Best practices for official voter guides

Layout and organization of voter guide content

Center for Civic Design

Project page and links to resources:

http://civicdesign.org/projects/how-voters-get-information/

Center for Civic Design

Contents

Examples are from the prototype Santa Cruz November 2014 guide created for testing, available on the project resources page.

Sample Ballot & Voter Information Pamphlet
Muestra Oficial de Balota e Información para el Votante

Statewide General Election
Tuesday, November 4, 2014
Polls are open 7am – 8pm

Elección general estatal
Martes, 4 de noviembre de 2014
Las mesas electorales abren de 7am a 8pm

← Polling place on the back cover
← Lugar de votación en la contraportada

Santa Cruz County Elections Department
701 Ocean Street, Room 210, Santa Cruz
Open Monday—Friday, 8am to 5pm

http://www.votescount.com
info@votescount.com

Information in English: 831-454-2060
Información en español: 831-454-2060
若需更多中文資訊: 1-831-454-5137
Impormasyon saTagalog: 1-831-454-5135
Toll Free (sin cargo): 866-282-5900
TDD: 831-454-2123
FAX: 831-454-2445

The cover is the information "bite" – a minimal summary of what the booklet is about. Include:

- The name of the county / county seal
- The title of the book
- The type and date of the election
- Election Day hours (or that it is an all-mail election)
- How to find the polling place
- Contact information
- An indication of all languages available

Keep the cover clean and simple. Don't include messages, news, or warnings.

Keep the county seal at the top-left of the page, for consistency across counties.

What we learned from the research

Experienced voters said that the information on the cover was often all they needed to know.

Layout notes for multiple languages on the cover

How to adjust the layout for one, two, or three languages.

One language:

County Seal

Sample Ballot & Voter Information Pamphlet

Type of Election
Tuesday, Month #, 201#

Polls are open 7am – 8pm

← Polling place on the back cover

Xxxx County Elections Department
Address
Open Monday—Friday, 8am to 5pm

http://website
info@email.com

Information in English: ###-###-####
Información en español: ###-###-####
若需更多中文資訊: ###-###-####
Toll Free (sin cargo): ###-###-####
TDD: ###-###-####
FAX: ###-###-####

Two languages:

County Seal

Sample Ballot & Voter Information Pamphlet
Muestra Oficial de Balota e Información para el Votante

Type of Election
Tuesday, Month #, 201#
Polls are open 7am – 8pm

Elección
Martes, 4 de xxx de 201x
Las mesas electorales abren de 7am a 8pm

← Polling place on the back cover
← Lugar de votación en la contraportada

Xxxx County Elections Department
Address
Open Monday—Friday, 8am to 5pm

http://website
info@email.com

Information in English: ###-###-####
Información en español: ###-###-####
若需更多中文資訊: ###-###-####
Toll Free (sin cargo): ###-###-####
TDD: ###-###-####
FAX: ###-###-####

Three languages:

County Seal

Sample Ballot and Voter Information Pamphlet

Type of Election
Tuesday, Month #, 201#
Polls are open 7am – 8pm
← Find your polling place and party registration on the back cover

Muestra Oficial de Balota e Información para el Votante

Elección Presidencial Primaria
Martes, 4 de noviembre de 2014
Los centros electorales abren de 7am a 8pm
← Encuentre su centro electoral y afiliación partidaria en la contratapa

選票樣本與選民資訊手冊

總統初選
2012 年 6 月 5 日週二
投票站開放時間為早上 7:00 點至晚上 8:00 點
← 請在封底頁上⊠找您的投票站地點

Xxxxx County Registrar of Voters
Address
Open Monday—Friday, 8am to 5pm
www.elections.co.gov

(###-###-1234 (English)
(###-###-1235 (Español)
###-###-1236 (中文)
California Relay Service: 1-888-877-5379

Word Tip
The front cover uses a table to manage the spacing and set background colors.
The contact information is in the footer, so that it is always at the bottom of the page.

What's in this guide?
¿Qué hay en esta guía?

The voter sees the table of contents immediately after opening the cover.

- Break the table of contents into the main sections of the guide.
- Use large text and white space to make the text easy to read.
- Include page numbers to help voters find the specific information they are looking for.
- Show the starting page for information in other languages. Use that section opening page to show the contents of that section.

What we learned from the research

Voters used the table of contents as their "home page" as they read a voter guide. Even in small books, they often kept their finger at the contents to come back to and find the next page they wanted to read.

