

ROCKTHE**VOTE**

**Voter Registration:
A How to Guide**



Introduction

In 2008, more young voters cast a ballot than in any other election since 18-20 year olds won the right to vote in 1971. Between now and Election Day 2012, young people can continue building political power and determining the direction of our country by voting . . . or we can take a step back.

First things first: people can't vote unless they are registered to vote. (That's a fact. Look it up.) This guide will help you register your friends, co-workers, and neighbors to vote. Here's what we've got for you:

- ✓ Step-by-step guide
- ✓ Tell us. Tell the World.
- ✓ Answers to FAQs
- ✓ Quick training guide
- ✓ Bonus: register your *online* community to vote too!

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Step 1: Pick a place, date, and time for your registration event.

You know your community. Where and when are the young people most likely to show up, wait in lines, hang out, or simply walk by? Be creative. Some suggestions:

- Find the scene and be the scene. Your target audience is your friends and people like you. Where are they during the day? Where do they hang out at night? Be there.
- Where is there a "captive audience?" People are most likely to register when they are killing time as they wait in line outside a bar or at a sporting event or concert or during lunch in the cafeteria.
- Set up a table in high-traffic areas like public festivals, a strip of nightlife, or a high school football game.

Step 2: Talk to the right people (if necessary).

Like everything else in life, there might be some red tape you need to cut through. It's not anything to worry about, just make sure you're covering your bases. Start with these:

- **Event organizers** know what's up. After all, they are running the show. Want a table at the 4th of July festival or the County Fair? Find the right people to ask.
- **Concert venues** and not the band are in control of who comes, goes, and sets up a table at their events.
- **School administrators** can tell you who needs to grant permission for registration drives on a high school or university campus.



Step 3: Build your team.

How many people you need to run a successful event? The more volunteers you have at your table, working a room, canvassing a line, or talking to their friends the more people you are going to register. Plus, it is fun to register voters with your friends.

- **Ask your friends to help you out.** Tell them what you are doing and explain why it is important to you. Your “inner circle” will be there for you.
- **Get online.** Post your event on your Facebook and Twitter. And make sure you post your event on the Rock the Vote website! Go to live.rockthevote.com and enter the details of your event. There may already be a Rock the Vote Street Team in your area. We can promote your event and help you recruit more volunteers.

[Insider Tip: Titles are free when you are registering voters! If you give your friends individual responsibilities, they will feel a sense of ownership over their “piece of the pie” and will not want to be the one to let the team down. Some examples include the Volunteer Coordinator, who will help build your team, and the Resource Captain, who will be responsible for ensuring that you have all the supplies and voter registration forms that you could ever need.]

Step 4: Get voter registration forms . . . and figure out what you are going to do with completed forms.

Where do you get voter registration forms? Great question! You have a few options here:

- You can often download state voter registration forms from the Secretary of State or local board of elections websites.
- Go to your local board of elections or county registrar office to get forms and let them know what you’re doing. Google can help.
- Go to live.rockthevote.com to download the National Voter Registration Form. (Note: this form is not accepted in New Hampshire, North Dakota or Wyoming.)

Once you have a stack of completed forms, what do you do with them? Another great question! You can take them to the local board of elections or county registrar in person. That’s the best and safest thing to do. Another option: mail them to the local board of elections, county registrar or Secretary of State’s office.

Whatever you decide, make sure the forms get turned in quickly! There are often state laws about how quickly completed forms must be turned in. The fate of all your hard work rests squarely on your shoulders. No pressure.

Tip: Double check all the forms before you turn them in! Most common errors are forgetting to sign the form and putting the current date in the signature date line.

[Sidebar: It is always helpful to contact your local election officials – usually the county board of elections or county clerk. They can answer important questions like the



appropriate addresses for students living on campus, how quickly completed forms need to be returned, requirements for people running voter registration drives (some states require those running registration drives to get training), critical deadlines, and more.]

Step 5: Get supplies.

Make sure you've got what you need. Some things you will need:

- Voter registration forms (see Step 4!)
- Clipboards
- Pens
- Envelope or box for completed forms
- Table
- Posters, banners, "register to vote here" signs
- Other schwag: stickers, buttons, t-shirts

Did we mention that you can get some things you need for your voter registration drive – like Rock the Vote t-shirts, posters, stickers and more – at live.rockthevote.com? Make it happen.

