

Field Guides
To Ensuring Voter Intent

Vol. 08

Guiding voters through the polling place

Field-researched, critical election
design techniques to help ensure that
every vote is cast as voters intend

The Field Guides
are online at
civicdesign.org/fieldguides

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Fourth edition, 2018

About the Field Guide series

If you could do just a few things that would make a big difference in the experiences voters and poll workers (and even candidates) have, what would those be? That's the question we tried to answer in each of the *Field Guides To Ensuring Voter Intent*.

Every guideline and example is based in research and practice. The guidelines come from sources ranging from the Election Assistance Commission, to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, to lots of our own research conducted alongside county and state election officials. We've tried to make each one easy to follow. You should be able to implement most of the guidelines independent of election laws or voting system technology.

— Dana Chisnell, *Field Guides Editor*

About this Field Guide

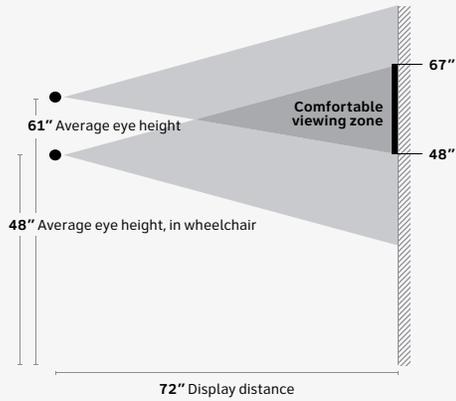
Hurricane Sandy, which struck the East Coast just before Election Day in 2012, delivered lessons and opportunities. Election officials proved just how resourceful they could be as polling places disappeared under water or were without power. The many success stories that came out of that election pointed to a few themes, one of which was about helping voters find their polling places and then make their way to voting within them. The guidelines in this Field Guide come from AIGA Design For Democracy's excellent work in *Effective Designs for the Administration of Federal Elections*.

To learn more about the research behind this guide and download examples, go to civicdesign.org.

The importance of guiding voters in the polling place

Polling places can be confusing, especially during peak times when there are a lot of voters waiting to vote.

Clear, easy to find, easy to read signs can help voters move through the process smoothly, keeping lines moving and minimizing waiting time.



No. 01

Make signs easy to read.

Hang signs at eye level for most voters.

Make sure that signs are visible from around the room. Are they behind poll workers?

- Identify precincts, districts, or wards clearly.
- Show voters where to line up.
- Make it easy for voters to find the scanner after marking their ballot.

No. 02

Show traffic patterns.

Make it easy for voters to navigate the polling place.

Where do they start? Do they have to go to several tables?

Where is the voting system for people with disabilities?

Before	Voter Assistance Table
After	Register and get provisional ballots here
Before	Cell phones are forbidden
After	Please respect other voters: use your cell phone outside the polling place.
Before	No electioneering within 100 feet of the polling place
After	You may not show, wear, or hand out anything to support a candidate or ballot question within 100 feet of the polling place.

No. 05

Provide clear information about behavior in the polling place.

Write in active voice.

Tell voters what to do. Avoid negative (don't do) when possible.

Before	It is unlawful to remove any ballots from the voting place. Punishable by up to 6 months in jail. #25-2430
After	Do not remove any ballots from the polling place. It is against the law, and you can be punished by up to 6 months in jail. State Law 25-2430

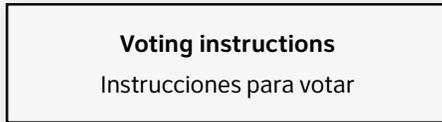
No. 06

Communicate laws and regulations appropriately.

Write a heading or sentence to summarize the law. If possible, paraphrase in plain language.

Include the source of the law so others can look it up.

Work with your counsel to get legal review early.



Show all languages in parallel: the two languages side-by-side or stacked. Use one image for both languages.

No. 07

Make it easy to read all languages.

Make it easy to compare the information between languages.

Limit signs to 2 languages.*
One should be English.

