



Electoral Education Centre

How to make your vote count

Your vote is secret. It is your right to vote how you want, and it is your right to not tell anyone how you voted unless you want to.

Legislative Assembly (White) ballot paper

Voting for the Legislative Assembly uses preferential voting.

To complete the ballot paper correctly, you must number ALL the boxes.

1. Clearly write the number '1' in the box next to the candidate or party of your first choice.
2. Write number '2' in the box next to the candidate or party of your second choice.
3. Continue to number all the boxes until there is a different number in every box in the order of your preference.

Legislative Council (Coloured) ballot paper

In the Legislative Council, the voting system used is proportional representation.

Proportional representation is the system used for multi member electorates where more than one person is elected to represent the people who live there.

For the coloured Legislative Council ballot paper you have a choice. You can vote by marking your ballot paper either above the line or below the line - but not both.

Above the line

If you choose to vote above the line (ticket vote), write the number '1' in one of the boxes to vote according to the political party, group or candidate of your choice. Leave all other boxes blank.

By doing this, your preferences will be distributed according to those of the candidate, party or group you vote for. These preferences, called a 'voting ticket', will be made available after nominations have closed.

OR

Below the line

If you choose to vote below the line (candidate preference vote), fill in all the boxes in the bottom section of the ballot paper in the order of your choice.

1. Write the number '1' in the box next to the candidate of your first choice.
2. Write number '2' in the box next to the candidate of your second choice.
3. Continue to number all the boxes in the order of your choice until there is a different number in every box. By doing this, your preferences will be distributed exactly as you have chosen.

If you complete both parts of the ballot paper, your candidate preference vote (above the line) is counted, if it is formal. If it is not formal, your ticket vote (below the line) will be counted.

Formality of votes

When you vote at an election, it is important to read the instructions on the ballot paper and complete your vote correctly. A correctly completed vote is called a 'formal vote'.

If you don't complete your vote correctly, your vote is 'informal' and can't be counted.

A ballot paper is informal if it:

- is blank
- does not show preferences according to the instructions
- does not show the voter's intention clearly
- has any marks which can identify the voter.

If the ballot paper is not marked correctly, but the voter's intention is still clear, the paper may be considered formal and included in the count. Ultimately, it is the Returning Officer who decides whether a ballot paper is formal or not.

If you want to learn more about the voting systems used in Western Australia, see the factsheets "Understanding Preferential Voting" and "Understanding Proportional Representation".