Page numbers and ballot styles

If your content management system supports creating sequential page numbers for the entire book, this is ideal.

If not:

- Include at least the opening page number for each section in the table of contents
- Use "chapter numbering" for the measure pages, using the measure letter and a number (K1, K2, K3...)

See notes on layout for the first pages in each chapter for more on page numbers (starting on the next page).

Bilingual table of contents

- Be sure both languages are visible in the table of contents, showing whether the content is shown in both languages within a section, or if there are separate sections for each language.
- If there are separate sections, the second language should have it's own table of contents at the start of the section.

Lo que hay en esta guía

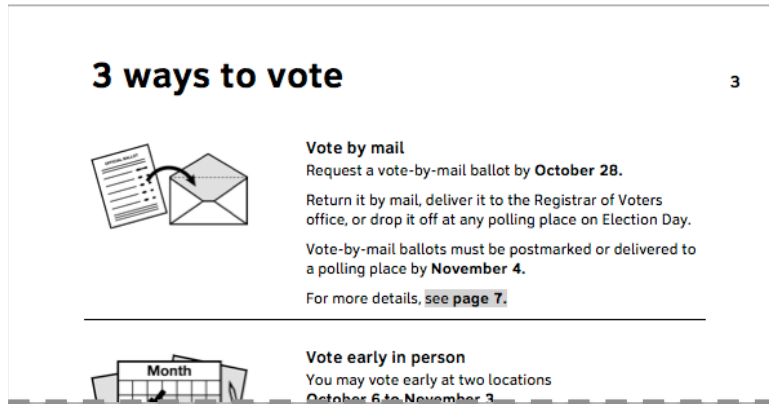| Formas de votar	
Declaración de derechos de los votantes	10
3 formas de votar	11
Cómo votar por correo	12
Cómo votar una boleta electoral de papel	13
Cómo votar una boleta electrónica	14
Votar con accesibilidad	15
Elecciones primarias en California	16
¿Qué hay en la boleta electoral para estas elecciones?	15

3 ways to vote   3

Vote by mail
Request a vote-by-mail ballot by **October 28.**

Return it by mail, deliver it to the Registrar of Voters office, or drop it off at any polling place on Election Day.

Vote-by-mail ballots must be postmarked or delivered to a polling place by **November 4.**

For more details, see **page 7.**

Vote early in person
You may vote early at two locations
October 6 to November 3.

What's on the ballot   17

for this election?

General Election – November 4, 2014

You will receive two voter information guides for this election with information about your ballot.

GENERAL
ELECTION

The first page of a "chapter" is a summary of the contents of the pages that follow.

A different look to the page layout signals a new section of the site.

- The top of the page has no banner.
- The page layout is unique.
- The chapter title is in large text.
- The body text is larger than the detail pages.
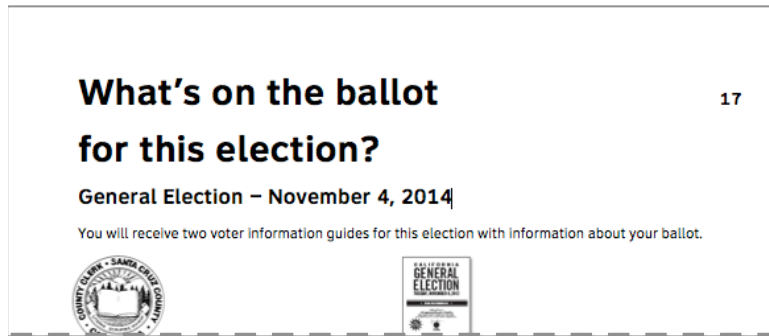
What we learned from the research

Even a small change in the look of the top of the page helped voters find the beginning of a section as they flipped through the book.

3a   Notes for the layout of the first page in a chapter

The text on these pages should be larger than the normal body text to make these pages stand out.

Don't clutter these pages. The first page of a chapter acts as a summary, pointing to further detail.

Try to start each section or measure on an odd-numbered (right side) page, using filler pages as needed.

- The table of contents should be page 1 of the interior pages
- "Ways to vote" goes on 3 of the interior pages (following the Voter Bill of Rights)
- "What's on the ballot" may need a filler page before it.

Word Tips

Use the style "Chapter Title" to keep the text size consistent.

