote for one candidate in your constituency by marking 'X' next to their name.

There are 650 constituencies across the UK. Most candidates will be standing for a party. Simply, the candidate with the most votes in your constituency is elected and becomes your Member of Parliament.

The political party which has most MPs elected across the whole of the UK wins the election and becomes the Government. They have what's called a majority, meaning they have the largest number of MPs.

It's important to remember that you don't vote for the Prime Minister. Instead, members of each political party elect their own leader. If their party wins the majority, their leader becomes Prime Minister and that person chooses who takes other senior Government positions, such as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary.

How local councils are elected

Local councillors are elected using a system called Single Transferable Vote.

Like the Additional Member System, calculating the results can be a little complicated.

Your ballot paper will list the names and political parties of the candidates in your area. You put a '1' in the box next to your first preference candidate, a '2' next to your second preference, a '3' next to your third preference and so on. You can do this for all the people you want to vote for. You do not have to put a number beside every name if you don't want to – you can just vote for one candidate.

In the first stage, the first preference votes are counted and a quota is calculated. The quota is the minimum number of votes a candidate must have to be elected. Any candidate with a number of first preference votes equal to or higher than the quota is elected.

If there are still empty spots for representatives, the excess votes from those elected are transferred to second preference candidates.



If there are still seats unfilled because not enough candidates have reached the quota, candidates with the lowest number of votes are knocked out of the running and their votes are transferred to second preference candidates.

The process continues until all seats are filled.

So, if your first preference candidate does not get elected or if they are elected with a large majority, your vote can still be used to help elect your second preference candidate. Your vote may be transferred a number of times as seats are filled and may play a part in electing several or even all of the candidates.