Step 6: Publicize the event

The tools and networks you utilize every day are the best place to start. Social networks – Facebook and Twitter – will help you spread the word. Also, make sure you post your event at live.rockthevote.com! Publicizing your event will help recruit volunteers and let potential voters know where they can go to register.

If the registration drive is at a school, tell the campus newspaper and radio station what you are up to. Get a local radio station to come broadcast from your registration event.

Other local media outlets may be interested, too. They just need to know it is happening. You can find a complete media guide and samples at <http://www.rockthevote.com/election-center/contact-sos/>.

Step 7: Train your volunteers

Prior to your event – and this can happen at a team meeting days before or 30 minutes prior to your event starting – you'll want to train your volunteers on the keys to a successful voter registration event. (Don't worry! We'll tell you how first.) You go over the tactics needed to register voters and help foster a team atmosphere, set goals, and hold each other accountable. Bottom line: you are doing something important and that feels good.

The complete training guide is below.



TRAINING YOUR VOLUNTEERS

Here's a quick guide to training your volunteers for some voter registration action. Depending on the size of your group, here are a few things you should do to get the ball rolling:

1. Introductions. Icebreakers are a good opportunity for everyone to get to know each other and laugh together. Each volunteer is doing this for a reason. You can motivate yourself, each other, and potential registrants by telling them your reason and asking for theirs
2. Hand out materials: Give everyone their clipboards and voter registration forms and anything else you've got for them.
3. Voter Registration How-To:
 - Walk through how to fill out the voter registration form
 - Point out the common mistakes that people make when filling out their form: (1) forgetting to sign the form, (2) entering today's date and the registrant's birthday in the wrong place, and (3) failing to provide a full driver's license or the last four digits of a Social Security number.
 - Everyone should ask: "Are you registered to vote at you current address?" If the person walking by says yes, ask them if they are sure that they have registered since the last time they moved.
 - Double check the form before they walk away, paying special attention to the common errors listed above.
 - Wrap up: "Thanks. We will turn your form in for you tonight. You should be getting a voter card in the mail from your Secretary of State in 4-6 weeks but if you have any questions, you can call your elections office directly. The number as well as lots of good info on the elections is available on our election center at rockthevote.com"
4. Do a demo. Have your volunteers role-play by registering each other to vote. And go through some of the FAQs (see below).
5. Tips for registering voters. Your training is an opportunity to talk about what is going to make your voter registration drive a success. The following ten golden rules will ensure a fun and productive event:
 1. **Voter registration forms are gold. Treat them like it.**
 2. **Don't stand behind the table. Move around, be assertive and friendly and let everyone see how much you are enjoying this!**
 3. **Ask everyone to register . . . not just the people that look like you or the people that approach you.**
 4. **Make sure you have two clipboards on you. While someone is filling out a form, start engaging your next registrant.**
 5. **Don't waste time convincing the unconvincible. If you get the feeling someone is just talking to be heard and won't be talked into registering, move on.**
 6. **Check the form twice. Make sure the registrant has signed their name in the appropriate spot and has not mixed up their birth date and the current date.**



7. **There is a role for everyone. If someone wants to help, let them help. Each person has something to contribute.**
8. **“Already registered” is just an excuse. Make sure they are registered at their current address – ask them if they have moved since last registering – and encourage them to register at their school address.**
9. **Don’t stand behind the table.**
10. **Have fun. Wave. Smile. Laugh. Ask questions. Share successes. Celebrate.**

****Make sure you print out these ten golden rules of voter registration***

6. Set a goal for each person and the group. Remember to make them realistic. If volunteers are fanning out into different areas, make sure everyone comes back to a central meeting place at the same time.
7. Register some voters!

Tips for the group leader:

- Circulate and check in with people throughout the event
- Register voters yourself – show them how its done!
- If a volunteer sees you slacking off, they will slack off as well . . . I promise.
- After the event, collect all the forms and count them. Announce how the group did against the goals.
- Thank everyone. Announce the next event and sign people up for it. Be excited! End on a high note! CELEBRATE!

Step 8: Showtime

Game on.

You’ve locked down the where and when. You’ve posted the event on Facebook and the Rock the Vote website. You’ve recruited the volunteers you need. The voter registration forms and supplies are stacked neatly in your home, office, or car trunk. Tomorrow is the big event. What now?