Use styles

- Cover-body is a larger type (12pts vs. 11pts)
- TOC-heading is for the sections of the contents
- TOC-page is for the individual entries
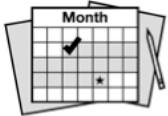
3 ways to vote 3

Vote by mail
Request a vote-by-mail ballot by **October 28.**

Return it by mail, deliver it to the Registrar of Voters office, or drop it off at any polling place on Election Day.

Vote-by-mail ballots must be postmarked or delivered to a polling place by **November 4.**

For more details, see page 7.

Vote early in person
You may vote early at two locations
October 6 to November 3

Santa Cruz County Elections Department
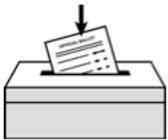701 Ocean St., Room 210
Monday – Friday, 8am to 5pm

Watsonville City Clerk's Office
275 Main St., 4th Floor (6th floor of the parking garage)
Monday – Thursday, 8am to 5pm

Both locations will also be open
Saturday and Sunday, November 1-2, 9am to 5pm

Vote at the polls in person
Polls are open on Election Day:
November 4, from 7am to 8pm

The location of your polling place is printed on the back cover of this guide.

Or, you can look up your polling place:

• On the web: www.votescount.com

• Call the Registrar of Voters' office at 831-454-2060

For more details, see page 9 and 11.

General Election • Santa Cruz County • Tuesday, November 4, 2014

If the cover is the "bite," this page is the "snack" with the details of when and where to vote, but not all of the detail of the pages that follow. Show

• Dates

• Addresses

• Hours

• Where to find more information in the guide

Use the images on this page in the banners for the details pages in this section.

What we learned from the research

Some voters thought that they were vote-by-mail voters because they got their guide in the mail.

Experienced voters appreciated seeing all the information about places, dates, and times on one page.

New voters don't know that there is more than one way to vote. Showing the options on one page, with clear wording, helped them see that they have choices.

Vote by mail

Vote early in person

Vote in person at the polls

Adjust this page to reflect the number of ways to vote in your county.

Don't treat "Saturday voting" as a different way to vote – it's another form of voting early in person.

Include a reference to the detail pages so voters who need more information can find it easily.

Word Tips

Use bold text to highlight dates and location names. It makes the information stand out on the page.

How to vote by mail

4

You can vote by mail before Election Day
To vote by mail, you have to request a ballot. Then you can mark the ballot and send it back or drop it off at any polling place. You can vote by mail for this election only, or for all future elections.

How to get your vote-by-mail ballot
You must request a vote-by-mail ballot by October 28.

You can:

☐ Request a ballot at **www.votescount.com**

✉ Use the application on the back of this booklet, and send it to:

Santa Cruz County Elections Department
701 Ocean St., Room 210, Santa Cruz, CA

After you apply to vote by mail, you will receive your ballot within ten business days.

Overseas voters, military personnel and their dependents can get a vote-by-mail ballot by asking your commanding officer, or go to: www.votescount.com

How to return your vote-by-mail ballot
Mark your ballot. Then follow the instructions on the official envelope to sign and seal your ballot.

You can:

✉ Mail your ballot, so that it is postmarked by Election Day, November 4

-OR-

▣ Hand deliver your ballot to the

Santa Cruz County Elections Department
701 Ocean St., Room 210, Santa Cruz, CA

-OR-

☐ Drop off your ballot on Election Day at any polling place in Santa Cruz County

In the Ways to Vote detail pages:

- Cover one topic per page. Don't hide extra information at the bottom of the page.

- Help voters get an overview of each topic both visually and with text.

- You don't have to repeat information from the opening page.

What we learned from the research

Voters liked the visual explanations with minimal text. It made them feel that it would not be too difficult to vote.

5   Notes for the pages in the Ways to Vote section

Pages in this section include, as needed, any instruction for How to Vote:

- How to vote by mail
- How to vote at the polls
- How to vote early in person
- How to vote with a paper ballot
- How to vote with the voting system
- How to vote in a primary
- Accessible voting
- Language assistance

These pages are included in all ballot styles, so the page numbers from the Table of Contents through the last page in this section can be consistent.

Word Tips

The basic text styles are:

- Body (11pts)
- Body-Bullets (sets bullets to the left margin, and doesn't add space between bullets)
- Body-ListIntro (less space after the paragraph, so it closes the gap to the list that follows)

Use the heading styles

- Heading 2 – for sections on the page
- Heading 3 – if needed for a second level

What's on the ballot for this election? 17

General Election – November 4, 2014

You will receive two voter information guides for this election with information about your ballot.

