

About this template

Provisional voting requires poll workers to navigate a series of decisions while also explaining the process to a voter who may already be confused or concerned about why they cannot vote normally.



This template is part of the Center for Civic Design's **Provisional voting toolkit**. Visit civicdesign.org/provisional

This What if guide template turns complex processes into a clear path, helping poll workers understand what to do and what to say.

The template will help you create a short printable job aid where every provisional voting scenario gets:

- flow charts to help poll workers decide what to do next
- scripts for poll workers to follow so they can speak confidently

How to use this item

Provide this guide to poll workers who are checking in voters. This resource serves as a quick reference guide to help poll workers guide voters through a variety of unique circumstances that may lead a voter to cast a provisional ballot.

Poll workers can use each decision tree to determine whether or not a voter should vote provisionally. By providing poll workers with scripts for each scenario, we reduce the cognitive load of deciding what to say in an already complex moment.

This tool can also be used during training in role-playing activities to help prepare poll workers.

Editing and printing instructions

There are sections of the What if guide that need to be edited to reflect your county. Edit all text in brackets, like the example here: [Replace your content]

This guide is designed to be printed on 8.5" x 11" paper.



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Samples



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Included in this template

Ohio 2026

What if guide for provisional voters

A complete guide for helping voters with exceptional situations

Identification Issues

Page 3

Name change

Pages 4

Address change

Pages 5

Wrong precinct

Pages 6

Citizenship

Page 7

Absentee

Page 8

Challenged voter

Page 9

Mismatch

Page 10

Extension of poll hours

Page 11

Cover page

Main Election Office

(333)-333-3333

If safety is threatened at the polling location, call 911

Other important numbers

County Sheriff's Department: (444)-444-4444

Rover Name: (555)-555-5555

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Contact page

The basics of provisional voting

What counts as acceptable photo ID?

- Ohio driver's license
 - If the driver's license contains a noncitizen label go to page 7
- Ohio ID card
- Interim ID form issued by the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV)
- A U.S. passport or U.S. passport card
- One of the following U.S. military ID cards:
 - U.S. military dependent ID card
 - Ohio National Guard ID card
 - U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ID card

What if the ID has an old address on it?

An unexpired ID with an outdated address is acceptable if the voter's current address is in the pollbook.

What if the ID has a different name on it?

An unexpired ID with an old name is acceptable if the voter has proof of legal name change.

What counts as proof of citizenship?

- A current Ohio driver license or state ID that doesn't indicate noncitizen status
- Birth certificate, report of birth certification, or consular report of birth abroad
- A current U.S. passport, passport card, or copies of their identification pages
- Certificate of naturalization or citizenship, or a copy
- I-797 Notice of Action for Form N-565 showing an approved application to replace a naturalization document

What are grounds for challenging a voter?

A voter can be challenged for one of the following reasons:

- providing a noncitizen photo ID when voting on Election Day
- suspicion of not residing in Ohio for 30 days immediately before the election
- suspicion that the voter is trying to vote in the wrong precinct
- suspicion of being less than 18 years old

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Frequently asked questions

Citizenship

Ask the voter if they have an acceptable, unexpired photo ID. See the full list of acceptable IDs on page 3.

"Hi! Before I get you checked in, can I take a quick look at your photo ID?"

Check the ID for a noncitizen notation. If there's a notation, let the voter know you're required to challenge the registration.

"Thank you! Since this ID has a noncitizen note on it, I'm required to formally challenge your registration today. That's part of our process."

Complete Form 10-U.

Then, ask the voter to provide acceptable proof of U.S. citizenship. If you need a refresher, the full list of acceptable proof of citizenship documents can be found on page 3.

"Do you have anything else with you that shows proof of citizenship, like a passport or birth certificate?"

I'll also need you to state that you're a U.S. citizen."

Provided

Not provided

Follow the standard challenged-voter steps toward a regular ballot.

"That takes care of it. Now, I can give you a regular ballot."

Direct the voter to vote provisionally.

"That's okay! You can still vote today with a provisional ballot. It's a regular ballot that goes through one extra check afterward to confirm your information."

Give the voter the provisional ballot notice (form 12-H) and tell them their next steps.

"You'll have four days after today to bring proof of citizenship to our board office. Here's a notice explaining what happened today, where to bring your documents, and what counts as acceptable documentation."

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Flow chart

Sample cover page

Start with your state name and the year

Ohio 2026

Write your header and subheader here.

What if guide for provisional voters

A complete guide for
helping voters with
exceptional situations

List each scenario covered in the guide as a table of contents.

Identification Issues

Page 3

Name change

Pages 4

Address change

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Extension of poll hours

Page 11

Include the page number to make it easy for poll workers to find the information they are looking for quickly.



