

# NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY ORGANIZER ★ TOOLKIT ★

A Step-by-Step Guide to Planning, Publicizing  
and Hosting a Registration Day event



[www.NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org](http://www.NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org)



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## 10 Steps to Get Started

### 1. Read Through All the Resources.

You're already reading this, so good work! Check out training and registration resources or learning more about voter registration in your state here at [nationalvoterregistrationday.org/resources](http://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/resources)

**2. Get Connected.** Get acquainted with [www.NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org](http://www.NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org). Make sure to like National Voter Registration Day on Facebook. Follow the event on Twitter using the handle @NatVoterRegDay. Use the hashtag #nationalvoterregistrationday.

**3. Start Early.** It's never too soon to start planning. Figure out the stuff you can knock off your list early and get it out of the way. Where will you register people? Will there be a lot of people there during midday on a Tuesday? Who will you recruit as volunteers?

**4. Convene Your Planning Crew.** Meet somewhere fun. Go over the basic plan for the event, answer people's questions, and get your team excited.

**5. Set Your Goals.** Check out our goals and objectives on the following page, and then think about your own goals. How many volunteers do you want to recruit? How many voters do you want to register?

### 6. Write and Follow Your Field Plan.

Figure out what it's going to take to recruit enough volunteers for your event and then follow the plan to a T.

**7. Set Your Schedule.** Timelines help you get stuff done. Start with National Voter Registration Day and then plan backwards. Schedule deadlines for things like venue confirmation, media contact, volunteer recruitment, and team training.

**8. Ask for Help.** Contact us if you need something and we'll do our best to make your organizing life easier. That's what we're here for! You can contact us at [info@nationalvoterregistrationday.org](mailto:info@nationalvoterregistrationday.org).

### 9. Participate in Any Trainings You Need.

Worried that you don't have knowledge about how voter registration works in your state? Look for announcements of our webinar trainings. Use our training resources. Contact a local partner or your local election board here: [www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state](http://www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state).

**10. Get to Work.** This is where it gets fun! Things might get crazy as September 24th approaches. Trust in the work you've done.



## Making a Plan

### Building Your Team

Your National Voter Registration Day event has lots of potential. This is a great opportunity to bring new people into your network and empower citizens to be more engaged in their communities. To make your event as successful as possible, you're going to need help. The first thing you'll need is a dedicated crew to help you plan your event. When recruiting your team, here are a few qualities to look for:

- ★ **Diligent and committed.** Look for people you can count on. Be clear up front with your volunteers about your expectations and needs.
- ★ **Fun and creative.** Look for people who will contribute creative energy.
- ★ **Connected and networked.** The person you work with who has 1,000 Facebook friends? Sounds like an asset. The one you see at every event? Definitely good to have on board.
- ★ **Informed and passionate.** People who are passionate about voting are always good to have around.

### Goal Setting

**Here are our goals for 2019:**

- ★ 200,000 people registered to vote.
- ★ 3,000 signed on as partners in all 50 states!
- ★ Wide support from election officials, community groups, businesses, schools, online partners and civic groups.

**What are yours?** For example:

- ★ # of Volunteers      10
- ★ # of Registrations      40
- ★ Partners      A local high school.  
An organization with volunteers.

### How will I know how many registrations I will collect?

Between 20% and 30% of eligible voters are not registered nationwide. Unless you will be in an area with a population that has a higher likelihood of people not being registered (such as a freshman college dorm or a naturalization ceremony) you can use this figure to predict the number of registrations you will collect. For instance, if you expect that 100 people will walk by your table and everyone will be asked to register, set a goal of 20 registrations. Not everyone will say yes, and that's okay!



## Volunteer Recruitment

### Figuring Out How Many Volunteers You Need

It takes lots of time to find volunteers. Not everybody who says they are going to volunteer will show up. The reliability of your volunteers depends on how loyal your potential volunteers are, how close they are to you, and how often you've asked them to volunteer.