Santa Cruz County Guide (this guide)
Local and county races and measures are on the following pages in this guide

California State Guide
U.S. national races, state races, and state propositions are in the guide from the state

Offices
Santa Cruz County
United States Representative
Member of the State Assembly
Associate Justice, Supreme Court
Associate Justice, Court of Appeal
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Santa Cruz City School District
Governing Board Member

Santa Cruz Port District
Commissioner

Measures
Santa Cruz County
K. Cannabis Business Tax

Offices
Governor
Lieutenant Governor
Secretary of State
State Treasurer
State Controller
Attorney General
Insurance Commissioner
Superintendent of Public Instruction
State Board of Equalization

State Propositions
1. Water Bond. Funding for Water Quality, Supply, Treatment, and Storage Projects
2. State Budget. Budget Stabilization Account.
45. Healthcare Insurance. Rate Changes
46. Drug and Alcohol Testing of Doctors, Medical Negligence Lawsuits
47. Criminal Sentences. Misdemeanor Penalties
48. Indian Gaming Compacts

This page introduces the section of candidate and measure information, and the practice ballot. It lists the contents of the ballot, by ballot type.

List the election type and date on the page.

The two columns show what is in the county and state guides.

- Use your county seal or a thumbnail of the county guide cover.
- List contests in the order they appear on the ballot.

What we learned from the research

Voters insisted they had seen this page before, even though it was new. They liked seeing a simple list of the contests.

Having the two lists helped people see that they might get multiple guides – in this case, one from the county and one from the state.

6a Notes for the What's on the ballot page

This page can be created for each ballot style or can be generic covering all ballot styles.

Use the short title of measures and propositions. You can truncate them if necessary.

Word tips

If you have a very long ballot, adjust the line spacing as needed to make it all fit.

If possible, make this an odd-numbered (right side) page. Use a filler page before it if necessary.

Local ballot measures: Measure K   K1

K Cannabis Business Tax
Cannabis Impuesto de Actividades Económicas

Ballot question
To protect the quality of life in Santa Cruz County and to fund essential county services such as police, fire, emergency response, health services, youth and senior programs, job creation, housing, environmental protection, and animal shelter programs; shall an ordinance be adopted to impose a tax of no more than 10% (7% when enacted) on gross receipts of cannabis (medical marijuana) businesses in the unincorporated county, subject to audits, with all funds staying local?

Boleta pregunta
Para proteger la calidad de vida en el Condado de Santa Cruz y para financiar los servicios esenciales del condado, como la policía, fuego, la respuesta de emergencia, servicios de salud, la juventud y programas para personas mayores, la creación de empleo, la vivienda, protección del medio ambiente, y el refugio para animales programas; se adoptará una ordenanza para imponer una fiscal de no más del 10% (7% cuando se promulgó) sobre los ingresos brutos de cannabis (marihuana medicinal) negocios en el condado no incorporado, con sujeción a las auditorías, con todos los fondos permanecer local?

What your vote means

YES	NO
A "Yes" vote is to approve imposition of the cannabis business tax.	A "No" vote is against imposition of the cannabis business tax.

For and against Measure K

FOR	AGAINST
Bruce McPherson (5th District) **Neal Coonerty** (3rd District) **John Leopold** (1st District) Santa Cruz County Supervisors **Fred Keeley** President, Sempervirens Fund **Betsy McCarty** Chief of Public Health, Santa Cruz County (Ret) **Ben Rice** Attorney for Association for Standardized Cannabis (signing on behalf of the organization) **Karen Delaney** Community Volunteer	**Michael Boyd** Taxpayer

The measure overview page provides a brief view of the measure before pages related to that measure. It includes:

- The ballot question text
- What your vote means (from the impartial analysis)
- Who is for and against the measure (from first argument)

Terminology

- "What your vote means"
  The column headings (Yes/No) should match the ballot language
- "For and against Measure X" (not pro and con)

What we learned from the research

Voters said that this page was one they "always read" even though it's a newly designed page. It's just enough information for them to get started, and have some context for the pages that follow.

If you translate the ballot question, but do not fully translate the rest of the information, include the translated question on this page.