* English + 2 Asian languages may also work.

Examples Review your ballot.

You must fill in the oval for your vote to count.

Please limit voting time to 5 minutes.

Put your phone away. Cell phones are not allowed in the polling place.

No. 08

Write in plain language.

Write short sentences.

Use simple words.

Think of the voter as “you.”

Write in the positive.

Use numbers on step-by-step instructions.

Keep paragraphs short.



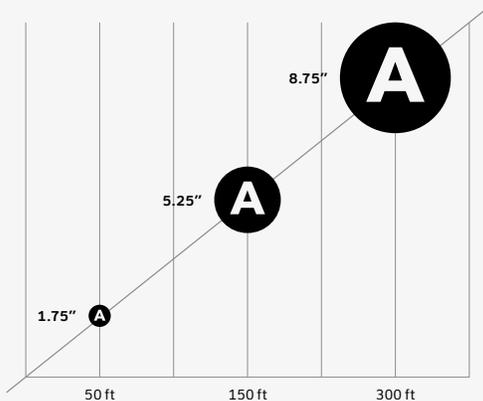
The Election Assistance Commission publishes icons like these in camera-ready formats. Request yours (along with *Effective Designs for the Administration of Federal Elections*, which has lots of other resources) at civcd.link/eacdesigns.

No. 09

Use icons to reinforce instructions.

Use informational icons such as arrows and exclamation points to draw attention to important information or to help voters quickly scan dense information.

Type size should be made 1.75 inches larger for every 50 feet of viewing distance.



No. 10

Make the text easy to read.

Use a font large enough to be seen from a distance.

Use upper- and lowercase.

Use sans-serif fonts.

Use white space to separate items on the same sign or poster.

Tip

Check that signs and posters are easy to find and read.

Can voters:

- find the information they need?
- find the correct place to sign in?
- understand how to navigate through the polling place?
- read all signs easily?
- read information in all languages provided at the polling place?
- understand what is allowed (and not allowed) in the polling place?

Notes**Notes**

Who made this Guide possible?

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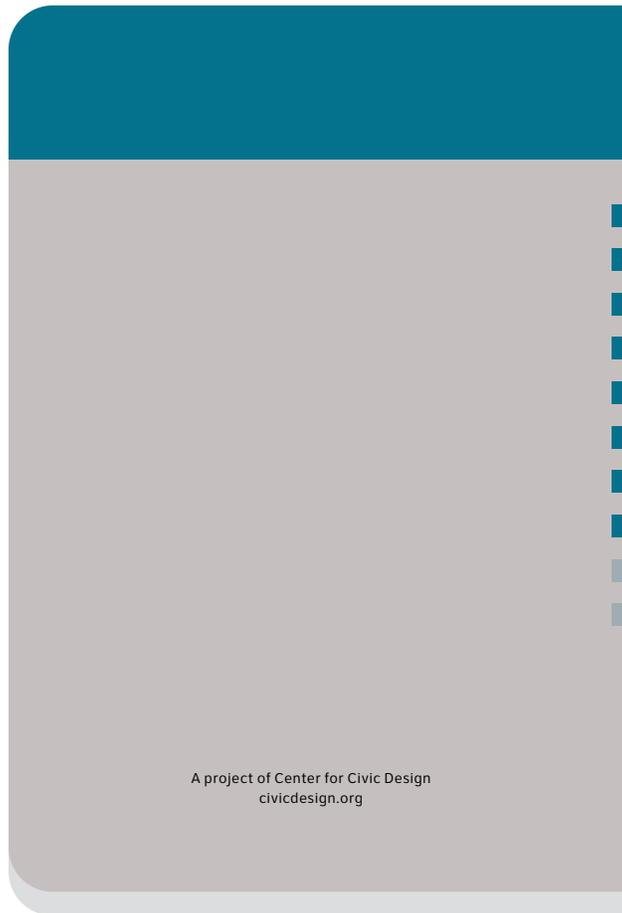
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