



**Voter Registration:  
A How-To Guide**



Election Day is quickly approaching, and we're excited that you've decided to get involved and host your own event! In this packet, you'll find important information about how to host a voter registration drive from start to finish. Here's an overview of our step-by-step guide:

## **1. Before Your Event**

- a. Know the Voter Registration Rules in Your State
- b. Pick a Date, Time and Place
- c. Build Your Team
- d. Get Registration Forms
- e. Get Supplies
- f. Set Up Your OVR Tool and Text-to-Vote Code
- g. Publicize Your Event
- h. Train Your Volunteers

## **2. During Your Event**

- a. Set Up Your Spot
- b. Use Social Media
- c. Check Forms for Completion
- d. Stay Nonpartisan
- e. Be Proactive and Engage with People
- f. Sign People Up for Election Reminders

## **3. After Your Event**

- a. Thank Your Volunteers
- b. Deliver the Voter Registration Forms
- c. Follow Up with Rock the Vote
- d. Plan Your Next Event!

## **4. Voter Registration Script**

## **5. Answers to Frequently Asked Questions**

## **6. 10 Golden Rules of Voter Registration**

*Remember: each state has its own laws and regulations for hosting a voter registration drive. Before doing anything else, make sure to read the state-specific guide that's a part of Rock the Vote's toolkit.*

# BEFORE YOUR EVENT

## 1. Know the Voter Registration Rules in Your State

Voter registration laws vary by state, so it's important to be well-versed about the rules and regulations that you will need to work with. Be sure to check out Rock the Vote's guide to your state's rules in our **State-Specific Registration Guide**, which is included in the event toolkit – some states have training requirements, others require you to register the drive with the state, and more.

## 2. Pick a Date, Time and Place

You know your community best – when and where are young people most likely to hang out, walk by, or be waiting in a line? Be creative! Some suggestions:

- People are most likely to register when they're killing time as they wait in line at a sporting event, concert, bar, lunch line, etc.
- Set up a table in a high-traffic area: think public festivals, college campuses, supermarkets, and local events.

Once you know where you want to hold your registration drive, be sure to get permission of any venue or store you'd like to set up at. Some tips:

- Event organizers know what's up. After all, they are running the show. Want a table at the Fourth of July festival or the County Fair? Find the right people to ask.
- Concert venues (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.

## 3. Build Your Team

How many people do you need to run your event successfully? Make sure to decide this early in the planning stages, and begin building your team. The more volunteers you have, the more people you'll be able to register. Make sure that you have enough people to work at your table, reach out to the passerby, canvass a line, and more.

- **Ask your friends to help you out.** Tell them what you're doing and explain why it's important to you – your “inner circle” will be there for you. Plus, it's fun to register voters with your friends!
- **Reach out to local organizations.** Civic and volunteer organizations in your community can put you in touch with people looking to register voters.
- **Get online.** Be sure to post about your event on social media! By engaging with people and offering volunteer opportunities online, you can expand your reach and connect with new people who want to help with your event.



# BEFORE YOUR EVENT

## 4. Get Registration Forms

The next step to planning your event is getting voter registration forms! In our state-specific guide, you'll find information about how to download forms online, where to obtain copies in person, and more.

Typically, you can download your state's voter registration form from your Secretary of State's website. You can also register voters with the Federal Mail-In Voter Registration Form, which is attached as a PDF in our toolkit – however (in some states), the federal form limits voters to only being able to vote for federal races.

## 5. Get Supplies

Try to get your supplies together in advance in order to have a streamlined and fun registration drive. Here are some things you'll need:

- Voter registration forms
- Clipboards
- Lots of black/blue pens – you'll probably need more than you think!
- Envelope or box for completed forms
- A table
- Chairs
- Posters, banners, and signs that say “Register to Vote Here”: you can incorporate the logos and banner from our toolkit!
- Swag: think stickers, buttons, and t-shirts.
- Consider buying snacks/giveaways to get people to approach your table.

## 6. Set Up Your OVR Tool and Text-to-Vote Code

Paper registration forms aren't the only way to register voters – Rock the Vote offers a free, open source **Online Voter Registration (OVR) Tool** that you can use at your event. Get yours by visiting <https://www.rockthevote.org/resources/online-voter-registration-tool>. You can add your organization's logo, track the number of people who register through your tool, collect email and phone numbers, and much more.

Our OVR Tool is fully compatible with mobile devices, tablets, and laptops. Sensitive information is immediately discarded after registration, and our tool is compliant with applicable state registration laws. You can set out iPads or laptops at your registration drive to make the process quick, easy, and secure for registrants. Your tool can be added to a website or shared on social media accounts, too!