Every organization is different, but you normally want to start volunteer outreach at least two weeks to a month before an event. That way you have plenty of time to make initial outreach calls, and then make follow-up reminder calls to each person who said they'd attend.

Our experience gives us the following assumptions:

- ★ For most organizations, about half of the volunteers who say they will show up actually do. It's a good idea to recruit twice as many volunteers as your goal. It will never hurt to have extra volunteers on the day of your event!
- ★ Mix online outreach with calls. A typical caller can make around 25 calls per hour.
- ★ Most organizations we've worked with talk to about four people and get one or two people to say "yes" per hour.
- ★ Most volunteers can do two hours of recruitment calls and not much more.

Based these assumptions, here is an example of how much time and how many people you'd need to reach your volunteer goals:

Volunteer Objective	10	50
How many volunteers do you need to say yes?	20	100
How many two-hour calling shifts should you plan for calling potential volunteers?	10	50

### Using Partnerships for More Volunteers

Are there other organizations in your community that could have a volunteer base your organization might tap into? Talk to them and coordinate! If you're in a larger city, there might even be other groups working on National Voter Registration Day.

#### How does your organization utilize partnerships?

"In NYC, we have taken the approach of working with partners and volunteers to host a broad scale of events designed to bring awareness of NVRD as a day of pride. We have accomplished this by co-hosting large and small opportunities for voter registration and engagement. The events have ranged from celebrity-hosted student rallies to workplace and subway drives to new-citizen swearing-in ceremonies."

— Onida Coward Mayers, NYC Votes



## Volunteer Recruitment

### Best Practices for Volunteer Recruitment Calls

#### Overall:

- ★ It goes without saying – a little excitement helps.
- ★ Always know what you want to ask – have specific times, dates, and places.
- ★ If possible, have a caller who knows the prospective volunteer call them.
- ★ Call through active volunteers first.
- ★ Make sure people who are calling to recruit volunteers are having fun, and are enthusiastic about what they're asking people to do.
- ★ Feed your callers! Try to get a volunteer or a local store to donate food.
- ★ Try to find a place that won't echo so your callers don't get distracted.

#### When to call:

- ★ Best time to call is 5:30 pm – 9:00 pm on a weekday.
- ★ Always schedule time for training before calls actually start.
- ★ Make time in your agenda for the night to give folks a break and maybe eat dinner or a snack.

#### How to call:

- ★ Give your callers a script. Ask them to practice it and make it their own.
- ★ Have a stated expectation for number of calls made per person. Give folks a list with a specific number of calls, and encourage them to finish the list.
- ★ Don't set down the phone. It can be surprisingly hard to pick it back up.
- ★ Have volunteers record the responses somewhere so you can call back through unanswered numbers; you can save time by not calling people who have already been talked to.

#### When someone says no:

- ★ Try to get them to volunteer for a different event with your organization. Don't waste the phone call!
- ★ Note the tone of their voice. If someone sounds annoyed, staying on the phone with them can do more harm than good.
- ★ Have a way of rewarding people who finish their list or get positive results – even just a shout-out. Many organizations find it helpful to have a way to celebrate each new volunteer commitment.
- ★ When you find someone who seems as if they're excited about the cause, try to get them to bring friends!





## Training Volunteers



### Training Your Volunteers

The first thing that has to happen for the event to be successful is the volunteer training. Make sure volunteers have all the materials they need before training starts. To keep this process painless, have all the clipboards assembled in advance with the script, who to call for questions, blank voter-registration cards, pens, and a "Register to Vote" sign taped on the back of the clipboard.

Good trainings are fun, informative, quick, and engaging. Keep things short, and leave time for questions and answers. Most important, give volunteers a chance to partner up and practice.

Role-play helps. Before you deploy volunteers to sites, announce what time they should return, make sure they know to turn their materials in when they get back, and have contact info from each of your volunteers.

