Disclaimer: This guide is designed for informational purposes only. It is not legal advice and is not intended to create an attorney-client relationship. The Election Protection Coalition does not warrant any information contained in this guide, nor does the Coalition suggest that the information in this guide should be used as a basis to pursue legal advice or decision-making.

Note: This FAQ is not exhaustive. Situations or inquiries may arise that are not answered below. In those circumstances, contact your hotline captain or command center for assistance. Please make sure to record all of the voter’s contact information should follow-up be necessary.

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1. **Am I registered to vote?**

A voter can determine whether they are registered to vote by first checking the California Secretary of State website at [https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/](https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/).

2. **Where do I vote?**
The address of a voter’s polling place is generally found on the back of the sample ballot booklet distributed by their County Election Official. If a sample ballot is not available, a voter can determine their proper polling place by checking the California Elections Division’s website (http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/polling-place/).

3. When do the polls open and close?

The polls must be open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. PST on Election Day.1 A voter waiting in line at 8:00 p.m. must be allowed to vote.2

4. When is/was the voter registration deadline?3

The voter registration deadline is 15 days before an election (February 18, 2020 for the March 3, 2020 Primary Election). Voter registration applications submitted by mail will be processed if they are postmarked on or before the 15th day before Election Day (February 18, 2020 for the March 3 Primary Election).

5. Is there same day voter registration?4

Californians can register to vote after the voter registration deadline (February 18, 2020 for the March 3, 2020 Primary Election), including on Election Day! Voters in California can complete registrations after February 18, 2020 for the 2020 Primary Election (including on Election Day), by visiting either their county elections office or a designated satellite location to register and vote conditionally. Voters who complete this process will be verified by the county and then have their ballots processed once verified.

Californians who live in counties with vote centers are able to register to vote during this period at the vote center.

6. I recently went to the DMV, was I registered?

Under the New Motor Voter Program, eligible Californians who are completing a driver’s license, identification card, or change of address transaction online, by mail, or in person at the DMV will be automatically registered to vote, unless they opt out. DMV customers applying for a driver’s license or ID online can begin to fill out their voter registration form, but must complete the form in person via a visit to the DMV field office.5

7. I got my license or state ID through the DMV at 16 or 17, do I have to go register to vote?

Eligible 16 and 17-year-olds will be preregistered to vote when they successfully complete eligible transactions with the DMV, unless they opt out. 16 and 17-year-olds who preregister will automatically be registered to vote and able to vote in an election on or after their 18th birthday. A card will be sent in the mail confirming the registration.6

8. Can I vote without providing identification?
California voters are generally not required to show identification at polling places. Voters must bring identification only if this is the first time they are voting in a federal election in that specific county and they registered by mail or online but did not provide a driver’s license number, state identification number, or the last four digits of their social security number when they registered.\(^7\)

In these narrow circumstances, acceptable proof of ID includes:\(^8\)

- Driver’s license or identification card of any state;
- Passport;
- Employee identification card;
- Identification card provided by commercial establishment;
- Credit or debit card;
- Military identification card;
- Student identification card;
- Health club identification card;
- Insurance plan identification card; or
- Public housing identification card.

Voters can also submit documents that include their name and address, dated since the date of the last general election. These include:\(^9\)

- Utility bills;
- Bank statements;
- Government checks and paychecks; or
- Documents issued by a governmental agency (e.g., an issued sample ballot, a voter notification card, public housing identification card, public housing identification card, lease or rental statement or agreement, student identification, tuition statement or bill, insurance plan or drug discount card, discharge certificates, pardons, and other documents relating to the resolution of a criminal case, indictment, sentence or other matter, public transportation authority senior citizen and disabled discount cards, identification documents issued by governmental disability agencies, governmental homeless shelters and other government temporary or transitional facilities, drug prescriptions, property tax statements, vehicle registrations or vehicle certificate of ownership).

9. I have moved and I didn’t update my voter registration. Can I vote?

The answer to this question depends on when the voter moved and where the voter moved. Please refer to the table on the following page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moved within 14 days of Election Day</th>
<th>Moved more than 14 days before Election Day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A voter can vote at their old polling place by regular ballot. (^{10})</td>
<td>The voter will need to file a change-of-address notice at their current polling place. (^{12})</td>
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<td>A voter can vote by regular ballot at the voter’s old polling place. (^{11})</td>
<td>A voter can vote by provisional ballot at their current polling place or at the county elections office. (^{13})</td>
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<tr>
<td>If the voter did not reregister to vote in the voter’s new county, the voter may not vote in the election, unless they complete conditional or same-day voter registration. (^{14})</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

10. What should I do if there are equipment problems at my precinct?

Voters should immediately notify the election officers if the voting equipment breaks down while the polls are open. If the problem cannot be fixed in a timely manner, a voter should ask if an emergency paper ballot is available.

