

# How to vote by mail

Easy read version



## How to use this guide



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



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

**Bold**

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

Not bold

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these bold words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 33.



You can find other Easy Read guides on our website.

[www.aec.gov.au/assistance](http://www.aec.gov.au/assistance)



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

## What's in this guide?

|                                                       |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----|
| What is a federal election?                           | 4  |
| How do you enrol 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?               | 18 |
| How do you fill out your green ballot paper?          | 21 |
| How do you fill out your white ballot paper?          | 23 |
| Where do you put your ballot papers?                  | 27 |
| Do you need to apply for a postal vote each election? | 29 |
| Can you practise voting before the election?          | 31 |
| How can you get more information?                     | 32 |
| Word list                                             | 33 |
| More information                                      | 38 |

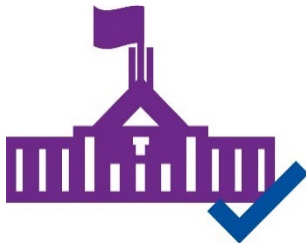
## What is a federal election?



In Australia there is a **federal election** about every 3 years.



A federal election is for the whole country.



It's how Australia's government is chosen.



On the election 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 has the rights and freedoms of the country where they live.

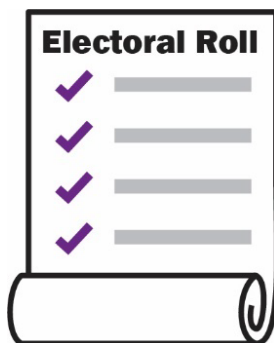


Voting lets you have your say about who runs our country.

## How do you enrol to vote?



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



When you enrol, we put your name on a list of **voters** – people who can vote.

We call this list the **electoral roll**.



We made a guide that explains how you can enrol to vote.

You can find it on our website.

[www.aec.gov.au/assistance](http://www.aec.gov.au/assistance)

## When do you need to vote?



We will tell people what the election date is once we know.

This is usually about a month before the election day.

You can also:



- ask someone you know, like a friend



- watch the news on TV



- search online.

## What if you can't vote on election day?



Sometimes, people can't vote on election day.



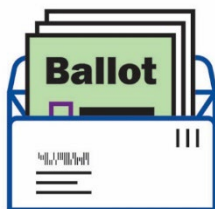
This might be because they are going away on holiday.



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 can apply for a postal vote.

We explain how to make a postal vote on page 10.





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



A polling place is a building where people go to vote.

For example, a:

- school
- community centre.



When we know the date of the election, we will put a list of polling places on our website.

[www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au)



If you call us, we will help you find a polling place.

**13 23 26**

## How do you ask for a postal vote?



You ask us 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.

## How to fill out your postal vote application online



You can fill out a postal vote application on our website once we know when election day is.

[www.aec.gov.au/pva](http://www.aec.gov.au/pva)



You need to answer some questions.



We explain these questions on page 14.



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



When you are finished, use the 'Submit' button to send your application to us.

## How to fill out your postal vote application on paper



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

Or you can print one from the AEC website.

[www.aec.gov.au/pva](http://www.aec.gov.au/pva)



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 14.



You can ask for help to fill out your postal vote application form.



When you finish, you need to return the form to us.



You can post it to us.

AEC

Reply Paid 9988

In your capital city

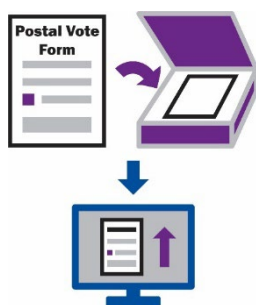
You don't need to use a stamp.



You can take the form to an AEC office.

If you call us, we can help you find an AEC office near you.

**13 23 26**



You can scan it and upload it to our website.

[www.aec.gov.au/pva](http://www.aec.gov.au/pva)

## Questions on the postal vote application form



We will ask you for your address.

You need to 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 where you will be staying.



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 might want 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.

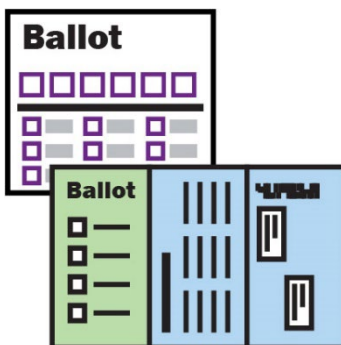


You will get them in the mail.

