

How to vote by mail

Easy to read guide



How to use this guide



The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) wrote this guide. When you see the word 'we', it means AEC.



We have written this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.



We have written some words in **bold**. We explain what these words mean. There is a list of these words on page 31.



You can ask for assistance to read this guide. A friend, family member or support person may be able to assist you.

What's in this guide?

Voting in an election	4
Enrolling to vote	6
When do you need to vote?	7
What if you can't vote on election day?	8
How do you ask for a postal vote?	10
When will you get your ballot papers?	16
What do you do with your ballot papers?	17
How do you fill out your green ballot paper?	20
How do you fill out your white ballot paper?	22
Where do you put your ballot papers?	26
Do you need to apply for a postal vote each election?	27
Can you practise voting before the election?	29
How can you get more information?	30
Word list	31
Contact us	34

Voting in an election



In Australia we have a **federal election** about every 3 years.



A federal election is for the whole country.



It's how we choose Australia's government.



The Governor-General chooses the date for the election.

Election day will be on a Saturday.



On that day, Australian people will **vote**.

When you vote, you help to choose who is part of Australia's government.



You must vote if you are:

- an Australian **citizen**
and
- aged 18 years old or older.



A citizen is someone who is given the rights and freedoms of the country where they live.

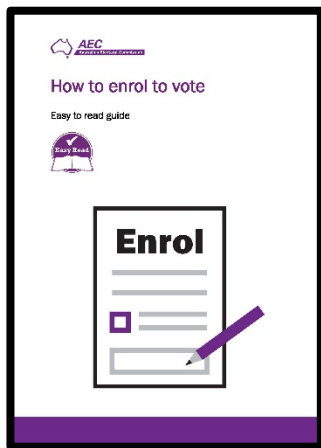


Voting lets you have your say about who runs our country.

Enrolling to vote



Before you can vote, you must **enrol**.



You can read our guide that tells you how to enrol
– *How to enrol to vote.*

When do you need to vote?



The Governor-General chooses the date for the election.



We will tell people what the election date is when it has been chosen.



If you want to find out when election day is, you can:

- visit our website www.aec.gov.au
- ask a family member, friend or neighbour
- watch the news on TV
- search online
- call us on **13 23 26**.



On election day, voting opens at 8am.



On election day, voting closes at 6pm.



You must vote before voting closes.

What if you can't vote on election day?



Sometimes, people can't vote on election day.



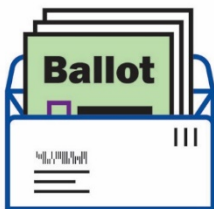
This might be because they are going away on holiday.



Or maybe they will be in hospital.



If you can't vote on election day, you can vote before the election.



You can send us your vote in the mail.

This is called a **postal vote**.



You must apply for a postal vote.



We explain how to make a postal vote on page 20.



You can also vote at some **polling places** before election day.



A polling place is a building, such as a school or community centre, where people go to vote during an election.



If you call us, we will assist you to find a polling place near you.

13 23 26

How do you ask for a postal vote?



You ask for a postal vote by filling out a form.

We call this a postal vote application.

You can fill out your postal vote application:



- online
- on paper.

Filling out your postal vote application online



When the date for election day has been chosen, visit our website.

www.aec.gov.au/pva



You need to answer some questions.



We explain these questions on page 16.



You can ask for assistance to fill out your postal vote application online.



When you are finished, you need to use the button that says: Submit.

Filling out your postal vote application on paper



You can get a postal vote application form at any AEC office.



If you call us, we can send you a form in the mail.

Our number is **13 23 26**



You need to answer some questions on the form.



We explain these questions on page 16.



You can ask for assistance to fill out your postal vote application form on paper.



When you are finished, you need to return the form to us.

You can:

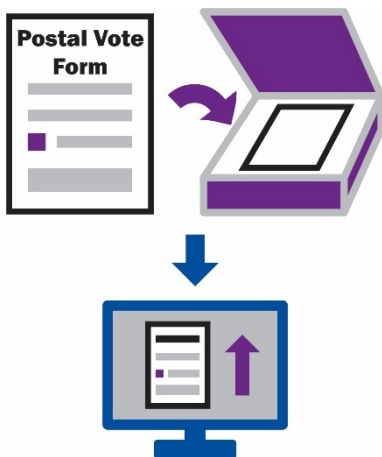


- post it to us at:
AEC
Reply Paid 9867
In your capital city

You don't need to use a stamp.