# BEFORE YOUR EVENT

You can also register voters using our **Text-to-Vote Code**. By texting “VOTE” to RTVOTE (788-683), people can register quickly on their own mobile device – a great solution for someone concerned about keeping their information secure. You can make signs for your event with the Text-to-Vote Code to facilitate a simple and fast registration process for passerby.



## 7. Publicize Your Event

The tools and networks you utilize every day are the best place to start. Social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, will help you spread the word. 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 your event is happening!

## 8. Train Your Volunteers

Whether it's at a designated team meeting or 30 minutes before the event, you'll need to train your volunteers on how to register people to vote! As the event leader, your job is to go over tactics and tips to register voters and help foster a team atmosphere, clear goals, and a sense of accountability. Remember: each volunteer is here for a reason. Make your volunteers feel valued and create an environment where you're able to motivate each other!

Below is a quick guide to help you train your volunteers. Depending on the size of your group, here are a few things you should do to get the ball rolling:

- **Introductions:** Icebreakers are a good opportunity for everyone to get to know each other and laugh together. Ask about each person's reason for participating in the registration drive! You can motivate each other and potential registrants by telling them your reason and asking for theirs.

# BEFORE YOUR EVENT

- **Hand out materials:** Give everyone their clipboards, pens, voter registration forms, and any other materials you have for them.
- **Explain how to register voters.**
  - Show them how to fill out a 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
    - (3) failing to provide a full driver's license or the last four digits of a Social Security number.
  - Double check the form before they walk away, paying special attention to the common errors listed above.
  - Everyone should ask: "Are you registered to vote at your 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.
  - Explain how to wrap up a person's registration process: "Thanks! We'll turn in your form for you tonight. You should be getting a voter card in the mail in 4-6 weeks, but if you have any further questions, you can call your Secretary of State or visit Rock the Vote's Election Center at [www.rockthevote.org](http://www.rockthevote.org)."
- **Do a demo.** Have your volunteers roleplay by registering each other to vote, and go through some of the FAQs that are at the end of this guide and in your **State-Specific Registration Guide**.
- **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.

## 9. Confirm Your Logistics

The day before your event, make sure to confirm the logistics with your venue or host organization! Additionally, call your volunteers to confirm their attendance and double-check that you have all the supplies you'll need. Take one more look at the Sample Script and Answers to FAQs found at the end of this guide, and make sure that you're ready for the big event! **You've got this.**



# DURING YOUR EVENT

## 1. Set Up Your Spot

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

- Arrive an hour – yes, one hour! – before your event starts.
- Lay out your supplies and make your spot look sweet! Set up your signs, lay out your buttons, and rock your t-shirts.
- Have volunteers arrive 30 minutes prior to the start of the event.

## 2. Use Social Media

Take lots of photos and videos during your event to post on social media! As the event starts, post about it on your social media accounts. Remember to follow the guidelines from our **Social Media Guide** and have fun!

## 3. Be Proactive and Engage with People

Make sure that you have all hands are on deck – stand up and engage with people, don't just sit behind your table. Circulate through the area you're set up in and make it easy for passerby to engage with you.

*Tip: When you start talking to someone, hand them a pen and registration form right away. Many people will instinctively begin to fill it out!*

## 4. Check Forms for Completion

Double check all the forms while the registrant is still standing in front of you. The most common errors are forgetting to sign the form, entering dates in the wrong places, and failing to provide an ID number.

## 5. Stay Nonpartisan

Remember that Rock the Vote is a nonpartisan organization. This means that neither you nor your volunteers can endorse or denounce a candidate or party. You must register anyone who wants to vote, regardless of their political preference.

## 6. Sign People Up for Election Reminders

If someone says they're already registered, ask them to sign up for **Election Reminders** instead! Have them text "ROCK" to RTVOTE (788-683) to get information about important deadlines, early voting and polling places. Have new registrants sign up for election reminders after finishing their form!



# AFTER YOUR EVENT

## 1. Thank Your Volunteers

Make sure to thank your volunteers, debrief and celebrate their work, and make plans for the next event. After you count all of your completed forms, announce how the group did against your goals. Be excited and end on a high note!

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, 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.

## 2. Deliver the Voter Registration Forms

Once you have a stack of completed forms, turn them into your local board of elections or country registrar within 24 hours. Submitting forms in person is the best and safest thing to do.

Another option if your state allows it: 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.

## 3. Follow Up with Rock the Vote

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 your event, you will receive an automated email that allows you to give us feedback. Also, make sure to upload photos/videos from your event and tag us!

