



Get Out the Vote Service-Learning Project

This project can be undertaken in almost as many different ways as there are students involved in the project. The goal of the activity is to increase the voter turnout from communities and demographics who are either

- less likely to register and initiate voting and/or
- more likely to encounter barriers when they do.

The project is meant to be undertaken in whatever state, county, municipality, etc. a student is located.

STEP ONE: PREPARATION

A part of the activity involves students going online to find out all about requirements for voting in the 2020 election: <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx> . This includes:

- The rules and timelines in their state for registering to vote [Check out <https://www.vote.org/voter-registration-deadlines/>]
 - Pay attention to in-person or mail-in or online registration
 - Pay attention to documentation requirements
 - Check out registration locations
 - Be prepared to provide or secure transportation for someone who needs to register in person [see special section on COVID-19 precautions when assisting others]
 - Are there any challenges to voter registration in your area that you should know about? Check with local voter advocates to find out if any issues are raising concern or require special attention.
 - IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN THE NOVEMBER 3 ELECTION, BE SURE TO REGISTER AS PART OF THIS STEP IN THE PROJECT. IF YOU ARE NOT ELIGIBLE, YOU WILL STILL NEED THIS INFORMATION TO HELP OTHERS AROUND YOU GET READY TO VOTE
- The laws and timelines on mail-in or absentee voting [<https://www.usa.gov/absentee-voting#item-37337>]
 - Different states have very different criteria for eligibility for mail-in and/or absentee voting. Some states actually encourage mail-in voting. Others make it a very limited choice. Check out your state's rules: <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vopp-table-2-excuses-to-vote-absentee.aspx> and check with your state or county voting officials: <https://www.usa.gov/election-office> [There is a lot of good information at most state election office websites. Take some time to explore your state's site.]
 - What are the timelines for mail-in, absentee voting?

- When is the earliest an absentee, mail-in vote can be submitted?
The latest?
- Are the timelines tied to when a ballot is deposited in the mail or when it is received?
- Is there an opportunity to drop off an absentee ballot at a polling place or drop box? Who/What/Where/When? Get the details.

- The laws, timelines, locations, date/time calendars for early in person voting. <https://www.usa.gov/absentee-voting#item-37337>. Check out this chart of state-by-state early voting requirements: <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/early-voting-in-state-elections.aspx#Early%20Voting%20Law%20Table>
 - Early voting varies widely from state to state and from county to county. Also, early voting locations and times have been known to change. Research the websites, email addresses and phone numbers that provide information on early voting. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/early-voting-in-state-elections.aspx>.
 - Make voice contact if possible with the county officials who are overseeing early voting.
 - Make sure you know where the early polling places near you are located and any barriers to reaching the actual voting site.
 - What requirements for who can vote where? What identification is needed?
 - What days of the week and what times of day? Is early voting on Sunday possible in your jurisdiction?
 - Are any local churches planning Sunday early voting drives?
 - Pay attention for any last minute changes that affect the ease and availability of early voting.
 - When is the earliest a voter can vote in your jurisdiction?
 - How soon before Election Day does early voting end?
 - Does your state allow in-person absentee voting? Use online sources and direct communication with county election officials and voter advocacy groups to compile your information

- The laws, timelines, locations, date/time calendars for in person voting on Election Day [<https://www.usa.gov/election-day>]
 - Remember that locations, rules and time of day for voting on Election Day can be different from those for early voting. Check your state, county or territorial voting office for detailed requirements. <https://www.usa.gov/election-office> . Remember to ask questions. This is an exercise in civic engagement. You have both a right and a responsibility to get the information you need from your public officials. Check with local get-out-the-vote advocacy groups as well.

- Again, be sure you know where the polling locations are and when they are open. Pay attention to how early the polling stations open and when they close
- What requirements for who can vote where? What identification needed? <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx#Details>
- Any special concerns about voter ID, voter access, voter eligibility in your area? Check with public officials and check with get-out-the-vote advocates. What are the best strategies for overcoming any barriers to voting for any person who wishes to cast their vote in this election?

Next, you will explore who you can help, how you can help, when you can help GET OUT THE VOTE!

STEP TWO: Using What You Know, Staying Safe, Getting Out the Vote

Now that you have the basic information about the requirements and opportunities for voting in your state and county, it's time to put this information into practice:

For yourself:

If you are or will be 18 years old on Election Day:

- If you are eligible to vote, but not registered, REGISTER TO VOTE. Don't miss you state's deadlines for registering for the 2020 Presidential Election.
- If you are eligible and registered, check your registration status online, just to make sure. Note any changes that may mean you need to revise your registration (New address? New name? New party affiliation?) Here are some links to help: <https://www.usa.gov/voter-registration> ; <https://www.voterparticipation.org/check-registration-status/> .
- If it's not crystal clear that you will be able to vote without a problem, contact the appropriate voter registration officials.
- If possible, vote early. With your own voting out of the way, you will have more time to GET OUT THE VOTE.
- If you want to vote by mail, check your state's requirements and, if you qualify (which varies widely from state to state), get in your application for a mail-in or absentee ballot as soon as application can be made. Using the resources described in Step One, mail in your ballot as soon as it is possible to do so. If your state or county has absentee voting drop boxes or takes absentee ballots at early voting sites, you can decide if you want to use this service or use the U.S. Postal Service and mail your ballot. Make sure you use the proper envelopes and use them correctly. If you are worried about your vote being received and counted, you may use Priority or Certified mail to make a record, BUT THIS IS NOT

NECESSARY TO VOTE BY MAIL. Your best protection is to mail your ballot EARLY.