**Get whatever training you  
and your team need. Our training  
materials can be found here:**

[www.nonprofitvote.org/nonprofitvotescount/voter-registration-toolkit](http://www.nonprofitvote.org/nonprofitvotescount/voter-registration-toolkit)



## Training Volunteers

### Training Should Include the Following:

- ★ Who can register to vote in your state? This includes knowing
  - that any U.S. citizen who turns 18 by Election Day can register and vote; and
  - your state rule – if any – for limiting the right of ex-offenders to vote. Find out [here](#).
- ★ How to fill out a registration form and which fields are required.
- ★ Where to look for common mistakes, such as forgetting to sign the form.
- ★ Staying nonpartisan. We're not here to tell you who to vote for, just to help you register.
- ★ Myth busting: Discuss common misconceptions, such as jury duty being decided by voter registration forms. It's most often from getting a driver's license or other lists.
- ★ Who to call if a volunteer has questions when registering someone.
- ★ Where to turn in all completed registration forms and other materials
- ★ Quick script training and role-play.
- ★ Time for Q & A.







## Logistics

### Before the Event

**Pick a location and get approval from the venue, if need be:**

- ★ Prioritize places with lots of foot traffic.
- ★ We've seen the most success at campuses, transit areas, food stores, at your own agency or business or in at local events in your neighborhood.
- ★ Avoid tourist places with people from out of state or out of country. Festivals and sporting events can have a lot of out-of-state people.

### Think about what you may need:

- ★ Plenty of blank registration forms or a tablet for registering online
- ★ A clipboard and multiple pens for every volunteer
- ★ Sample scripts
- ★ A volunteer sign-in sheet
- ★ "National Voter Registration Day" posters\*
- ★ Stickers to identify volunteers and to give away\*
- ★ A volunteer signup sheet\*
- ★ A training script for all of your trainers
- ★ Envelopes or boxes for completed registration forms
- ★ A table and chairs
- ★ A source of shade (umbrella or tent)



- ★ A way to play music
- ★ Handmade posters and banners with your organization's name
- ★ A camera
- ★ Water and snacks for volunteers

*\* All partners who sign up on our website are sent free posters and stickers.*

### Event Components

#### Volunteers

- ★ Have volunteers show up well before you actually plan on having the event take place so that they can be trained. Factor in time in case volunteers show up late.
- ★ Have volunteers sign. There is a sample sign-in sheet on the Partner Resources page to make it easy to track who volunteered and how many voters they registered.



## Logistics

### Pre-event training

- ★ One person can train approximately 5 – 10 others. Make sure you have enough trainers for all of your volunteers! Each trainer should be familiar with voter registration rules in your state, as well as tips for talking to prospective voters.

### Greeting your volunteers

- ★ Make sure you have lots of greeters (like at the end of a marathon) for when people come back from volunteering. If you're staying in one spot, just keep your energy high and give your volunteers lots of positive feedback.
- ★ Have snacks and goodies for volunteers.
- ★ Collect each volunteer's clipboard, and any completed voter registration forms.

### Doing Voter Registration

- ★ Smooth deployment from training to actually registering is critical. Make sure you have transportation figured out beforehand if you'll be driving somewhere.
- ★ Make your event fun. Announcements, cheering, and music will attract a lot more positive attention than people just sitting at a table.

### Finishing up

- ★ Allow your volunteers to chat about how registering went. Always finish the event by asking volunteers about their favorite registration or memory from the day.
- ★ Remind all of your volunteers how big of an impact they've made.
- ★ Have someone count all of the registrations to show how each individual added together made a big impact.

### Running the Event

One of the secrets to running a great event is to have a run sheet: a chart or timeline that breaks down what needs to happen minute by minute and identifies who's in charge. See sample below.

Make one person the stage manager for the event. This person is in charge of following the run sheet word by word, making sure that everything that needs to happen happens. Of course, it's impossible to predict everything that will happen, so be ready to improvise.