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Sample contact page

At the beginning of the what if guide, provide poll workers with contact information, in case they need help or in case of emergency.

Main Election Office



(333)-333-3333

If safety is threatened at the polling location, call 911

Other important numbers

County Sheriff's Department: (444)-444-4444

Rover Name: (555)-555-5555



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Sample intro page

Put answers to the most frequently asked questions or information that applies to any scenario at the front of the guide. (Think of this as an FAQ.)

Keep answers short, direct, and action-oriented.

When an issue requires additional support, clearly explain who the worker should go to or what they should do next.

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Tips for writing the intro page

1 topic: 1 heading.

Good headings make the booklet easy to scan quickly. Don't put more than one topic in one heading.

Write headings as questions.

People read FAQs when they are looking for answers to specific questions. Writing headers as questions makes it easy for them to recognize their questions and quickly find the answers they need.

Common questions:

When should I offer a provisional ballot?

List the specific situations that require a provisional ballot in your jurisdiction. This is probably the most important FAQ to connect directly to a flow chart.

Does this voter need a provisional ballot, or can I resolve the issue another way?

Help workers tell the difference between situations that can be resolved at the polling place and those that require provisional voting.

What information or documentation does the voter need to provide?

Different provisional voting scenarios may require different documentation and or information. List all approved forms of documentation for each scenario (for example, acceptable ID, proof of name change, proof of citizenship, etc.).



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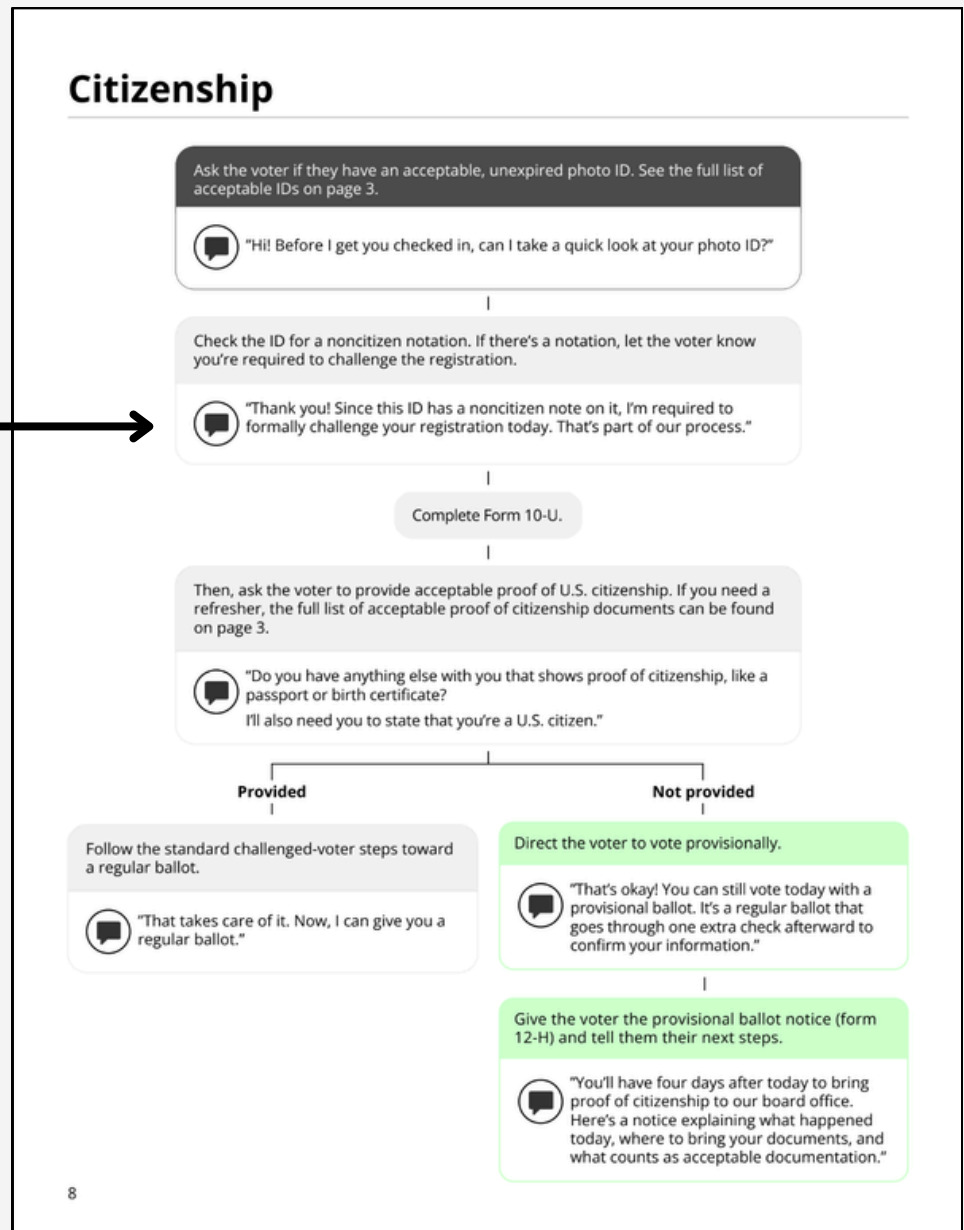
Sample flow chart