If will not yet be 18 years old on election day or for any other reason are not eligible to vote in this election (including non-citizenship), you can still help to get out the vote of people in your household, your community, your circle of friends.

For your family, friends, neighbors:

DON'T TAKE ANY RISKS WITH THE PANDEMIC and DON'T PUT ANYONE ELSE AT RISK EITHER. Follow the guidance of the experts:

[https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/how-can-i-protect-myself-from-coronavirus)

[diseases/coronavirus/how-can-i-protect-myself-from-coronavirus;](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/how-can-i-protect-myself-from-coronavirus)

[https://medical.mit.edu/four-ways-to-protect;](https://medical.mit.edu/four-ways-to-protect)

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html;](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html)

- Plan voter outreach activities that are safe.
 - Use phone and email to contact people who are not in your immediate family
 - Wear a mask when you meet anyone not in your household
 - Carry hand sanitizer with you at all times and some alcohol wipes
 - Be active and socially distant at the same time
 - Avoid crowds, confined indoor spaces,
- Talk up voting – in your family, among your friends.
 - Start right now if you want to be sure you can help unregistered but eligible voters get registered. Some states end voter registration 30 days before the election (see Step One above).
 - Use in-person contact when it is appropriate and safe; otherwise connect with your circle by phone, text, email, messenger, etc.
 - Ask family and friends who they know who might need some help getting registered and/or getting to the polls this year;
 - when possible, get contact information and an introduction
 - Be aware of some of the disincentives to voting that may be affecting people you know:
 - Age and/or disability
 - Lack of transportation
 - Unfamiliarity with the requirements
 - Uncertainty about where or when to vote
 - No nearby polling place
 - Difficulty getting time off work
 - Non-English speaker
 - Difficulty reading official documents
 - Fear, especially fear of authority figures and government officials
 - Previous bad experiences with government agencies or officials
 - Discouragement (“my vote won’t make any difference”)

- [Ask your contacts why they might not try to vote this year and listen to their concerns]
- Offer to be helpful. If it helps, explain that this is a service-learning activity to practice responsible civic engagement
 - Don't combine this activity with campaigning or advocating for any candidate, party, etc. at the same time. This is an activity to practice non-partisan civic participation. It is not and should not be considered a "political" act to help our fellow citizens participate in a public election. Be prepared to explain why you are helping to get out the vote in non-partisan, civic engagement terms. This is what democracy looks like!
 - Offer your help, not your judgment. This is a delicate matter that you will have to negotiate in each individual encounter. Some of your family members, friends or neighbors might just need a reminder and a little encouragement. Others may have deep feelings connected to their unwillingness to register and vote. Be a good listener. Ultimately, it's up to the potential voter. Just let it be known that you are willing to help with the mechanics of getting registered and voting.
 - When someone is willing to accept your help, use what you have learned in Step One to help them register and/or vote. Examples:
 - Help your grandmother check her voter status on the computer
 - Help a neighbor or relative read and understand the directions – online and in any paper documents
 - Get translations of key documents or websites
 - Explain the requirements for registration
 - Help with addressing and mailing when needed
 - Respect the privacy and autonomy of the potential voter – it's their vote, not yours!
 - Help the potential voter plan their voting action – be it mail-in/absentee, early vote, Election Day. Help them work out the transportation they might need.
 - Encourage your potential voter to vote early so that any problems can be addressed before Election Day
 - Offer to accompany. This can be very important, especially for elderly, disabled, language-minority voters or voters who fear being intimidated by the voting experience.
 - Remember that accompanying is an act of diplomacy as much as an act of civic support. Don't get mad at anybody when you are accompanying!! Do pay attention to what happens.
 - If there is any difficulty in the registration process or at a polling place, observe and make a note, not a scene!
 - Know who to ask for help if you feel the voter you are helping is being treated unfairly.

<https://www.bustle.com/p/8-voting-rights-organizations-to-know-before-the-2020-elections-roll-around-13156367>

- Do what makes sense to you. The above steps are suggestions only. You are the one who is in your family, your friendship group, your neighborhood, your community. Trust your good sense, your civic awareness and your commitment to inclusive democracy.
 - Keep a journal of what you do and why you do it. This is a hands-on exercise in participatory democracy. Your experiences will help guide the rest of us when it's time for all of us to do this again.
- When Election Day is over and any post Election Day challenges have been resolved, write your impressions of what you have done, what you have learned, how your understanding of your society and your place in it have been affected by your service to our democracy.

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