## Logistics

### Sample Day of Timeline

Time	Event	Location	Who Leads	Details
10:15AM	Leave office to get to venue	Headquarters		Make sure to bring all materials needed.
10:30AM	Set up, prepare tables, snacks, check-in, music	At Site		Music player, snacks, tables, check-in materials.
10:45AM	Check-in arriving volunteers	At Site		Welcome! Explain day's process and hand out clipboards/materials.
11:00AM	Icebreaker for volunteer	At Site		Favorite childhood book/first memory of civic participation/etc.
11:20AM	Group voter registration training	At Site		Answer any questions. Do a demonstration. Go through materials that everybody should have. Have them split into pairs and practice.
11:40AM	Team Cheer	At Site		"Yeah, democracy!"
11:40AM	Spread everybody out through square.	At Site		Check in with each departing volunteer to make sure they have everything they need.
12:15PM	Set up lunch for volunteers	At Site		Have them take 15 minute, incremental breaks so there are still volunteers registering at all times.
1:00PM	Check in with each volunteer team	At Site		Ask them if they have any questions, and collect any filled out registration forms.
2:00PM	Check in with each volunteer team	At Site		Ask them if they have any questions, and collect any filled out registration forms.
3:00PM	Regroup team	At Site		Collect all materials and count completed forms. Encourage volunteers to take water and snacks.
3:15PM	Check-outs, Celebration	At Site	All staff	Announce how many registrations we accomplished, Check-in with volunteers to get feedback on event.
4:00PM	Break down tables, clean up, go to office	At Site		Make sure not to forget anything. Keep registration forms within reach.
5:00PM	Debrief, Did Good / Do Betters	Headquarters	Everyone	Add up numbers of voters registered and volunteers engaged. Report to National Voter Registration Day website.



## Keeping National Voter Registration Day All About Democracy



National Voter Registration Day is about democracy. It's about doing something, big or small, to help your community and participate and vote. We're helping people find their voice – not telling them what to say.

We have three major ways we keep National Voter Registration Day about democracy and not partisanship:

### **No “Electioneering”: Candidates and Ballot Measures**

We ask that no National Voter Registration Day event may be used to advocate on behalf of a candidate or ballot measure. You can provide nonpartisan voter education on where and how to vote. Or information about something else your group is doing. By keeping National Voter Registration Day strictly about registering people

to vote, we keep it a feel-good democracy event that everyone wants to participate in.

### **Messaging**

In addition to not advocating for partisan issues, there's a lot you can do to help National Voter Registration Day stay all about democracy and the importance of turning out the vote in your community. Keep it positive.

### **Targeting People, Not Parties**

No targeting may be done on the basis of party. You are free to target your friends, people you serve, your local community, and areas with historically low turnout or new to voting, such as young voters or new citizens.





## How to Ask Someone to Register

Even though asking someone “Are you registered to vote?” or “Can I help you register to vote?” seems straightforward, we’ve learned that those questions aren’t the best ones. Try these alternatives instead:

**“Did you know you have to update your voter registration every time you move? Let’s check your registration to make sure it’s up to date.”**

- ★ Why it works: Some people may think their registration is current because they got a driver’s license in their new state or only moved across town. Even if you move down the street, you have to update your voter registration or you might be turned away at the polls.
- ★ Use the Voting In Your State guide to find the right link for people to check their registration: <https://www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state/>. You can have a laptop set up for people to check, or encourage them to visit their link on their smartphone.

**“Our community needs more voters. Can you help out by updating your registration today?”**

- ★ Why it works: Some people aren’t motivated by politics but care deeply about their community. You can explain that elected officials who

represent them are more responsive to communities with higher numbers of registered voters.

- ★ Remember to use the word “update” since many people don’t realize they need to update their registration when they move, change their name, or if they haven’t voted in several years.
- “The deadline for voter registration is approaching. Do you have 2 minutes to make sure you’re registered?”**

- ★ Why it works: Use that sense of urgency (the looming deadline) and highlight the ease of registering to get people to do it on the spot rather than waiting for another day or time.
- ★ Get even more specific by inserting your state’s registration deadline in your ask. You can find your state’s deadline by checking your Secretary of State’s website or visiting the Voting In Your State guide.