We will give you:

2 ballot papers:

- a white one
- a green one.



The green ballot paper will be attached to a **blue certificate**.

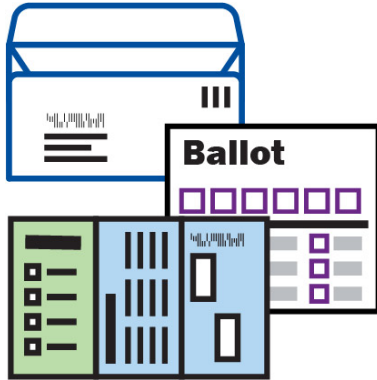
The blue certificate explains who you are.



It will include:

- your name
- your address
- the security question you gave us in your application.



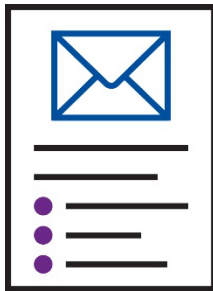


We will also give you a white return envelope.

You need to put your:

- ballot papers in it
- blue certificate in it.

Then you need to send it back to us.



We will also give you a guide to voting by mail.

## What do you do with your ballot papers?

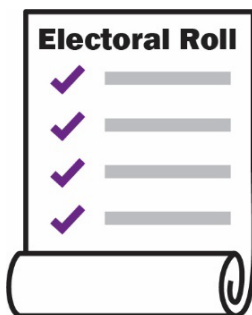


Before you can vote, you need to get a **witness**.



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

- family member
- friend.



Your witness needs to be on the electoral roll.



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



Before you fill them out, show your witness your:

- ballot papers
- blue certificate.



You can also answer your security question.



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

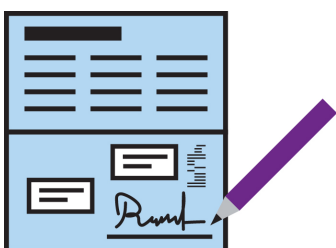


After that, you need to sign your name.



You can ask your witness to help you.

When you finish, your witness needs to:



- sign the blue certificate



- write the date.



When you've done this, you're ready to vote.

## How do you fill out your green ballot paper?



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

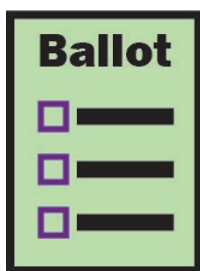
The House of Representatives:



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



- includes the 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**

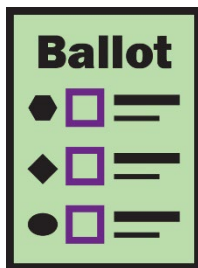


Pick the candidate who you want to vote for next.

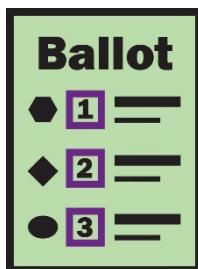
Write 2 in the empty box next to their name.



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



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 the people voted for by the Australian people to represent each of the states and territories.



Your white ballot paper has a black line on it.



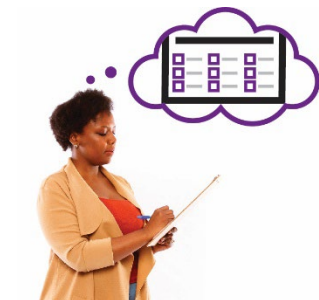
There is a list of groups above the black line.

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



A political party is a group of people who:

- share some of the same ideas
- work together on a plan for how the 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.



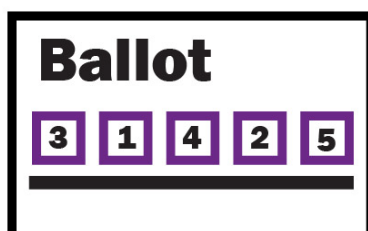
Pick the group who you want to vote for next.

Write 2 in the empty box next to their name.

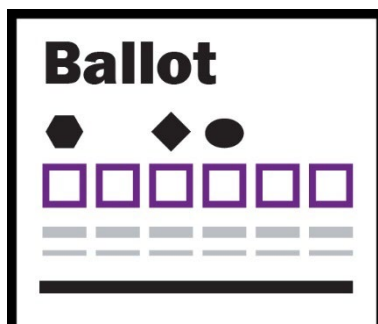


Keep choosing groups and writing numbers until you have filled out 6 boxes.