If you do not want to add a whole page for the measure overview, start with the ballot question, so voters know what they will be asked on the ballot, then continue with the other sections.
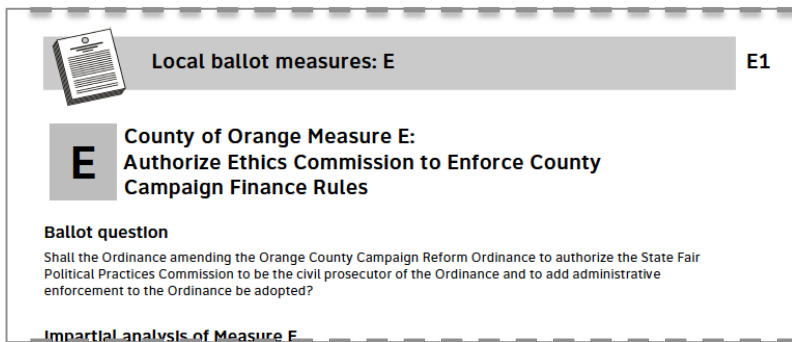
Word Tips

The measure pages have their own styles so you can adjust them separately from other pages.

- Measure-first-page −11pts (same as body), Measure-detail and Measure-detail-bullets - 9pts.

Section headings use H2.

Use the Word header feature in measures pages, so text can flow from page to page as needed.

Number the pages in each measure with the measure letter or number (K1, K2...) so it's easy to put them together into different ballot styles.

1. Arguments and replies

(on two pages)

Argument for Measure K	Argument against Measure K
VOTE YES ON MEASURE K – THE CANNABIS BUSINESS TAX Santa Cruz County voters have overwhelmingly supported State and local laws for the compassionate and safe use of medicinal cannabis (marijuana) by physician's	The Board of Supervisor unanimously approved June 10, 2014, a 10% sales tax, called the "Cannabis Business Tax". A lawsuit was filed July 15, 2014 by local free speech and civil rights advocate Michael Boyd which challenges the proposed
Reply to argument against Measure K	**Reply to argument for Measure K**
Don't be fooled by an argument that the County is legally prohibited from regulating or taxing the sale of medical cannabis (marijuana). The recent California Supreme Court decision in Riverside v. Inland Empire gives the County broad authority to regulate safe, compassionate access to medical cannabis by people in	The Proponents Argument is deceptive, arguing for stigmatizing the compassionate use of "medical" marijuana, using the theme of criminality, to justify their overly regressive tax on its use. My lawsuit isn't just against their new tax, but against the existing 8.25% tax that will increase to 18.25% if the voters approve Measure K. If approved only "medical cannabis" patients are

2. Official analysis

(flow on pages as needed)

Impartial analysis of Measure K

Dana McRae, County Counsel by Jane M. Scott, Assistant County Counsel

If this measure is approved by a majority of those voting on it, an ordinance will be added to the Santa Cruz County Code authorizing the County of Santa Cruz ("County") to impose a tax on the gross receipts of cannabis (marijuana)businesses operating within the unincorporated area of the County. The tax and the reporting requirements imposed by the ordinance apply to the covered businesses, not to persons who purchase or acquire cannabis from those businesses

Fiscal impact statement by county auditor-controller

Mary Jo Walker, Auditor-Controller & Treasurer-Tax Collector

Measure K would authorize the County of Santa Cruz to add Chapter 4.06 to the County Code, imposing a business tax of no more than 10% on the gross receipts of cannabis (medical marijuana) businesses in the unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County. The rate would be set at 7% at the time of enactment. The cannabis business tax revenue would be used solely for County general governmental purposes.

3. Full text

(flow on pages as needed)

Full text of Measure K: Cannabis Business Tax

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ:

Title 4 of the Santa Cruz County Code is hereby amended to add a new Chapter to be numbered, entitled and to read as follows:

Chapter 4.06

Organize the measures information in this order:
- Measure overview (with ballot language)
- Arguments for and against
- Replies to arguments against and for
- Impartial analysis and fiscal impact (if included)
- Full text

Put the names of authors
- At the bottom of the arguments
- At the top of the official analyses

What we learned from the research

Voters said they often started with the arguments, using them as a way to get a sense of the issue.

When the analysis is written well, voters find it useful.

They rarely read the full text, but want it available.

Order of the arguments

Set up the pages so the "sides" of the argument stay on the same side of the page

First page

(L) Argument for   (R) Argument against

Second page

(L) Reply to against (R) Reply to for

Page order

If you do not include the measure overview page, we suggest:

- Ballot language
- Official analyses
- Arguments and replies
- Full text

Word Tips

The templates use tables to manage the layout of the arguments. Use "Distribute Columns Evenly" to be sure space is equal.

