

Voting in the General Elections

Who Can Vote in a General Election?

People in the UK can only vote in general elections when they turn 18.

For the 2024 election, people need to make sure that they have **registered to vote before 18 June**.

According to the Electoral Commission – the group that oversees elections in the UK – only British citizens, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen or a Republic of Ireland citizen with a UK address can vote.

All British citizens who live abroad can register to vote, as long as they are not legally excluded from voting.

[You can register to vote here.](#)

How Do I Vote in a General Election?

There are three different ways people can vote:

- [In a polling station](#)
- [By post](#)
- [Nominating someone to vote for you – known as voting by proxy](#)

In a UK general election, voters can only vote for one candidate.

If a voter chooses more than one candidate on their ballot paper, then their ballot paper is not counted.

If a voter has left their ballot blank, or if who they voted for is unclear, then the ballot paper isn't counted either

What is a Polling Station and What Happens Inside?



Polling stations can be set up in lots of different places – this one was in a laundrette!

Voting in a polling station is the most popular way to vote, and they only open on voting day.

Polling stations are often places like schools or community centres that are turned into a voting station on the big day.

When the voter goes inside, they must show a valid photo ID, like a passport or a driving licence.

They're then given a **ballot paper**, on which they choose their candidate and mark their vote.

The vote is done in a private booth because your vote is yours and you don't have to tell anyone who you vote for.

To vote, there's a grid of names, and voters clearly mark who you want to win. This is usually done by marking a cross with a pen or pencil, in a box next to the person they choose.

Everyone then puts their ballot paper into a big ballot box, which is sealed, with a hole in the top and that's where all the votes are collected before they go off to be counted.

[You can find your polling station here.](#)

What is a Postal Vote?



Another way that people can vote is by post.

When you register to vote, you can choose to register for a postal vote. If you do, before the general election, you'll get a letter with a ballot paper in.

Postal voters have to make sure they make their choice and send their ballot paper by post by a certain deadline, before the general election day.

What is Voting by Proxy?

Voting by proxy is when you choose someone to go and vote for you.

You have to register beforehand and decide who you want to do your vote.

You then tell them who you want to vote for, and they go along to the polling station for you.

How are Votes Counted in a General Election?



Counting all the votes is one of the big moments in any election.

The team of counters gather all the ballot papers together in a count centre – often this is in a large room, like a leisure centre or community hall.

Votes don't start being counted until the deadline for voting has ended.

Usually, counting starts right away and can take all night.

However, some areas love to be the first to get a result, so they try to do it as quickly as they can.

Once all the votes have been counted, the total number of votes, and the winner – the new MP – is announced.

Will I need Photo ID to Vote in the General Election?

Yes. Since May 2023, voters have to show a valid form of photo ID at polling stations to vote in person at a general election.

There are [22 acceptable forms of ID](#), including:

- Passport
- Driving Licence
- Disabled Person's Bus Pass

You can use an out-of-date photo ID as long as you look the same.

Alternatively, anyone registered to vote without the correct ID – or who no longer looks like their photo – can apply for a free document called a [voter authority certificate](#).

The deadline to apply for a voter authority certificate to use in the general election is **5pm on Wednesday 26 June**.

If you realise you do not have a valid ID after this deadline, you can apply for an [emergency proxy vote, external](#) up until 5pm on polling day.

[Can I take children or pets to a polling station?](#)

What if I'm Currently Homeless?

If you are living in temporary accommodation, such as a hostel, you may be able to register at that address, as long as you don't have a permanent address somewhere else.

If you are homeless or do not have a fixed address you can still register to vote by downloading the 'Electoral registration form for someone with no fixed or permanent address' at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-to-vote-if-you-havent-got-a-fixed-or-permanent-address>