- take it to an AEC office
If you call us, we can assist you to find an AEC office near you.
13 23 26



- scan it and upload it to our website.

www.aec.gov.au/pva

Questions on the postal vote application form



One question will ask you for your address.



You must use the same address you gave us when you enrolled to vote.



Another question will ask you where to send your **ballot papers**.

Ballot papers are forms that you fill out to show who you want to vote for.



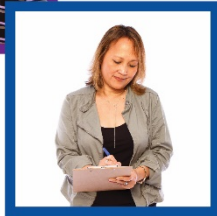
You can give us:

- the address where you live
- another address where all your mail goes
- an address you will be visiting in another
 - state
 - country.



We will also ask you a security question.

It is like a password.



You can:

- choose your security question
- write your own answer.



You need to remember your answer.



You may like to write it down and keep it safe.

When will you get your ballot papers?

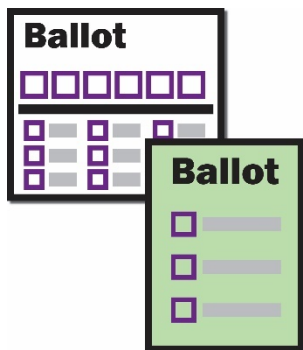


We will send your ballot papers to you when it's time to vote.

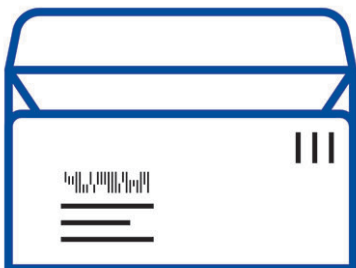


You will get them in the mail.

You will be given:



- 2 ballot papers:
 - a white one
 - a green one.



- a postal vote envelope to put your ballot papers in to send back to us.

What do you do with your ballot papers?



Before you can vote, you need to find a **witness**.

A witness is someone who knows you, such as a:

- family member
- friend
- neighbour.



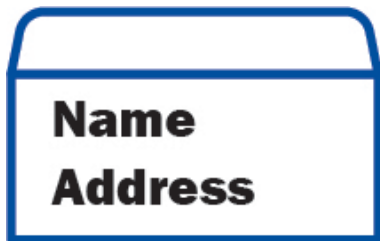
Your witness needs to be on the electoral roll.



Your witness needs to make sure you fill out your own ballot papers.



Show your ballot papers and your postal vote envelope to your witness before you fill them out.



The postal vote envelope will have your name and address on it.



It will also ask your security question.



You need to write the same answer to the security question that you gave on your application.



After that, you need to:

- sign your name
- or
- make your mark.



You can ask your witness to assist you.



When you are finished, your witness needs to:

- sign the envelope
- write the date.



When this has been done, you're ready to vote.

How do you fill out your green ballot paper?



Your green ballot paper is for the **House of Representatives**.

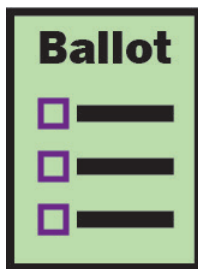
The House of Representatives:



- is 1 of the 2 houses of Australia's Parliament – the house in which government is formed



- includes 151 people voted for by the Australian people.



Your green ballot paper has:

- a list of candidates' names
- empty boxes.

1



Pick the candidate who you want to vote for the most.

Write 1 in the empty box next to their name.

2

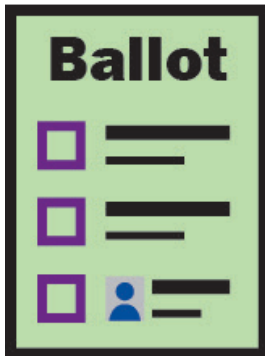


Pick the candidate who you want to vote for next.

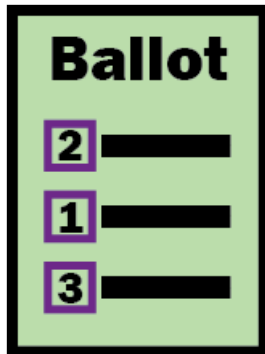
Write 2 in the empty box next to their name.



Keep choosing candidates and writing numbers until all the boxes are filled out.



Some candidates might have words or pictures next to their names.