Use the Measure-detail-bullets style to keep the layout of bullets consistent.

If you have to squeeze the text to stay on a page, adjust in this order:

- Reduce space before headings
- Reduce space between bullets
- Reduce space after paragraphs
- Reduce font by half a point

Practice Ballot

A copy of the ballot the voter will use

We suggest using the title "Practice Ballot."

If you have room at the top or side of the page, add instructions:

> Review this ballot to get ready to vote at the polling place. Mark it as practice and take it with you. (This is not a real ballot, but it has all of the items you can vote on.)

What we learned from the research

New voters, voters who don't read well, and voters who don't read English well all worried about making mistakes, but did not understand that they could use the "sample ballot" to prepare and practice.

Notes for how to include the practice ballots in the guide

Vertical or horizontal?

Both options have advantages and disadvantages of how easy it is to read vs. how easy it is to see the whole ballot page.

Horizontal ballot layouts must start on an even-numbered page, so the ballot fills a two-page spread.

Where to put the practice ballots?

We suggest putting the sample ballots at the back of the voter guide, so they are easy to find and don't interrupt the other informational pages.

If you have a bilingual guide, with two sets of pages, you can also put the ballots in between the sections.

Some counties use a full-sized ballot with no page numbers or page headers, "blowing in" the correct ballot style in the center of the booklet.
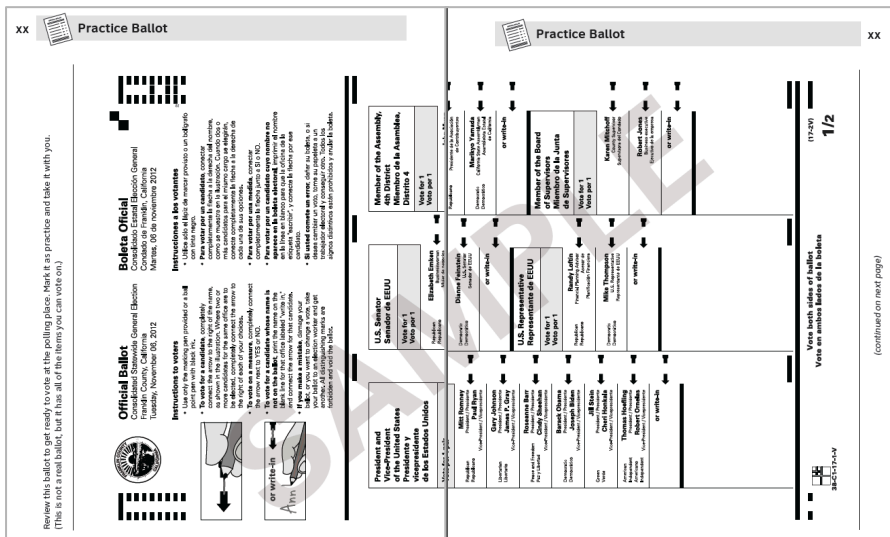
Templates

Starter files for all the different types of content

All files are in Microsoft Word .DOCX format

- **Cover**
  Front cover, ROV letter, back cover with postcard, English and bilingual, and a tri-lingual cover

- **Ways to Vote**
  Table of Contents, Ways to Vote, and sample pages to edit

- **Ballot-Candidates (and bilingual)**
  On the ballot page, candidate endorsements and mandatory text, and candidate statements

- **Measures**
  All pages for a measure, ready to add content

- **Practice Ballot**
  Pages set up with headers for the practice ballot
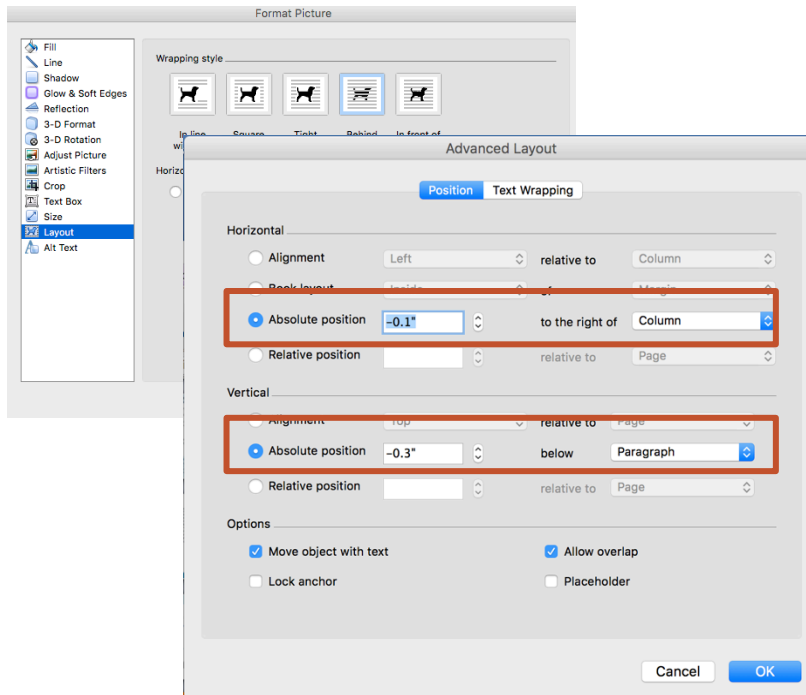
To make sure the page banners are always in the same place:

• set the image wraping to "behind text"

• set the position to the same absolute settings on each page

• use tabs to set the position of the page number and the page title (You will have to adjust the tab for the title around the icon.)

Word Tips

The page headers are set up with different odd and even pages.

• Page numbers are inserted as a field in Word.

• Don't use the basic page number function as it doesn't allow you to set the position.

Headers can be tricky in Word.

To make it easier to manage, lay out all of your pages first, then put in the headers, so you know which ones are on the left and which are on the right.

• In the On the Ballot section, where content takes up more than one page, the banners are in the Word header. To change the page header, you have to make a new "section"

• In the Ways to Vote section, where each page is a new topic, we've put the banners at the top of the page content (but not in the Word header) so it's easier to manage.
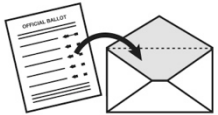
Vote by mail
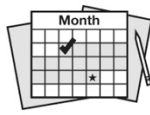
Vote early in person
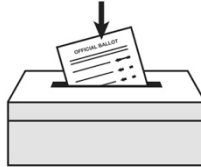
Vote in person at the polls

Candidates (Who is running)

Measures

Language

Disability

Bill of Rights

Practice Ballot

Questions/FAQ

Generic

Sample page banner with embedded icon

R3a
Icons to identify types of information
Help voters see different types of contacts or places

Communication channels:

| Mail | Email | Twitter | Facebook | Telephone | Address | Online | Calendar |

Documents:

| Voter guide | Petition | Form |

Places:

| Polling place | State capital | Local election/ city building | Dropbox |

People:

| Voter | Disability | TTY | Language | Common questions |

Word Tip
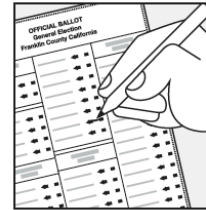Scale the icon to .19 x .19 in Word and it will fit next to text in the Body style.
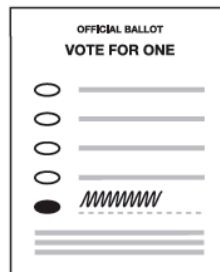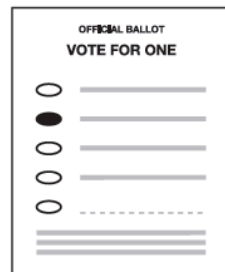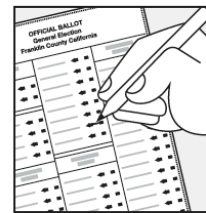
Samples of the illustrations
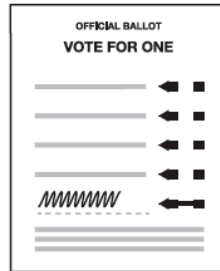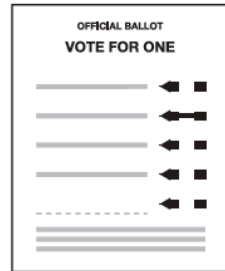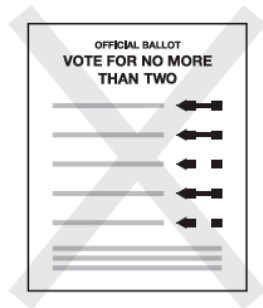
Mark ballot correctly
(arrows)
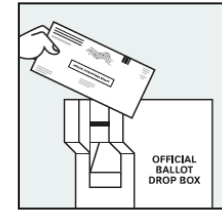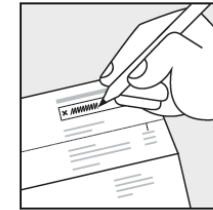
Vote by drop box instructions

Mark ballot correctly
(bubbles)

Vote by mail instructions

The templates use the Clearview ADA font, because we think it's a nice, clear, easy-to-read font that helps people with reading disabilities such as dyslexia.