## 4. Plan Your Next Event!

Start getting ready for your next voter registration drive! Announce the next event and sign people up for it. Ask your volunteers from this event to join you again – even if they can’t commit, always leave them with a next “touch point” in which you will reach out to them again.



# VOTER REGISTRATION SCRIPT

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm with Rock the Vote.

Are you currently registered to vote?

**IF YES** – That's great! Have you moved or changed your name since the last time you voted?

**IF YES, I'VE MOVED/CHANGED NAME** – I can help you update your voter registration right now! It will only take a minute, and it will ensure that you're able to vote on Election Day.

**IF NO** – Thanks! Can I sign you up to receive election reminders from Rock the Vote? These include important information about deadlines, what to bring to the polls, and where to vote. You just need to text "ROCK" to RTVOTE (788-683).

**IF NO** – Let's get you registered! It's quick and easy. Can I help sign you up now and make sure your voice is heard this election?

**IF YES** – Great! Here's the form to get started.

**IF NO** – Okay! If you change your mind, you can always register at [www.rockthevote.org](http://www.rockthevote.org). Have a great day.

**IF THEY HAVE A QUESTION** – See the answers to frequently asked voting questions on the next page.

**CLOSING** – Thanks so much for registering to vote! We'll turn in your form for you tonight. Can I sign you up for important election reminders from Rock the Vote? These include important information about deadlines, what to bring to the polls, and where to vote. You just need to text "ROCK" to RTVOTE (788-683).



# ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Why should I register?** You can't vote if you don't register, and most states have voter registration deadlines that occur long before Election Day. So even if you haven't decided whom you're voting for or even *if* you're voting, you should register now so you will be able to vote on Election Day.

**Why should I vote?** Great question! There are many reasons why a person votes and yours may be different from anyone else's, but voting is an essential part of our democracy. We elect representatives to enact laws on our behalf and the only way to voice who represents you is to cast a ballot. Also, many issues come up on the ballot that you are allowed to directly vote on like the freedom to marry, how much you pay in taxes, where they put a landfill/build a stadium, and much more.

**I don't like either presidential candidate, so I'm not going to vote.** You should still vote! There are other important local, state and federal elections to vote for. You don't need to choose a presidential candidate to vote in other key races.

**When do I vote?** Elections happen all the time. You know the big one: the presidential election every four years. There are midterms elections, too, and even more happening at the state, county and city level. (Think Governor, Sherriff, or Mayor) Check out [www.rockthevote.org/voting-information](http://www.rockthevote.org/voting-information) to find out what's happening in your area.

**I don't believe in voting.** Everyone's entitled to their opinions and beliefs. I'd encourage you to vote based on the issues you care about and think about how casting a ballot might change that.

**Which address do I use?** Use the address where you reside and intend to vote.

**Who's on the ballot?** Ballots vary by location. Be sure to check out Rock the Vote's Election Center to view a sample ballot or contact your local officials for more information.

**Does my vote even count?** Yes! It may sound cliché but every vote matters. Think of it this way: the only vote that doesn't matter is the one that was never cast. Make your voice heard – don't let other voters decide the election results for you!

**How can I check my voter registration status?** Contact your county elections office or your state election official. They can confirm if you are registered and at which address.



# ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**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.

**Can I register to vote using a P.O. Box as my address?** No, you must provide a valid place of residence as your address on your voter registration application.

**My address has changed. Do I need to re-register?** Yes. Each part of the state has its own unique candidates and measures on the ballot. Simply fill out a new application form, and re-register at your new address.

**I want to vote, but I will not be in my home precinct on Election Day. Can I still vote?** Absolutely. Go to [www.rockthevote.org/voting-information](http://www.rockthevote.org/voting-information) for details on getting an absentee ballot from your state.

**If I register to vote, am I going to be called for jury duty?** Juror lists are created from a variety of state databases, including lists of taxpayers and drivers – so if you have a driver’s license or pay taxes, you are still on the state’s list of eligible jurors. Don’t give up your right to vote to avoid jury duty!

**I do not have a permanent residence because I am homeless. Can I still register and vote?** Yes, you are still eligible to register and vote. You may use the address of where you sleep as the place of residence on your voter registration application.

**Where do I vote?** Where you vote depends on where you live. Your state elections office should have precinct locations posted online in advance of Election Day.

Check out our **State-Specific Registration Guide** for the answers to the following types of voter registration questions:

- Do I need to show ID at the polls?
- Am I eligible to register to vote?
- I have a felony conviction. Can I vote?
- I’ve moved within the county/moved to a new county. What should I do?
- I’ve changed my name. How do I update my registration?
- When is the deadline to register to vote?



# 10 GOLDEN RULES OF VOTER REGISTRATION

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 unconvinced. 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!