Each box should have a different number in it.



When every box is full, your ballot paper is finished.

How do you fill out your white ballot paper?



Your white ballot paper is for the Senate.

The Senate:



- is 1 of the 2 houses of Australia's Parliament – it is known as the upper house
- includes 76 people voted for by the Australian people to represent each of the:
 - 6 states
 - 2 territories.



Your white ballot paper has a black line on it.



There is a list of groups above the black line.



Most of the groups are **political parties**.

A political party is a group of candidates who:

- share the same ideas
- agree on how government should run our country.



There is a list of candidates below the black line.

There are 2 ways to fill out your white ballot paper:



- put numbers in the boxes above the black line and vote for groups

or



- put numbers in the boxes below the black line and vote for candidates.

Voting above the black line



Pick the group who you want to vote for the most.

Write 1 in the empty box next to their name.



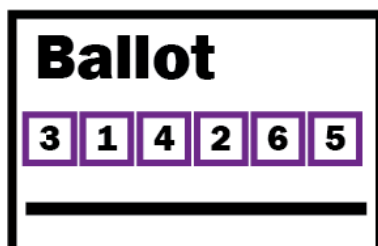
Pick the group who you want to vote for next.

Write 2 in the empty box next to their name.

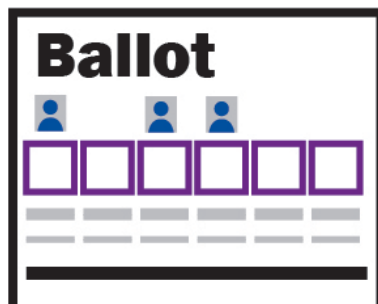


Keep choosing groups and writing numbers until 6 boxes are filled out.

You can finish at 6 or keep going.



If there are less than 6 empty boxes, put a number in every box.



Some groups might have words or pictures next to their names.

Voting below the black line



Pick the candidate who you want to vote for the most.

Write 1 in the empty box next to their name.



Pick the candidate who you want to vote for next.

Write 2 in the empty box next to their name.



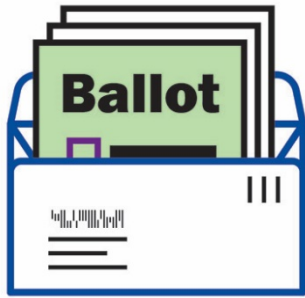
Keep choosing candidates and writing numbers until 12 boxes are filled out.

You can finish at 12 or keep going.



If there are less than 12 empty boxes, put a number in every box.

Where do you put your ballot papers?



When you have filled out your ballot papers, you need to put them into the postal vote envelope and seal it.



Take the postal vote envelope and put it into a mailbox.

You don't need to use a stamp.



Do this straight away so it gets to us quickly.

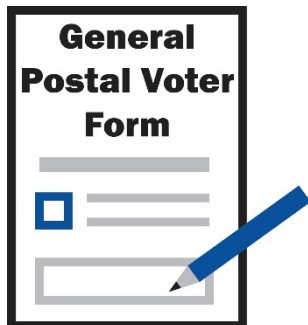


When you have put your envelope in the mailbox you have finished voting.

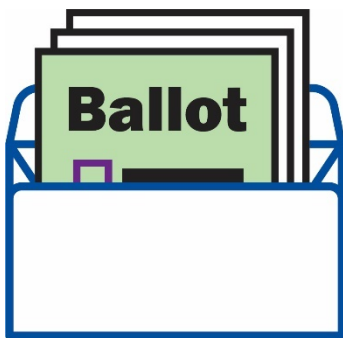
Do you need to apply for a postal vote each election?



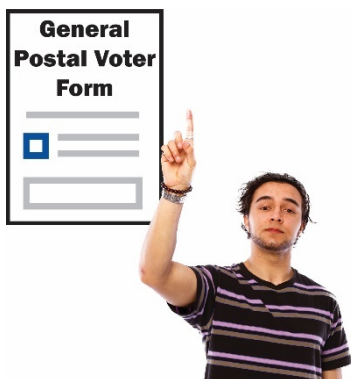
You must apply for a postal vote before each election.



But you can apply to become a **general postal voter**.



A general postal voter is sent their ballot papers in the mail for each federal election.



This means you don't need to apply again for other federal elections.



You must be **eligible** to become a general postal voter.