Terminal Design, which created and sells Clearview ADA offers a 20% discount to election departments. Use discount code **clvadaelec**

http://www.terminaldesign.com/fonts/clearviewada-complete-family/

The Clearview font family includes:

- Light
- Regular
- Medium
- Demi-Bold
- Bold
- and italics of all styles

However, any clean sans-serif font – like Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, or Univers – will also work.

If you do not want to use Clearview, Calibri will give you similar spacing and layout in the templates.

Election materials color palette (for use consistently in all print and digital applications)

These contrast ratios meet or exceed WCAG 2.0 accessibility requirements.

3:1 contrast ratio (Use for large text: titles, headings, and banners — in color on white, or white text on solid color background)

#b28e2f R178 G142 B47	#43a0b2 R67 G160 B178	#d7616f R215 G97 B111	#00a59c R0 G165 B156	#b083a7 R176 G131 B167	#3f98d3 R63 G152 B211	#d87d2e R216 G125 B46	#849b5d R132 G155 B93		#949494 R148 G148 B148

#b28e2f R178 G142 B47   #43a0b2 R67 G160 B178   #d7616f R215 G97 B111   #00a59c R0 G165 B156   #b083a7 R176 G131 B167   #3f98d3 R63 G152 B211   #d87d2e R216 G125 B46   #849b5d R132 G155 B93   #949494 R148 G148 B148

7:1 contrast ratio (Use for any size text — in color on white, or white text on solid color background)

#6e5723 R110 G87 B35	#27606b R39 G96 B107	#a72534 R167 G37 B52	#00645f R0 G100 B95	#744c6e R116 G76 B110	#275d81 R39 G93 B129	#824d20 R130 G77 B32	#515f39 R81 G95 B57		#595959 R89 G89 B89

#6e5723 R110 G87 B35   #27606b R39 G96 B107   #a72534 R167 G37 B52   #00645f R0 G100 B95   #744c6e R116 G76 B110   #275d81 R39 G93 B129   #824d20 R130 G77 B32   #515f39 R81 G95 B57   #595959 R89 G89 B89

15:1 contrast ratio (Use for background behind any size text to ensure text is easy to read — black text on solid-colored background)

#ece3cb R236 G227 B203	#d0e7ec R208 G231 B236	#f5d7db R245 G215 B219	#bfe8e6 R191 G232 B230	#ebe0e9 R235 G224 B233	#cfe5f4 R207 G229 B244	#f5decb R245 G222 B203	#e0e6d6 R224 G230 B214		#dadada R218 G218 B218

PDF file: VoterGuide-Color-Palette
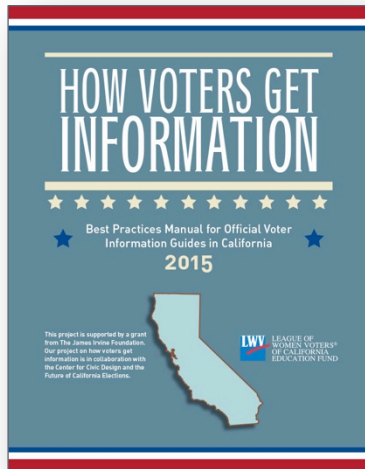
How voters get information:
Best practices manual for official voter information guides in California

Available from
https://cavotes.org/download-best-practices-manual
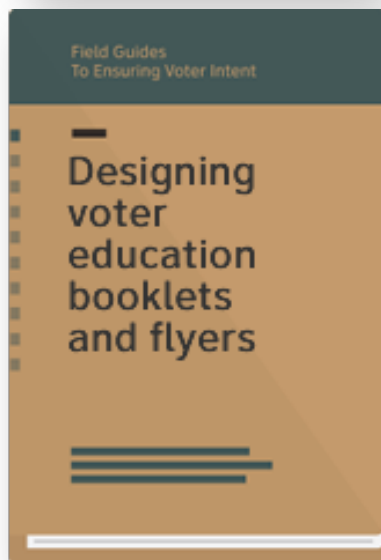
Field Guides to Ensuring Voter Intent
Design guidelines for election officials, based on solid research and best practices

Available from
http://civicdesign.org/fieldguides/