

Registering to vote

Easy · 10 min to do · Free

You can vote if you're a U.S. citizen, 18 by Election Day, and meet your state's residency rules, and in almost every state you can register before you turn 18. Start at vote.gov, pick your state, and register online, by mail or in person, usually with your driver's license or state ID number. Deadlines can be up to 30 days before an election. Re-register whenever you move or change your name. If you're away at college, ask about an absentee ballot; being an out-of-state student is an accepted excuse in states that require one.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ A driver's license or state ID number, in most states
- ☐ Your current address (you don't need a permanent home address)

DO IT LIKE THIS

- 1 **Check that you're eligible: a U.S. citizen, meeting your state's residency requirements, and 18 on or before Election Day.** In almost every state you can register before 18 if you'll be 18 by Election Day, and some states let 17-year-olds vote in primaries.
- 2 **Go to vote.gov and pick your state or territory.** Depending on its rules, you'll register online, by mail, or in person at your local election office. You can also register at the DMV or public assistance offices.
- 3 **Have your driver's license or state ID number ready.** Without one, some states accept documents like a bank statement or utility bill.
- 4 **Using the paper National Mail Voter Registration Form?** Sign it before mailing it to the address listed for your state. All states except New Hampshire, Wyoming and North Dakota accept it.
- 5 **Beat the deadline.** Every state but North Dakota requires registration, and the deadline can be as much as a month before an election.
- 6 **Confirm it worked.** Use Can I Vote, linked from [USA.gov](https://usa.gov), to check your status, name, address and polling place before the deadline.

Watch out Moving or changing your name means you must update your registration. Moving to another state means registering there. If the name or address on your ID doesn't match your registration, you may have to cast a provisional ballot.

DAD NOTE Register the day you move. It takes ten minutes.

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/legal/registering-and-voting/registering-to-vote/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: [Vote.gov](https://vote.gov); [USA.gov](https://usa.gov).