Use flow charts to break down provisional voting procedures into manageable steps. A well-designed flow chart should help a poll worker answer three questions quickly:

- What do I do?
- What do I say?
- What happens next?

Include a short script for each step when poll workers need to explain something to a voter, ask a question, or give instructions.

This gives poll workers the action they need to take and the language they need in the moment.



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Design tips for creating effective flow charts

Create one flow chart per scenario.

It can be tempting to include all potential provisional voting scenarios in a single flowchart. Too many decisions in one chart can overwhelm readers, especially in a moment where they need to take quick action. A good flow chart should help a poll worker understand what to do at a glance. The goal is not to document every rule. It is to make the next action clear.

Start with the decision points.

Identify the moments when a poll worker needs to make a choice or take an action. Build the flow chart around these decision points rather than trying to map every detail of the process.

Use one action or decision per box.

Write steps as short, direct instructions that begin with an action verb, like “Check the voter’s information” or “Ask the voter to complete the form.”

Use a consistent direction, like top-to-bottom or left-to-right.

Connect each step with clear arrows, and avoid crossing lines. A poll worker should be able to follow the process without stopping to figure out where to go next.

Visually separate actions from scripts.

If the poll worker needs to say something to the voter, visually distinguish the script from the action. For example, use a speech bubble, quotation marks, or a shaded area for language that the worker can say out loud. This makes it clear which information is for the poll worker and which is intended for the voter.

Design for quick scanning.

Assume the poll worker will use the flow chart while actively assisting someone. Use large enough text, generous spacing, short labels, and a clear visual hierarchy. Someone should be able to find their place in the process within a few seconds.

Use color to organize, not decorate

Give each color a specific job in the flow chart. Use the same color meaning throughout the chart. Don't introduce a new color unless it communicates something new.

Use icons to reinforce meaning

Use simple, familiar icons to help poll workers quickly recognize different types of information or actions. Place icons consistently in the same location within each step so they become visual cues rather than decoration.



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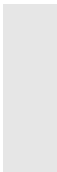
Templates



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Add a heading

Add a subheading



Scenario 1
Page #



Scenario 2
Page #



Scenario 3
Page #



Scenario 4
Page #



Scenario 5
Page #



Scenario 6
Page #



Scenario 7
Page #



Scenario 8
Page #



Scenario 9
Page #



Scenario 10
Page #

Main Election Office



[XXX-XXX-XXXX]

If safety is threatened at the polling location, call 911

Other important numbers

County Sheriff's Department: [(xxx) xxx-xxxx]

Rover Name: [(xxx) xxx-xxxx]

[Frequently asked questions]

[Write the question here]

[Write the answer to the question here.]

[Write the question here]

[Write the answer to the question here.]

[Write the question here]

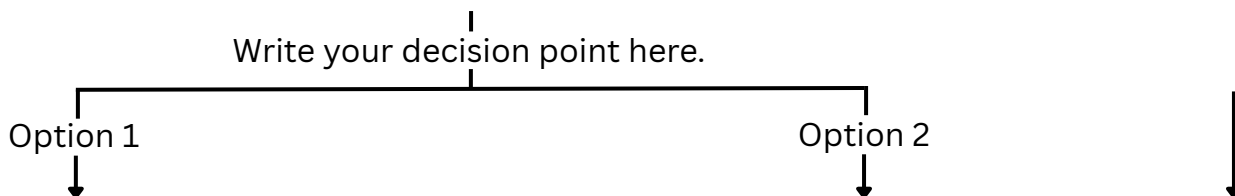
[Write the answer to the question here.]

Build your own flow chart

Components

Write your step here. “Include a script for your poll workers to follow here.”	Write your step here. “Include a script for your poll workers to follow here.”
Write your step here. “Include a script for your poll workers to follow here.”	Write your step here. “Include a script for your poll workers to follow here.”

Arrows



Icons and alerts



Write an alert here



Build your own flow chart (Continued)

Complex components

Write your step here.

“Include a script for your poll workers to follow here.”

Write your decision point here.

Option 1



Option 2



Write your step here.

“Include a script for your poll workers to follow here.”

Write your step here.

“Include a script for your poll workers to follow here.”