Voters should be permitted to vote by a paper ballot (in counties with voting machines) or by a provisional ballot if necessary. The provisional ballots will be counted as regular ballots in this case (if the voter is otherwise qualified). \(^{15}\)

11. I am a registered voter who is not on the rolls at my precinct. Can I vote where I am?

Yes. Voters whose names do not appear on the rolls at their precinct have the right to cast a provisional ballot. A provisional ballot will not be rejected simply because a voter submitted it in the wrong precinct. \(^{16}\)

Volunteers should first help the voter verify they are in the correct precinct or polling location. If the voter is at the wrong location, volunteers should encourage the voter to go to the correct precinct so that they may vote by regular ballot. However, if the voter does not wish to travel to the correct precinct or polling location, the voter should vote by provisional ballot.

12. My name isn’t showing up on the list of registered voters – could it have been removed?

A voter’s name may be removed from the voting list by: \(^{17}\)

- The voter’s signed, written request;
- The voter’s legally established mental incompetency;
- Proof the voter is currently imprisoned or on parole for conviction of a felony;
- A judgment directing the removal;
- Death;
- Return of a pre-election confirmation postcard that indicates the voter is no longer a resident;
- Notification the voter is registered to vote in another county or state; or
• Proof that the person is otherwise ineligible to vote.

Any voter whose name was removed from the voter registration list on the basis of a determination of ineligibility who subsequently becomes eligible to vote must reregister to have their name restored to the state wide voter registration system.

13. I have a criminal conviction. Can I vote?

It depends. Those who are in county jail who are either serving a misdemeanor sentence in a county jail, are in county jail as a condition of probation, serving a felony jail sentence, or awaiting trial CAN REGISTER TO VOTE! Also, those on probation, on mandatory supervision, on post-release community supervision, on federal supervised release, or a person with a juvenile wardship adjudication can register to vote as well.\(^\text{18}\)

14. I am in prison, am I able to vote?

In California, individuals who are currently imprisoned in state or federal prison or on parole for conviction of a felony may not vote. Once parole and other post-sentence disposition is complete, those with felony convictions become eligible to vote again.\(^\text{19}\) However, they must reregister to vote before the registration deadline.

15. I have been offered a provisional ballot. What should I do?

Inquire why the voter was offered a provisional ballot and whether it was for one of the following reasons:

• The voter’s name is not on the voter rolls;\(^\text{20}\)
• The voter is conditionally registered;\(^\text{21}\)
• The voter moved within a county but did not update their voter registration information to reflect the move and the voter wants to cast a ballot in the polling place for their new address;\(^\text{22}\)
• The voter requested a vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot but does not have it with them;\(^\text{23}\) or
• The voter is voting during extended polling place hours per a court order.\(^\text{24}\)

Other than for these reasons, the voter should be able to cast a regular ballot. A provisional ballot should be a last resort. However, if the voter needs to cast a provisional ballot, the majority of provisional ballots are counted. Provisional ballots will be reviewed by the Election Official who will verify the voter’s eligibility by comparing their signature on the provisional ballot envelope with the signature on their voter registration form. If the signatures match, the ballot will be counted. The voter should receive a stub from the ballot to allow them to verify that the vote was counted.\(^\text{25}\)

16. I am a college student. Can I vote where I go to school?

Yes. A student living away from home may register at their school residence address (either on or off campus) or at their permanent home address, but only at one of those places.\(^\text{26}\)
17. I am physically disabled and need assistance. Will my polling place be accessible?

Generally yes, and if not, an alternative process of “curbside voting” must be made available. There must be a clear path of travel for persons with disabilities to access their polling place and every polling place must have one accessible voting system.

Any voters who, for any reason, require or want assistance to vote may have the right to receive assistance from no more than two persons selected by the voter, other than the voter’s employer, an agent of the voter’s employer, or an officer or agent of the union of which the voter is a member. All voters who require assistance must take an oath and state the reason why they require assistance.

If a polling place is not accessible, a poll worker must bring a regular or vote-by-mail ballot to a person with a disability outside to a place that is accessible and as near as possible to the polling place (curbside voting). A precinct board member will take a regular ballot to the voter, qualify that person to vote, and return the voted ballot to the polling place. If it is impractical to cast a regular ballot outside the polling place, voters who require assistance should be provided with vote-by-mail ballots in the same manner as regular ballots may be voted by that person outside the polling place.

18. I am blind, physically disabled, or cannot read English and require assistance in order to vote. Can I get assistance at the polls?

Yes, any voter who requires assistance to vote as a result of blindness, physical disability, or inability to read or write English can receive assistance from a person of the voter’s choice, other than the voter’s employer or agent of that employer, officer, or agent of the voter’s union.

If voters are unable to mark their ballot, they have the right to receive assistance from no more than two persons selected by the voter, except for the voter’s employer, agent of the voter’s employer, or an officer or agent of union of which the voter is a member. Voters requiring an assistance must take an oath.

Language assistance must also be provided under federal and state laws for certain counties and precincts which have a sizable population of eligible voters who have limited proficiency in English.