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.



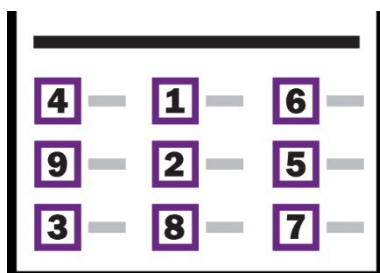
Pick the candidate who you want to vote for next.

Write 2 in the empty box next to their name.



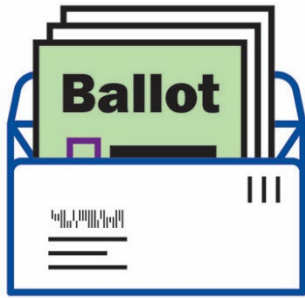
Keep choosing candidates and writing numbers until you have filled out 12 boxes.

You can finish at 12 or keep going.

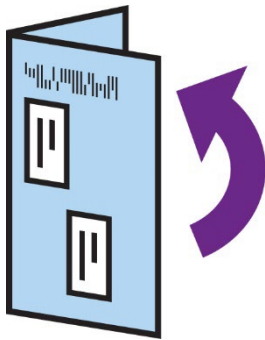


If there are less than 12 empty boxes, put a number in every box.

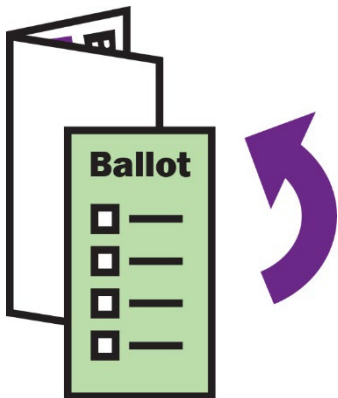
## Where do you put your ballot papers?



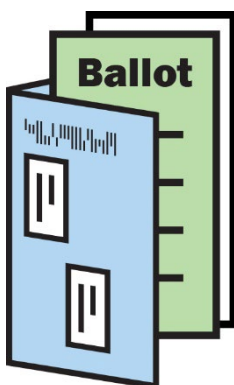
When you have filled out your ballot papers, you need to:



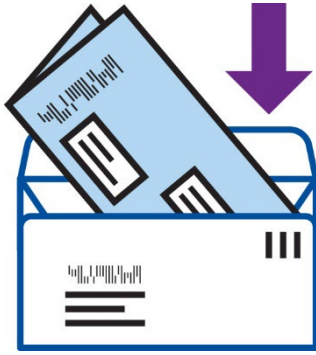
- fold your blue certificate in half



- fold your ballot papers in half



- place your ballot papers inside the blue certificate.

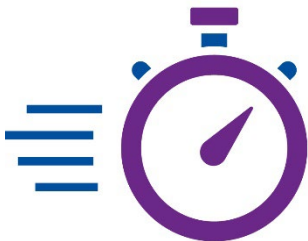


Place the folded blue certificate inside the white return envelope.



Take the white return 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.

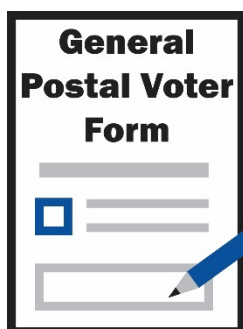


When you have put your white return envelope in the mailbox you have finished voting.

## 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**.

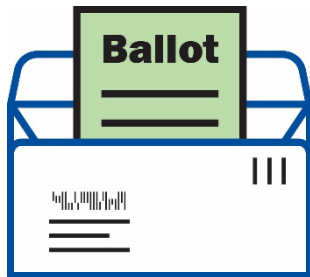


This means you don't need to apply again every time you need to vote.

Your ballot papers will be sent to you when you need to vote.



You need to meet our rules to become a general postal voter.



We send general postal voters their ballot papers in the mail each time they need to vote.



You can find more information and apply on our website.

