



## TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS FOR MOCK ELECTIONS AND VOTE COUNTING

### YEARS 10-12 MOCK ELECTION:

- This presentation does not come with a prescribed election theme. There are ballot papers (in PDF format) available on our website that are linked to other school presentations that you are welcome to use.
- Otherwise, you can come up with something relevant to your school, year group or local community (it does not have to be for people/representatives). It's best to keep the voting choices (or 'candidates') to somewhere between 4 – 6 options.
- The Australian Electoral Commission has an excellent online ballot paper generator that anyone can use. This will allow you to create and print ballot papers about any election topic you choose. It can be found here: <https://getvoting.aec.gov.au/ballotpaper>
- To run the election, you will need ballot papers, a ballot box of some kind, and an area to vote, this may or may not have some kind of screening for private voting. The NTEC can provide you with voting screens and ballot boxes if you are based in Darwin or Alice Springs.
- Once you have finished the PowerPoint presentation, let students know they will now vote in a mock election, and they will see how votes are counted. Discuss the election theme you will use, and go through the candidates. Tell them this will be a preferential election.
- Before students vote, reiterate the voting instructions:
  - Number every box in the order of your choice
  - #1 is your first choice, your favourite, the one you want to win, #2 is your second choice etc.
  - Do not use ticks or crosses as these can't be put in order
  - Don't put your name on the ballot paper as it is a secret ballot
  - Students will vote in the designated voting area, then put their ballot paper in the ballot box.
- Hand out ballot papers slowly so there is no crowding in the voting area that you have set up. Have the ballot box (or equivalent) on the other side of the room to help clear out students from voting area.
- Students will likely ask, "do I fold it?" regarding their ballot papers. It's up to them, it's not required but may help to keep their vote a secret. But one fold is enough!

### HOW TO COUNT VOTES:

- It is easiest to count the votes using sorting cards. These just need to be pieces of paper that each have the name of one of the candidates from your election. You may also need an extra one for 'informal votes'.

- Depending on the size of your group, you can gather students to one area (on grouped desks or mat) or choose around 4 students to assist with the counting at the front of the class. To set up, lay out the sorting cards in the same order as ballot paper.
- Empty the ballot box and make one pile of ballot papers. Check for informal votes (i.e. votes that cannot be counted; not every square is numbered, numbers not sequential, full name written on ballot paper) and put these on the 'informal votes' sorting card. (If you can read the voter's intention, even if it's difficult, and even if there is other things written on ballot paper, you always want to include as many ballot papers as possible to the count.)
- Count the total number of formal ballot papers.
- Record these on a results table (provided below). You should draw as results table on the white board or can print out a copy to fill in. It is much easier for students to understand the counting of preferential votes if they can see all the steps in this process.
- Write in the total votes, informal votes and total formal votes. (You could change language to 'incorrect' votes / total 'correct' votes for plainer English)
- Remind students that to win this election a candidate must get 'more than half' the total votes. We call this the 'absolute majority', and mathematically this is  $50\% + 1$  of the total formal votes. It might happen that  $50\%$  of your total votes is a decimal (if an odd number) so rather than '+ 1' you just need to '+ 0.5' to get 'more than half'. For example, if 31 students voted, the absolute majority would be  $31 \div 2 = 15.5$ , then to get 'more than half' this becomes 16. (Because you cannot have half a vote).
- Calculate the absolute majority for your election. Tell students: *This is the number of votes a candidate must get to win this election.*
- Sort ballot papers → look at number 1 votes and place onto sorting cards accordingly.
- Count each pile separately and record these results in table as the primary count. If one of the candidates gets the absolute majority ( $50\%+1$  number) declare that one the winner.
- If no candidates gets the absolute majority, ask students which candidate got the smallest amount of number 1s?
- This candidate will be 'excluded' from the count, so take that pile ONLY and distribute that candidate's ballot papers according to number 2 votes. Make a second pile under each of the remaining piles. E.g. if Candidate 3 got the smallest amount of number 1s, take the ballot papers with number 1 for Candidate 3, turn over Candidate 3's sorting card, put these ballot papers on the remaining sorting cards according to the number 2 votes. Make this a separate pile to the primary count. See sample table.
- Record results and add up sub-total (make one pile on each sorting card now). Is there a winner yet (i.e. has anyone reached the absolute majority amount)?
- If not, repeat the process. Exclude the candidate with the lowest number of votes so far. Take their ballot papers and turn over that sorting card. Distribute these ballot papers according to the number **2 votes first**. If the number 2 vote is unavailable (it's been taken out already) look at number 3 votes. ALWAYS look at number 2 first. Add up the totals.
- This should result in a winner (if you had 4 candidates)
- Repeat the process of excluding the candidate with the lowest number of votes so far (if you had more than 4 candidates). Continue until there are only 2 candidates left.

## SAMPLE RESULTS TABLE

<b>TOTAL VOTES</b> <b>32</b>	<b>INFORMAL VOTES</b> <b>2</b>	<b>TOTAL FORMAL VOTES</b> <b>30</b>	<b>ABSOLUTE MAJORITY</b> <b>50% + 1</b> <b>16</b>	
CANDIDATES →	<b>CANDIDATE 1</b>	<b>CANDIDATE 2</b>	<b>CANDIDATE 3</b>	<b>CANDIDATE 4</b>
PRIMARY COUNT	12	8	<del>4</del>	6
FIRST DISTRIBUTION	1	2	-	1
SUB TOTAL	13	10	-	<del>7</del>
SECOND DISTRIBUTION	1	6	-	-
TOTAL	14	16	-	-
		WINNER		

If there's a **tie** at any stage of counting:

- If there is a tie for which candidate to exclude or take out – go back to the most recent count when there was a difference and the candidate with lowest number of preferences is *excluded* from count.
- If there's a tie at the primary count (number 1s), conduct a draw (like a raffle) to choose one. The candidate chosen in the draw is *excluded* from the count.
- If there is a tie at the last count, when there are only 2 candidates left, conduct a draw (like a raffle) to choose one. This time, the candidate that is chosen in the draw is the winner.

**RESULTS TABLE FOR MOCK ELECTION (up to 4 candidates)**

<b>TOTAL VOTES</b>	<b>INFORMAL VOTES</b>	<b>TOTAL FORMAL VOTES</b>	<b>ABSOLUTE MAJORITY 50% + 1</b>	
CANDIDATES →				
PRIMARY COUNT				
FIRST DISTRIBUTION				
SUB TOTAL				
SECOND DISTRIBUTION				
TOTAL				

## RESULTS TABLE FOR MOCK ELECTION (up to 6 candidates)

TOTAL VOTES 45	INFORMAL VOTES		TOTAL FORMAL VOTES		ABSOLUTE MAJORITY 50% + 1	
CANDIDATES →						
PRIMARY COUNT						
FIRST DISTRIBUTION						
SUB-TOTAL						
SECOND DISTRIBUTION						
SUB-TOTAL						
THIRD DISTRIBUTION						
SUB-TOTAL						
FOURTH DISTRIBUTION						
TOTAL						