19. Are there election materials and ballots available in languages other than English?

Yes. The languages available to voters varies depending on the county that the voter lives in. If 3% or more of the residents of voting age need ballot materials because of a lack of English skills, the county will provide copies of voting materials printed in Spanish or other applicable languages in affected polling places.

Voter can visit https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/ccrov/pdf/2017/december/17148sr.pdf to find a list of counties that provide other language materials and what languages are accounted for.
20. I don’t know how to use the voting equipment. Can I get help?

Yes. The precinct board should instruct voters on usage of the machines before they enter the booth, and are required to ask any related questions.\(^{35}\)

21. Can I bring my children into the voter booths with me?

Yes, if your children are under the age of 18, then you are allowed to bring them into the voting booth with you.\(^{36}\)

22. Can I vote absentee or vote in person before Election Day?

Absentee voting allows registered voters to vote by mail or in-person before on election day. There are three types of voting before election day in California:

1) **Vote-by-Mail**: Any registered California voter can request a vote-by-mail ballot; no special circumstances are necessary.\(^{37}\) Voters (or their near relative or legal guardian) can obtain an absentee ballot application through their county level election offices via the California Election Division’s website (http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-status/), at an Elections Division office, or at county board of election offices. The completed ballot must generally be received by close of polls on election day. However, ballots postmarked by close of polls on election day are valid if received no later than 3 days after Election Day.\(^{38}\) If a vote-by-mail voter is unable to return the ballot on their own, they may designate any person to return the ballot to any polling place within the county.\(^{39}\)

2) **Early Voting** (also called one-stop absentee voting or in-person absentee voting): Some counties offer early voting at a few locations before election day. Voters should contact their county elections office to see if they offer early voting. County contact information can be found by visiting the Secretary of State’s website at: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/county-elections-offices.

3) **Military-Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting**: Absent uniformed service members (and their eligible dependents) and U.S. citizens living outside of the United States may request an absentee ballot under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). The voter can get step-by-step assistance and forms at http://www.fvap.gov/.

23. What if I requested an absentee ballot but I want to vote in person on Election Day?

Before polls close on election day, a vote-by-mail voter can vote at the office of the elections official (i.e. at any polling place in the county).\(^{40}\)

Vote-by-mail voters who return to their home precincts on Election Day can vote if they surrender their vote-by-mail ballots to the inspector of the precinct board, or if the voting authority can verify that their ballot has not already been returned.\(^{41}\) Any vote-by-mail voter who is unable to do so can also vote by provisional ballot.\(^{42}\)
For voters in Voter’s Choice Act counties (Amador, Calaveras, Butte, El Dorado, Fresno, Los Angeles, Mariposa, Orange, Santa Clara, Tuolumne, Sacramento, San Mateo, Napa, Nevada, and Madera counties in 2019), voters do not need to surrender their vote-by-mail ballots to vote at a vote center. More information on California’s Voter’s Choice Act, a law passed in 2016 to help modernize elections is available at https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voters-choice-act/.

24. What rules apply to people campaigning or “hanging around” my polling place? Can people approach me?

Electioneering, including the visible display or audible dissemination of information that advocates for or against any candidate or measure on the ballot, is prohibited within 100 feet of a polling place, a vote center, an elections official's office, or a satellite location.43

25. Someone is formally challenging my right to vote. What do I do?44

A voter's eligibility can only be orally challenged at the polling place by a member of the precinct board. A voter may be challenged by anyone in writing; if probable cause for the challenge exists as determined by the elections official, the precinct board will try the eligibility of the voter. If the challenge relates to residency, dual voting, or identity, an oath by the voter as to their eligibility will determine the challenge in favor of the voter.

26. Can someone else return or collect my vote-by-mail ballot?45

Californians who vote using vote-by-mail ballots are able to select anyone to return their voted ballots to either the elections official who issued the ballot, the precinct board at a polling location or at a vote center in participating counties, or to a vote-by-mail ballot dropoff location within the state once their voted ballot is sealed inside the ballot envelope. The ballot must be received before the close of the polls on Election Day, 8 p.m.

27. Can I take a picture with my ballot? 46

Yes you can! California voters can now take a picture with their ballot (a “ballot selfie”) and share it on their preferred social media site. Although pictures are allowed, voters cannot cause disruptions at the polling location when taking their picture.

29. Can I vote in the primary election?

The presidential primary in California is a “modified closed primary system,” meaning that voters must be registered members of the party holding the primary to vote in the primary. Unaffiliated voters can vote for a party’s candidates in a primary election if authorized by that party’s rules. Voters have until 15 days before the primary election to change their party affiliation. The deadline for voters to change party affiliation is February 18, 2020—and they have to reregister to vote.47
3 See http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/.
5 Cal Elec. Code § 2265.
11 Id.
13 Id.
36 Cal. Elec. Code § 14281, 14222, 14224
47 See https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/primary-elections-california/#targetText=Qualified%20political%20parties%20in%20California%20in%20one%20of%20two%20ways%3A%20qualified%20presidential%20primary%20for%20that%20party%20for%20presidential%20nominee.