

Voter Registration FAQs

The general rule:

Voting is a right, not a privilege that must be earned.



Q. What are the eligibility requirements for registering?

A. To register, you must be:

- * a U. S. citizen
- * 18 years old by the day of the General Election in November
- * a resident of Ohio for at least 30 days before the day of the election NOT currently in prison for a felony
- * NOT declared “incompetent” for the purposes of voting” by a probate judge

Q. When is the deadline for registering?

A. The deadline for registering to vote for the November election is 30 days before the day of the election.

Q. Can I take a form with me for a friend?

A. Yes, you may take a form to someone else to fill out and mail in. However, it might be more efficient if the other person were to go to any public library or deputy registrar of motor vehicles (where you renew your driver’s license) and fill out a voter registration form there. Then s/he could be sure it would get to the Board of Elections on time.

Q. May I register to vote if I have been in prison for a felony?

A. Yes. Ohio law allows you to register and vote as soon as you are released from prison, even if you are on parole or probation. You do not need to do anything besides fill out an ordinary voter registration form. You cannot vote if you are currently incarcerated.

Q. May I register to vote if I am 17 years old?

A. You may register while you are 17 if you will be 18 by the General Election. You may also vote in a Primary Election (for candidates only, not on any ballot questions) while you are 17 if you will be 18 by the General Election.

Q. May I register if I am a college student living in a dormitory or apartment?

A. Yes. As a student, you may choose to vote either where you attend school or “back home,” depending on which place you now consider your residence. The official determination is “that place to which, whenever they are absent, they intend to return.” But you may NOT vote both places! If you are registered “back home” and now want to change that registration to your school residence, be sure you fill out your former registration address so it can be cancelled.

Q. May I register if I am on or have been on public assistance?

A. Yes. This does not in any way interfere with your right to register and vote.

Q. May I register if I have just moved to Ohio?

A. Voter registration closes 30 days before an election. So, if you are here in time to register before the deadline, you will automatically have been a resident for the required 30 days before the election.

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Q. May I register if I have just moved to this county or to a different county within Ohio?

A. You should re-register in your new county if you have changed your residence. Be sure to fill in your old address where you were registered so that it can be cancelled—and so you can't be accused of trying to register twice.

Q. May I register using this form if I live in a different county (not in this county)?

A. Fill out the registration form, putting your county's name at the top. We will turn all of the completed forms into the Board of Elections of this county and they will forward the out-of-county forms to the correct counties.

Q. What if I will be moving in October just before Election Day?

A. You should register and vote in this election from the address where you now live. After the election, be sure to send a change of address to the Board of Elections so they will have you registered at your new address for the next election.

Q. What if I just became a United States citizen?

A. You became eligible to register to vote the minute you became a citizen. In fact, many jurisdictions provide voter registration services at the citizenship ceremony.

Q. What if I do not speak English very well?

A. You do not need to speak fluent English to vote. You may have help in filling out the registration form; and you may have help in voting, if you want it, from two election workers who belong to different political parties—or anyone else except your employer or union officer or a candidate for office.

Q. What if I am homeless, living in a homeless shelter, or living in temporary housing?

A. If you have someplace that will accept mail for you (for example, a friend's or relative's home, a church, a food pantry), you can register from that address. You need to give an address so the Board of Elections knows where to send the postcard telling you the location of your polling place.

Q. What if I am staying in a shelter for abused spouses?

A. You need not use the address of the shelter. Use your former home address to register; then request an absentee ballot to be sent to another address (perhaps where you work, a friend's, an attorney's office). Or you can vote by absentee ballot at the Board of Elections office during office hours until the day before the election.

Q. What if I am living in a nursing home?

A. You should register to vote from the address where you now live. If you are in a nursing home or assisted-living facility, you may vote in person or by absentee ballot. If you request an absentee ballot, note on it that you are in a nursing home, and the Board of Elections will send your ballot with two of their employees from different political parties to help you vote, if you want help. It is your choice.

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Q. What if I cannot read or write well, or have developmental disabilities?

A. Someone else can fill out the registration form for you and you can simply sign it or make your mark. When you go to vote, explain that you need help; you may be helped by anyone you choose except your employer or union officer or a candidate, or you can be helped by two election workers of different political parties. It is your choice.

Q. What if I have a “green card” but I’m not a US citizen?

A. No, you may not register to vote in Ohio. You must be a United States citizen. No matter how long you have been a permanent resident and have paid taxes, you may not register and vote if you are not a citizen.

Q. What if I live in a different state?

A. We do not have the authority to register residents of other states. We do not have the forms or the information to ask you what the laws of other states require. You need to get in touch with that state’s Secretary of State or League of Women Voters so they can tell you what you need to do to register in your home state.

Q. How do I declare my political party affiliation?

A. You do not declare your party when you register to vote in Ohio. You only declare your party when you ask for one party’s ballot at a Primary Election.

Q. Once registered, where do I go to vote?

A. The Board of Elections should send you your registration card, with polling place location, in the mail before November 2. If it does not arrive, you should contact your county board of elections to ensure you are registered and to find the address of your polling place. Consider voting an absentee ballot if you expect to be away from the county on Election Day.

Q. Who can vote absentee?

A. Anyone can apply for an absentee ballot. Contact your county Board of Elections. The Board of Elections has special arrangements available for persons with disabilities and persons who have medical emergencies the day of election. Contact your county Board of Elections for further information. Absentee ballots must be received at the county Board of Elections office by 7:30 PM on Election Day in order to be counted. Ballots mailed from outside the United States must be postmarked by Election Day and will be counted if received by the Board of Elections up to 10 days after an election.