

# How To Vote: Demystifying Voting Toolkit.



**ELECT**HER

**#ELIGIBILITY**

**#REGISTERING**

**#VOTING**

**#DECIDING**

# Introduction

[Elect Her](#) is a multi-partisan non-profit organisation working to motivate, support and equip women to pursue their political ambitions and stand for elected office in all spheres of government across Britain and helping them to thrive once there.

We want to support the women of Britain to engage in our democracy. We need more women's voices in every democratic space, and voting is a key way to engage in our democracy. This toolkit is for women who want to learn more about voting in elections.

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## This Toolkit Covers:

- [Who is eligible to vote](#)
- [How to register to vote](#)
- [The different ways you can vote](#)
- [How do I decide who to vote for](#)

This toolkit has been produced by [Elect Her](#) and designed by Michaela Pointon, with illustrations by Ida Henrich.

# Women and Voting

## In Historical Context:

Women have not always been allowed to vote. Before we look at how you can vote today, we want to pay heed to the cultural and historical significance of women as voters. Voting is an essential part of our democracy and the right of all citizens. For women, the right to vote marks a significant and hard fought milestone on the road to equality.

Until 1918, women were not allowed to vote in parliamentary elections. Decision-makers were all men and were elected exclusively by men, particularly wealthy white men, as not all men had the right to vote.

During the 19th century, voting rights were extended to some working-class men, so by 1900, 58% of men had the right to vote. Many women were in the same circumstances as the newly enfranchised men, and a growing sense of injustice led to women organising to lobby and campaign for the vote through the latter part of the 19th century and into the 20th, through peaceful means. With little action from the the government, groups turned to increasingly militant methods.

The website Who can I vote for? Shows the law to allow women over 30 who owned property to vote, but this still excluded a third of women, while virtually all men over 21 were given the right to vote.

At this time, the first woman was elected, but since she was a representative of Sinn Féin, she did not take her seat in Westminster. It was not until the following year, in a by-election, that Nancy Astor (Viscountess Astor) became the first woman to take her seat in parliament, where she stayed until 1945.

Finally, in 1928, the Equal Franchise Act allowed women over 21 to vote and gave women the same voting rights as men for the first time.

**Voting is an important part of our democracy, and we want to encourage all women to exercise their right to vote and be part of choosing who is elected to represent them and make decisions on their behalf. [Read this guide to find out how!](#)**

**1.**

**Am I  
eligible to  
vote?**



## # To vote; you must be:

- » 18 or over on the day of the election,
- » a British, Irish, or EU citizen or from a qualifying Commonwealth country,
- » resident at an address in the area you want to vote in,
- » and not legally excluded from voting.

**In Wales, you can vote in a Senedd Election if you are going to be 16 or over on the day of the election ('polling day').**

**If you are living in Scotland, there are different eligibility rules.**



**You can register to vote when you are:**

- » **aged 14 or older for Scottish Parliament and council elections**
- » **aged 16 or older for UK Parliament elections**
- » **not legally excluded from voting**

**You must also be one of the following:**

- » **a British citizen living in Scotland**
  - » **an Irish citizen living in Scotland**
  - » **a foreign national of another country living in Scotland who has leave to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need leave.**
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# #Eligibility Checklist

- Will you be 18 or over on the day of the election?
- Are you a British, Irish, or EU citizen or from a qualifying Commonwealth Country?
- Are you a resident at an address in the area you want to vote in?
- Have you checked you're not legally excluded from voting?

2.

# How Do I Register?



Once you have checked your eligibility, it is time to register to vote. Remember you don't need to register to vote in every election!

- » You have never registered before.
- » You've recently moved house.
- » If you have changed your name.

When you register, you can select how you would like to vote. Once you have registered to vote, you will receive a poll card.



To register, [go to this website](#):  
This only takes 5 minutes.

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## ● **Top tip:**

# **How do I find out if I'm already registered?:**

If you are not sure if you are registered to vote, you can check with your local Electoral Registration Office. You can find their contact details by entering your postcode [here](#):

# #Registering Checklist



Are you eligible to vote?



Will you vote in person at a polling station, by post or by proxy?



Do you know when the deadline for voting registration is?

3.

# How Do I Vote?



There are three ways you can vote:

1. voting in person at a polling station
2. voting by post
3. voting by proxy

Ahead of polling day, everyone who is registered to vote will receive a poll card, which is usually sent out about five weeks before the election. Your poll card tells you when the election is and how you will vote.

## **1.) At a polling station**

Unless you've arranged otherwise, it will be assumed that you want to vote in person.

Your poll card will tell you which polling station you will need to go to cast your vote on election day. You can't choose which polling station to vote at – you have to go to your assigned polling station. The polling station could be a school, hall, community centre or a portable cabin and are usually open from 7am until 10pm



Find out your polling station on your ballot, [or here:](#)

At the polling station, there is usually one person in charge who is called the Presiding Officer and one or two additional people called Poll Clerks. When you enter, they will ask for your name and address so they can check that you're on the electoral register. You don't need your polling card to vote, but you are welcomed to bring it.

