



Teacher's Guide to Student Elections

Holding a student election is easy. There are five steps:

1. Calling for nominations
2. Making the ballot papers
3. Conducting the election (polling day)
4. Counting the votes
5. Announcing the results.

Step 1: Calling for nominations

Announce the election at a school assembly. You can also advertise the election in school notices and ask teachers to discuss it with students in their classrooms.

Students will need to know:

- when the election is
- what positions are available
- how to nominate, including when nominations close
- what the responsibilities of an elected candidate will be.

Use the nomination form template to create a nomination form. You will need to add:

- the school name
- where the completed form should be submitted. This could be the name of the person accepting completed nomination forms or a location where forms should be taken
- the closing date and time of nominations.

Nomination forms can be distributed to all eligible students, given out on request or made available where the nominations are to be submitted.

Step 2: Making the ballot papers

Once nominations have closed, you can format and print your ballot papers. You will need a separate ballot paper for each position.

Gender representation

If you are conducting an election and want to ensure equal gender representation (e.g. electing two school captains, a boy and a girl), you will need separate ballot papers for male and female candidates.

Now, you must decide on the voting system that you will use. The Electoral Education Centre (EEC) recommends a simplified version of preferential voting (the voting system used for the Legislative Assembly and the House of Representatives). Students must vote by numbering all the boxes on the ballot paper in the order of their choice. If you have a large number of candidates, you may instruct students to only number some of the boxes.

There are two ballot paper templates available for preferential voting – one for 10 candidates or fewer, and one for more than 10 candidates. You will need to add the:

- school name
- election name (position)
- number of candidate preferences students should complete (usually the same as the number of candidates, or less if there are many candidates)
- candidates' names.

The order in which candidate names are listed on the ballot paper is very important. The EEC recommends a random order, which you can determine by drawing the names out of a hat, starting with the first ballot paper position and continuing until all candidates' names have been chosen.

The other voting system you can use is first-past-the-post, but this is not recommended for elections for multiple vacancies. There are two ballot paper templates available for first-past-the-post voting – one for 10 candidates or fewer, and one for more than 10 candidates. You will need to add the:

- school name
- election name (position)
- candidates' names.

Step 3: Conducting the election (polling day)

There are many different ways that your election can be conducted – the choice depends on the size of the school, the number of ballot papers and candidates and the amount of time that teachers have to dedicate to the election. Two approaches you might consider are conducting elections in-class or having a polling place.

In-class

You may wish to conduct elections in class. Each teacher is given an appropriate number of ballot papers and conducts the election in their classroom. After voting is completed, the teacher will collect all ballot papers for counting.

Polling Place

If there is an area in the school that is large enough to accommodate a class, such as a library or undercover area, you may wish to set this area up as a polling place. Students are brought class by class to the polling place, where they will receive instructions on how to vote, fill in their ballot papers and return to class. Students can act as 'electoral officials' and help to direct voters, cross students off the roll (a class list), issue ballot papers and guard the ballot box.

Step 4: Counting the votes

After voting, when all the ballot papers have been collected, the count begins.

Separate instructions and tally sheets are available to help with the count.

Step 5: Announcing the results

The results of the election can be announced at a school assembly or in school notices.

Resources available

The EEC's Teacher's Pack can be downloaded from www.elections.wa.gov.au/EEC and includes:

- nomination form template
- ballot paper templates
- tally sheets and counting instructions.

If you would like additional equipment or resources, such as ballot boxes or voting screens, please contact the EEC and discuss your needs with the friendly staff.

Remember, the EEC can conduct your student election for you, free of charge. You can contact the EEC on (08) 6552 6077 or eec@waec.wa.gov.au for more information or to make a booking.