## More Tips for Talking to Voters

### Always Look Like You're Having Fun

- ★ Get out from behind that table and invite people to talk to you.
- ★ Give a shout-out every time somebody registers to vote and compliment the heck out of them. If you make somebody feel special for participating, you can bet they'll want to keep doing it.
- ★ Act up a little. Move or say something while you're standing around, and have a good time. This can help make the whole process much less intimidating for new voters.
- ★ Make sure you're an approachable group. Standing or walking in pairs is encouraged, but not at the expense of talking to voters instead.

### Be the Kind of Person You'd Want To Talk To

- ★ Be friendly.
- ★ Talk like a regular person. Don't be a robot and read directly off the script.
- ★ Be up front about what you're doing in a positive way. Identify yourself as a volunteer immediately when you start talking to them.
- ★ Take nothing personally and don't get discouraged. If somebody is rude to you, shake it off and move on.
- ★ Have a conversation, rather than talking at people.

- ★ Ask questions and listen to the answer. Tailor your message to the individual.
- ★ Find your own pitch. Experiment and figure out what works best for you.
- ★ Talk to everyone you see. The next person could be amazing!
- ★ Connect voting to their lives and the issues they care about.

### Stay on Message

- ★ You're not telling them who to vote for, just helping them register!
- ★ National Voter Registration Day is a positive way to celebrate democracy.

### Close the Deal

- ★ Always make the ask. If you can, put the clipboard and pen in their hand while you're talking to them. You'll be amazed at how many people start filling it out.
- ★ Don't backtrack. Once you ask them to register, wait for their response.
- ★ If you have handouts, give them out at the end of your conversation. They can be distracting if you hand them to voters right away.



## After Your Event

### Turn in Your Completed Voter Registration Forms.

- ★ All states have rules on when completed forms need to be turned in. It's always best to turn in forms as soon as possible to avoid any issues.
- ★ If you don't know when or where to turn them in, ask a partner or local election office. Visit <https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/partner-tools/rules-for-voter-registration-drives/> to download your state's registration drive rules.

### Report Your Numbers.

- ★ We'll send you a couple emails right after National Voter Registration Day with a link to report the number of volunteers you engaged and voters you registered. These numbers are important for us to be able to know how big our impact is nationally, as they're some of the only numbers we are able to track year to year.

### Thank Your Volunteers.

- ★ This is a big one. People love to be appreciated. If you want to email them, that's great. But make sure that it's personal to them, and try to follow it up with a phone call. Actively appreciating the people who help you accomplish your goals is the easiest way to make sure they keep helping you.

### Follow Up With the Voters You Registered.

- ★ If it's okay in your state, make a copy of each of the completed voter registration forms for your own records. Some states like Texas and New Mexico don't allow copying so check with someone who knows. Redacting personal information (date of birth, signature, SSN, or driver's license number) is always a good idea.
- ★ You can use the copies you made to follow up with folks to make sure they have all the information they need to actually vote.
- ★ Every time you contact a voter, you increase their likelihood of voting. Follow up with them right after the event to thank them for registering and answer any questions they might have, then again during your get-out-the-vote process!





## More Resources

**View/Download the Following Registration and Training Resources at**

[www.nonprofitvote.org/nonprofitvotescount/voter-registration-toolkit](http://www.nonprofitvote.org/nonprofitvotescount/voter-registration-toolkit)

- ★ State Voter Registration Deadlines
- ★ FAQs When Doing Voter Registration in Your State
- ★ Filling Out and Returning the Voter Registration Form
- ★ Planning and Running Voter Registration Activity
- ★ Reasons to Register and Vote
- ★ Sample Script VR and Pledge and Common Responses
- ★ State Guides for Doing Voter Registration Drives
- ★ Staying Nonpartisan: Election Activities Checklist
- ★ Tips Active Tabling
- ★ Tips for Asking Someone to Register to Vote

- ★ Voter Registration Checklist
- ★ Voter Registration Training Video
- ★ Voting in Your State: Official state links on how to register, find your poll, bring ID, vote early by mail or in person, contact your election office and more
- ★ What Staff and Volunteers Can Say about the Election

OTHER LINKS TO BE ADDED HERE