If you are eligible, you meet our requirements



This means that you will be sent a postal vote for each election.



You can find more information and apply on our website.

www.aec.gov.au/gpv

Can you practise voting before the election?



If you want to practise voting, you can visit our website.

www.aec.gov.au/practice



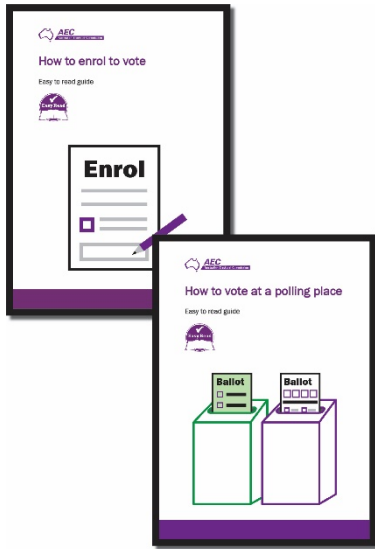
Your practise vote doesn't count.



You still need to vote:

- at a polling place
- or
- by mail.

How can you get more information?



If you want to find out more about voting, we have 2 other guides you can read:

- *How to Enrol to Vote*
- *How to Vote at a Polling Place.*



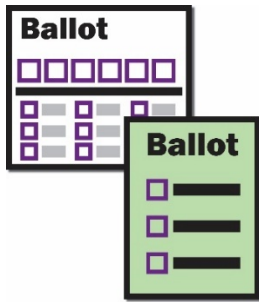
You can find these guides on our website.

www.aec.gov.au/assistance



We also have information on our website for people who speak languages other than English.

Word list



Ballot papers

Ballot papers are forms that you fill out to show who you want to vote for.



Citizen

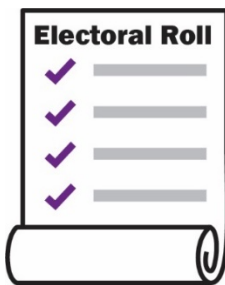
A citizen is someone who is given the rights and freedoms of the country where they live.



Election officials

People who work at polling places on election day.

It is their job to assist you.



Electoral rolls

A list of voters.



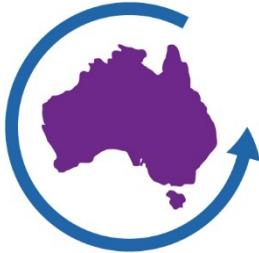
Eligible

If you are eligible, you meet our requirements.



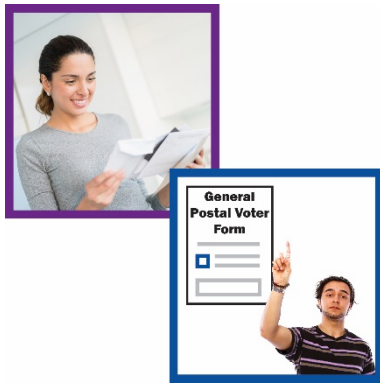
Enrol

When you enrol, we put your name on a list of voters.



Federal election

A federal election is for the whole country. It's how we choose Australia's government.



General postal voter

A general postal voter:

- is sent their ballot papers in the mail when an election date has been chosen
- doesn't need to apply again for other federal elections.



Political party

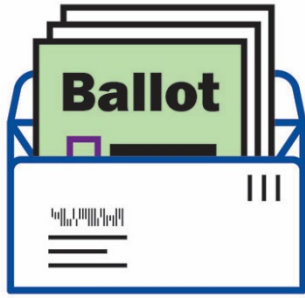
A political party is a group of candidates who:

- share the same ideas
- agree on how government should run our country.



Polling place

A polling place is a building, such as a school or community centre, where people go to vote during an election.



Postal vote

You send us your vote in the mail.



Vote

When you vote, you help to choose who is part of Australia's government.



Voters

People who can vote.



Witness

A witness is someone who knows you, such as a:

- family member
- friend
- neighbour.



Your witness needs to be on the electoral roll.

Contact us

National Relay Service



TTY users:

- Phone 13 36 77
- Ask for 13 23 26



Speak and listen users:

- Phone 1300 555 727
- Ask for 13 23 26



Internet relay users:

- Connect to the NRS
- Ask for 13 23 26



Other languages:

- Phone 1300 720 153



www.aec.gov.au



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Authorised by the Deputy Electoral Commissioner, Canberra.