

What is voting by mail?

"Voting by mail" is one way voters may participate in an election other than in-person at a voting location.



This process is also called **absentee voting** in some communities.

How do I vote by mail?



The rules for voting by mail vary widely among the states, territories, and the District of Columbia.

In some jurisdictions, voters must provide a valid reason to be issued a mailed ballot. In others, no reason is required. Examples of reasons may include illness, injury, disability, traveling outside of your residence on Election Day, being a college student, or serving in the military.

Several states mail ballots to all registered voters, but most states require voters to ask their elections office to mail a ballot to them.

How do I return my ballot by mail?

Some states offer multiple ways to return your ballot. Check with your local election official for the rules in your state. However, there are typically three ways to return your ballot:

1 Mail



Remember to add postage (where required) and mail your ballot early enough to meet your state's ballot return deadline.

2 Drop Box



Be sure to return your ballot in the correct drop box for your county, city, or town.

3 In Person



Check with your local jurisdiction for information on how and when to return your ballot in person.

Note: Be sure to place your ballot inside the correct envelope, and sign and date where required. Some states also require a witness signature or notary. Find your state's vote by mail requirements here:
<https://www.eac.gov/voters/register-and-vote-in-your-state>

Did my ballot count?

All valid ballots are counted in every election, regardless of the outcome or closeness of any contest. You can contact your state or local election officials to verify whether your ballot was received by the elections office in time to be counted for a specific election.

Note: Election officials take your privacy seriously, and multiple steps are taken to ensure that your votes remain private. Election officials keep a record of whether or not someone cast a ballot, but they are never able to tell how someone voted.



Many states also allow voters to track the status of their ballots online. Find more information about voting by mail in your state, including links to your state's ballot tracking system, here:

<https://www.eac.gov/voters/register-and-vote-in-your-state>



Is voting by mail secure?

Election officials only send ballots to voters who are properly registered to vote, or otherwise meet each state's requirements for being issued a ballot. Once a ballot is received from a voter, election officials:



Verify that each ballot has been received from a voter who was properly issued a ballot.



Verify that the signature and other identifying information on the ballot envelope matches the voter's information on file.

If election officials identify a problem while verifying a mailed ballot (for example, if a signature is missing), the ballot may be rejected for counting. In some cases, the voter may be contacted to resolve the issue prior to Election Day.

More information about voting by mail in your state can be found here:
<https://www.eac.gov/voters/register-and-vote-in-your-state>



The U.S. Election Assistance Commission helps election officials improve the administration of elections and helps Americans participate in the voting process.



United States Election Assistance Commission

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Voting by Mail 101

Election Information for New Voters



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