**You will need to present an ID to the polling station staff to vote. This can be a:**

- » UK, EU & commonwealth passport
- » UK & EU driving licence
- » Blue badges  
Local travel card
- » PASS card
- » Or you can apply for a free voter authority certificate



**For more information on voter IDs,  
[visit this link:](#)**

Once you have your ballot paper, you can cast your vote in a private booth.

Make sure to take the time to read the instructions on your ballot paper properly and ask if you are unsure. Some elections ask for you to cast a vote by putting one cross in one box, while others might ask for two. It is possible that you could be voting in different elections on the same day, in which case you'll be given more than one ballot paper.

There will also be signs in your polling station to guide you. If you make a mistake and need a new ballot paper, don't worry. You can speak with a staff member, and they will provide you with a replacement ballot paper. Once you have finished voting, you will then place your ballot paper in a sealed ballot box.

## **# Asking for help at polling stations:**

If you are unsure about anything or need assistance, ask a staff member. They are there to help and will be happy to explain the process or walk you through anything before voting.

If you have a visual impairment, you can ask for a large print ballot paper, or a special voting device to help you cast your vote. If you can't fill out the ballot paper yourself, you can ask a staff member



or a trusted adult such as a parent or carer to mark your ballot paper for you.

## **# Taking dependants to polling stations:**

You can go to the polling station with whomever you like, such as a parent or partner, but only those registered to vote at that station can go inside. For voters with children, you are allowed to take them into the polling booth, but your children must not mark the ballot paper for you.

## **2.) Voting by post**

If you think you might not be able to get to a polling station on election day, consider a postal vote. You do not need to provide a reason, unless you are in Northern Ireland.

To be entitled to postal vote, you first need to apply no later than 11 working days before polling day – but the sooner the better.

You will need to supply your signature on your application form, and again on the postal ballot paper when you vote, to confirm who you are.

Closer to the election, you will receive a voting pack in the post, including a ballot paper. Fill this out, and return it by post using the freepost pre-addressed envelope before the postal vote deadline. If you miss the deadline to post your vote, either you or a person you trust can still return it to a polling station in your council area on polling day.

### **3.) Voting by Proxy**

Proxy voting is when you ask someone you trust to vote on your behalf. You tell them who you would like to vote for, and they go to your polling station and vote for you.

Unlike a postal vote, you can only apply for a proxy vote in certain circumstances, such as:

- » **being away on polling day**
- » **having a medical issue or disability**
- » **not being able to vote in person because of work or military service.**



For more information and to apply for proxy voting, [visit this link:](#)

# #Voting Checklist

- Have you checked what elections are happening near you and when?
- Where is your nearest polling station?
- Will you postal vote, or vote in a polling station?
- Have you got the postal vote deadline and/or election day in your diary?
- If you are voting in person, what ID do you have to take with you?

4.

# How Do I Decide?



## # Who can I vote for?

It's important to think about who you might vote for in advance - don't wait until election day to decide! First, find out which candidates are standing in your area.

[Who can I vote for?](#) Shows all candidates who have been confirmed, their party (or if they are an independent candidate), their social media information, website and contact email. Note that more may be added as they are confirmed, so you may wish to check back.

## # How do I decide who to vote for?

Once you know who is standing, do your research and decide who you're supporting.

Some candidates will be standing as independents, and others will be standing for political parties. All will have information available online, and some will also post leaflets through your door -or even knock on your door to meet you - closer to the election.

For candidates representing a party, as well as reading about them as individuals, you can read their party's manifesto and think about which most closely reflects your beliefs on the issues you care about.

## ● **Top tip:**

# **See beyond the party:**

Within a political party, there is a wide spectrum of beliefs and priorities. Each candidate is an individual person with their own life experience, reasons for standing for election, and their own ideas about what they would do in office.

Remember candidates from the same party will also widely differ in terms of worldview, skill sets, personal interests, priorities and goals once they're in office.

Make an informed decision about who you will vote for by finding out more than just which party a candidate is standing for.

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## **# How do I get to know my candidates?**

- » **Look at their website, blog or social media**
- » **Read leaflets**
- » **Search online for them**
- » **Attend a hustings and ask them questions**

## # You might want to research or ask them:

- » Why do they think they would make a good representative of the community?
- » What is their background? For example: are they local to the area? Have they been involved in community projects? Do they understand the challenges of local services in the area?
- » What experience and knowledge do they have of the issues that you care about?
- » What are their key priorities if elected?
- » Is their approach to politics constructive and collaborative or combative and focused on criticising others?

## **A note from us:**

**Remember that candidates are people too!**

Candidates and politicians are first and foremost people; they are human. Standing for office is a really big deal - a sacrifice of time, energy and resources, and an emotional rollercoaster.

Whether or not we agree with a candidate's views, all candidates, regardless of the party they represent, deserve respect and dignity for their participation in our democracy and should be celebrated.

# #Selection Checklist

- Which candidates are going to be on your ballot paper?
- Have you researched who they are and what they stand for?
- Who is going to get your vote?

