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Get my vote

An easy read guide to voting



What is voting?



Voting is your chance to choose which group of people will make important decisions for the UK.



These groups of people decide things like how schools, hospitals and the police service are run. This is why we say that they 'run the country'.



Each group of people is called a **political party**. A political party is made up of people called **politicians**. Each politician is a **Member of Parliament (MP)**.



You use your vote to pick which **politician** or **political party** you want to run the country.



The time to vote is called an **election**. The word election means choosing.

An **election** can ask you to choose 1 politician or political party.



The time when you choose a group of people to run the country is called a **general election**.

How do I register to vote?



To vote in an election you must register your personal details. This means telling your council where you live and that you want to vote. You can only vote if you have done this.



To find out if you are registered to vote you can call your **local council**.



The phone number is in the phone book under your local council.

They will need your name and address to check if you are registered to vote.



If you are not registered, the council will send you a **registration form** which you must fill in and send back to them.



If you do not understand the form you can ask somebody to help you.

How do I vote?



At the polling station

Before any election your council will send you a card. This card is called a **polling card**. It tells you when and where you have to go to vote.



The place where you vote is called a **polling station**. This is usually a local school or hall near to where you live.

On the date of the election you need to go to this place to vote.



When you get to the polling station you need to tell someone your name and address and **give them your polling card** to show who you are.



Someone will give you a piece of paper. This is called a **ballot paper**. It is a list of all the people that you can vote for in that election.



You must go to a private area called a **polling booth** so nobody can see you vote.



To vote you need to **put an X on the ballot paper** next to the name of the person you want to vote for.



You then fold the ballot paper and put it into a **ballot box**. This will be a large box that will be clearly marked with the name ballot box.



What if I can not get to the polling station?



If you cannot get to the polling station, you can either vote by post or get someone else to vote for you.



Vote by post

Your local council will send you the ballot paper in the post.



You fill it in and then post it back to them.



Let someone else vote for you

If you can not get to the polling station you can ask your local council to let somebody else vote for you. This is called a **proxy vote**.



The person must vote for the person you tell them to.

After the election



An election takes place on **1 day only**.

After this time the election is finished and no more votes can be made.



After the election has finished all the votes are counted.



The winner is the person with the most votes. This person is then elected.

In a general election, each person that you can vote for is a Member of Parliament (MP) from a political party.



To win a general election, a political party needs people in the UK to vote for its own MPs.



The political party that has the most elected MPs is allowed to run the country.

How to contact your Member of Parliament (MP)



You can **visit your MP** to tell them what you think about the things you would like them to do.



You can also **write to them** or **email them**.

For more information contact



Campaigns
Mencap
123 Golden Lane
London
EC1Y 0RT



Phone **020 7696 6952**



Email **campaigns@mencap.org.uk**

Sign up to support our campaign
www.mencap.org.uk/getmyvote