

Be a VOTER

10 Tips To Help Eligible Voters Register and Vote In Washington State

Registering and voting in Washington can be confusing at times. Spokane County Auditor Vicky Dalton, with 20 years in her role, is one of the longest-serving elected auditors in the state. She answers 10 questions to reduce the confusion.

1. If I give the Department of Licensing my new address, will my ballot be sent to my new residence?

No. Updating your address with the DOL or U.S. Postal Service isn't always enough to get your ballot delivered properly. You must also notify your county auditor. The easiest way is online at [Votewa.gov](https://voter.votewa.gov) (<https://voter.votewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx>).

You can also contact your auditor's office by phone or in person. Check the Secretary of State's website to find your [county auditor's office](https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors/) (<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors/>) in Washington.

2. Do I need Washington state identification to register to vote?

If a prospective voter has a Washington-issued driver's license or identification card, the license number must be included in the voter registration application.

A prospective voter without state-issued identification, like a person who moved recently to Washington from another state, must submit the last four digits of their Social Security number.

All prospective voters must sign an affidavit attesting they are a United States citizen, will have lived at this address in Washington for at least 30 days before the next election in which they will vote, are at least 18 years old when they vote, and have no restrictions against voting because of convictions or court orders.

3. How important is readable handwriting?

If you are signing up at a registration drive, take a few extra moments to make sure your handwriting is legible. Election workers check names and identification against databases and their work can be slowed if they can't read your writing. Auditor Dalton recommends people print information, other than their signatures.

4. How old must I be to register to vote?

Voters must be 18 to vote, but 16- and 17-year-olds may sign up for the [Future Voter](https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/future-voter-program.aspx) program to ensure they receive their ballot on the first Election Day after they turn 18. If you turn 18 on Election Day, you must visit the elections office in person to vote because officials are not permitted to mail ballots to voters under the age of 18. You can learn more about the [Future Voter program](https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/future-voter-program.aspx) (<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/future-voter-program.aspx>) on the Secretary of State's website.

5. Will my vote count if my registration isn't complete or my ballot isn't through the drop-box slot on Election Day?

You can show up at the Elections Office on Election Day a few minutes before 8 p.m., and as long as you've started the registration process, you will be given a ballot that will count. The same is true if you arrive at a drop box just as the clock strikes 8 and there's a line of cars or people in front of you.

"The same thing used to apply at poll sites. We would mark the end of the line," Dalton said. "We do the same thing with cars on election night that are lining up to drop ballots into the bins."

6. Do I have to mark every race on my ballot for my vote to count?

No. Leaving one or more races blank on your ballot will not make your vote invalid. Election officials track the number of ballots in each contest that have no choice marked. They list them in official results, counting them as "under votes."

7. Must I place my ballot in the security envelope for my vote to count?

Election officials prefer you seal your ballot in the unidentifiable security envelope that comes in your packet, but forgetting to do so won't make your votes invalid.

Election officials will put any ballot that is not in the security envelope into one when it is opened at the election office. That's to protect the voter's anonymity.

8. What if I forget to sign my name on the outside of the envelope?

Election workers check all signatures on submitted ballots, so failing to sign the outside of the envelope can result in your ballot not being counted. If the signature on the envelope is missing or does not match the signature in the voter registration record, election officials will send a letter to the voter to correct the signature. If the voter responds to the letter with a signature that matches, the ballot will be counted.

You can check the status of your ballot by visiting the [VoteWA \(https://voter.votewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx\)](https://voter.votewa.gov/WhereToVote.aspx) website. Be sure to check the site if you think you forgot to sign your envelope.

10. How can I stop the many phone calls and email solicitations from candidates and political parties?

The surest way to stop those phone calls and end the mailers arriving at your home is to vote early, Dalton said. Candidates and campaigns are notified when your ballot is received and so it is not likely they'll continue to send you reminders once your ballot is in.

10. Will my ballot be counted as long as I drop it in the mail on Election Day?

Your ballot must be postmarked by Election Day. So, if you mail your ballot on Election Day, look on the mailbox to make sure a pickup is scheduled for later that day. If you are unsure, take your ballot to a ballot drop-off location. Drop boxes are located at public libraries and many city halls. A ballot put in a drop box will count as long as you drop it in by 8 p.m. on Election Day. Check your county auditor's website for drop box locations. Check the Secretary of State's website to find your [county auditor's office \(https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors/\)](https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors/) in Washington.