Here’s your checklist:

Pre-game (day before the event)

1. Confirm the logistics for the event with your venue or host organization.
2. Call your volunteers to confirm their attendance.
3. Make sure you’ve got all the voter registration forms, supplies and equipment you need. (Got your voter registration forms? Clipboards? Pens? Signage? Table? Chairs?)

Gameday (starts at least one hour before the event)

4. Arrive an hour – yes one hour! – before your event starts.



5. Lay out your supplies and make your spot look sweet. Set up your signs, lay out your buttons, rock your t-shirts.
6. Volunteers arrive 30 minutes prior to the start of the event.
7. Train your volunteers. Show them the ropes of registration. And go through the list of FAQs.
8. Work it! All hands on deck and no standing behind your table!

Post-game

9. Thank volunteers, celebrate your achievements, debrief and make plans for the next event.
10. Make another ask. Can the volunteer join you at the same Farmer's Market next week? Even if they can't commit, always leave them with a next "touch point" in which you will reach out to them again.
11. Turn the completed voter registration forms to the elections office within 24 hours.

[Insider tip: The key to getting volunteers to keep coming back is to make them realize that they had an impact. The key to making them feel like they had an impact is to set realistic expectations. Generally, an average volunteer collects three to five voter registration forms in an hour at a heavily trafficked place. Sometimes less.

Not only is that perfectly okay, but it is a huge deal! Let your volunteers know this, especially if they feel like they "only got four forms." Because of their hard work, four new people can vote. That is huge. People fight wars and die for that right and you just gave it to four people.]

TELL US. TELL THE WORLD.

If you haven't figured it out, voter registration is a pretty big deal. We want to highlight your work and use it to inspire other young people from around the country to register voters in their community.

After the completion of any event posted on live.rockthevote.com, you will receive an automated email that will give you the option of submit pictures, video, and even a blog. We would love to help you write a short blog entry about your experience. We would like it, but your mother would love it even more.

FAQs

What if I am already registered?

Cool, but are you registered at your current address?! You need to be.

Can I register to vote at my college or university address?

Yes. Even if you are already registered at home, we encourage you to register at school. You are much more likely to vote.



And local election officials cannot treat students differently than they treat any other citizen when it comes to voting. (That's in the U.S. Constitution, baby!) You cannot vote in two places – like at your parent's house and at school – but if you consider your dorm or address at school your residence, you should register to vote there.

Are there any restrictions on registering to vote using a P.O. Box, college campus, or dorm address?

A person may register to vote using any address he or she considers to be his or her legal residence. Residence requires both domicile and a place of abode. A P.O. Box is sufficient as a mailing address, but insufficient to establish residency. College students should list the street address of their dorm and specify the room, floor, or apartment they occupy.

I live in the same state but have moved to a different address than the address that is on my current voter registration. Do I need to re-register?

Yes. Each part of the state has its own unique candidates and measures on the ballot. When you vote at your assigned polling place you will have the opportunity to vote on the candidates and issues that most directly affect you and your neighbors. When you send in your new voter registration form indicate that you are changing your address. You will get a voter registration card in the mail within a month that will tell you where your precinct's polling place is located. You do not have to "unregister" your previous registration.

What if my college or university encourages me to vote at home?

You have the legal right to register and vote at any address that you will have been living in for a state-specific amount of time prior to the election. In every state, if you moved into on- or off-campus housing at the start of the fall semester, you will have been living there for long enough to vote.

Do I need to show photo ID at the polls?

Yes, but only to verify your identity (not your address). A voting card, a social security card, any federal, state or employee issued ID, regardless of address, is fine. But the rules all vary by state, so check out your state rules here ([link to election center](#)).

I want to vote, but I will not be in my home precinct on Election Day. Can I still vote?

Absolutely. Go to http://www.longdistancevoter.org/absentee_ballots for details on getting and submitting an absentee ballot. Advanced planning is encouraged because in some states the deadline for applying for an absentee ballot is a few weeks prior to Election Day. As long as the absentee ballot itself is postmarked by Election Day it legally has to be counted.

If I register to vote, am I going to be called for jury duty?

It is against the law to use the voter roles to determine jury duty.



BONUS: ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Did we mention that Rock the Vote has a free, easy-to-use online voter registration tool that you can give use to register your social networks to vote? True story. You can direct people to www.rockthevote.com/resigster to fill out a form online. And by direct we mean post it to Facebook, Tweet it, and email all of your friends.