[www.aec.gov.au/gpv](http://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](http://www.aec.gov.au/practice)



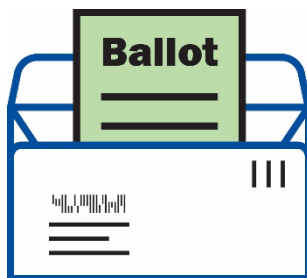
Your practise vote doesn't count.

You still need to vote:



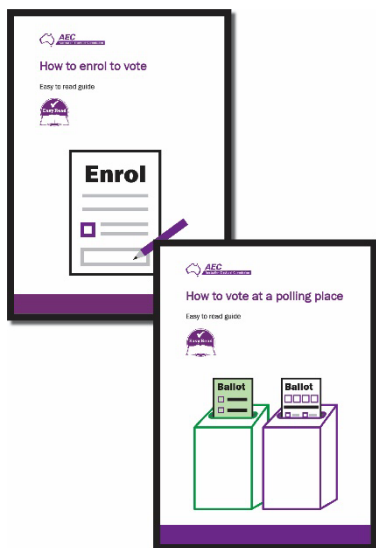
- at a polling place

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](http://www.aec.gov.au/assistance)

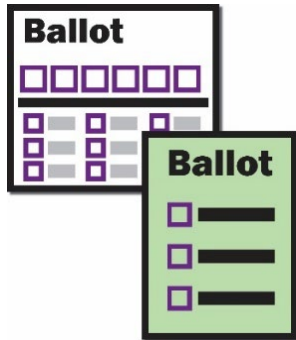


We also have information on our website for people who speak languages other than English.



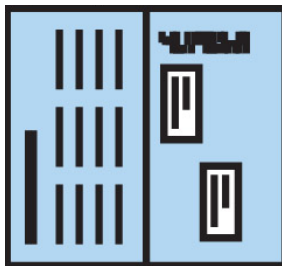
## Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.



### **Ballot papers**

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



### **Blue certificate**

A blue certificate explains who you are.

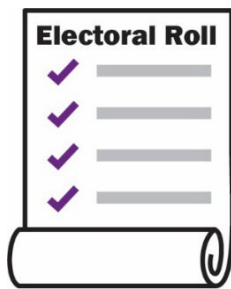
It will include:

- your name
- your address
- the security question you gave us in your application.



### **Citizen**

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



## **Electoral roll**

A list of voters.



## **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 Australia's government is chosen.



## General postal voter

If you are a general postal voter, you don't need to apply again every time you need to vote.

Your ballot papers will be sent to you when you need to vote.

## 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 the people voted for by the Australian people.



## Political party

A political party is a group of people who:

- share some of the same ideas
- work together on a plan for how the government should run our country.

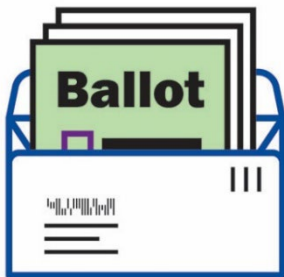
## Polling place



A polling place is a building where people go to vote.

For example, a:

- school
- community centre.



## Postal vote

You send us your vote in the mail.

## Senate

The Senate:



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



## **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.

## More information



You can call us for more information.

**13 23 26**



You can visit our website.

**[www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au)**



You can find us on Facebook.

**[www.facebook.com/AusElectoralCom/](https://www.facebook.com/AusElectoralCom/)**



You can find us on Twitter.

**[@AusElectoralCom](https://twitter.com/AusElectoralCom)**



You can find us on Instagram.

**[@auselectoralcom](https://www.instagram.com/auselectoralcom)**



You can find us on YouTube.

**[www.youtube.com/@AECTV](https://www.youtube.com/@AECTV)**

## National Relay Service



You can call the National Relay service if you:

- are deaf or hard of hearing
- find it hard to speak using the phone.



TTY

**13 36 77**



Speak and Listen

**1300 555 727**



Ask these services to connect you to our phone number.

**13 23 26**

## Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)



If you speak a language other than English, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).

**131 450**



Tell them what language you speak.



Ask them to connect you to our phone number.

**13 23 26.**



The Information Access Group created this Easy to read guide using stock photography and custom images. The images may not be reused without permission. For any enquiries about the images, please visit [www.informationaccessgroup.com](http://www.informationaccessgroup.com).

Quote job number 5712-B.

Authorised by the Electoral Commissioner, Canberra.