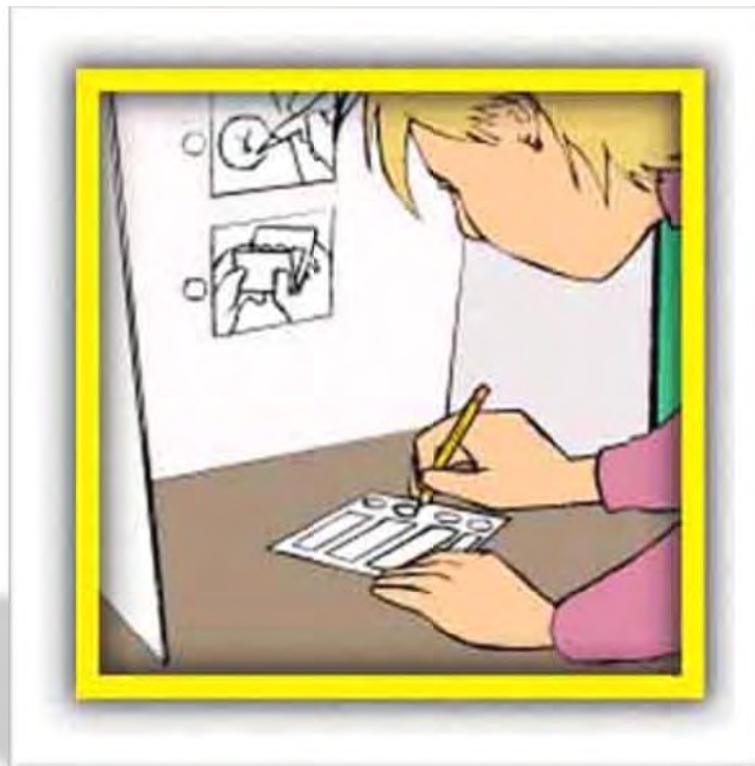


# **Election**

## **Study Kit**



**Funded by Elections Canada**

## Acknowledgements

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## **Introduction**

**Elections present a special challenge for all voters.**

This is a time that has its own vocabulary and challenging concepts. It is a great time to build literacy skills.

This Election Study Kit includes literacy activities that you can do with adult learners during the election period. There are suggestions for activities that will help learners:

- make informed decisions about the election
- make their voices and votes count
- develop their vocabulary and understanding of elections and democracy

## Canada's Parliament

Canada's Parliament is made up of the House of Commons, the Senate and the Queen of Canada (represented by the Governor General).

There are 308 members of Parliament (MPs) in the House of Commons in Ottawa. Members of Parliament usually belong to a political party, although some members are independent.

Each MP is elected to represent an area of Canada called an electoral district or riding. MPs make decisions and laws on behalf of Canadians. In a federal election the people of Canada vote for members of Parliament to represent them.

The political party with the most elected members in the House of Commons forms the government. If it has a majority of seats (155), then it automatically forms a majority government. If the leading party has fewer than 155 seats, it forms a minority government and will seek the co-operation of other parties.

The leader of the party with the most seats becomes the Prime Minister. The party with the second highest number of seats usually becomes the Official Opposition. Its leader becomes the Leader of the Opposition.

**For more information on how Parliament works, go to [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca).**

## **What is a Federal Election?**

The purpose of a federal election is for the people of Canada to choose their next government. Elections allow for a peaceful change of government.

The independent agency of Parliament that runs federal elections is called Elections Canada.

## **Why is a Federal Election Important?**

Voting is an important right and responsibility for every citizen.

A federal election is the time to choose a candidate who will speak up for the things you think are important. It is your chance to choose the candidate you think will do the best job of representing you.

## **Who Can Vote in an Election?**

You can vote if you are a Canadian citizen and at least 18 years old on Election Day.

## **How Do I Get on the Voters List?**

The voters list is a list of people who are eligible to vote. You may already be on the voters list. Elections Canada keeps a computerized database of voters, but your name or address may be out of date (if you have moved, for example).

If your name and correct address are already on Elections Canada's voters list, you will receive a voter information card in the mail.

If you haven't received a voter information card in the mail two weeks before the election, you should call Elections Canada at 1-800-463-6868 to find out how to register. When you receive your voter information card, please read it carefully and make sure that your name and address are correct.

If your name and address on the voter information card are correct, keep the card. It tells you when and where to vote. If the name or address on the card is not correct, call Elections Canada.

You will find the telephone number of the local Elections Canada office on the back of the card. They will tell you what you need to do.

*With proper identification, you can also register to vote at your local polling station on Election Day or at the advance polls.*

## Acceptable Identification

To register and vote in the election you must prove your identity and address. You must show original documents, not photocopies.

You can choose from option one, two or three.

**Note:** The identification you show for a federal election may not be the same as the identification needed for provincial and municipal elections.

### **Option 1**

Show **one** original piece of identification issued by a government or government agency that has your photo, name and home address.

Example:

- driver's licence (as long as it shows a street address)

### **Option 2**

Show **two** original pieces of identification. Both must show your name, and one must also contain your address.

Examples:

- health card and hydro bill
- social insurance number card and bank statement

For more information, call Elections Canada at 1-800-463-6868.

### **Option 3**

If you don't have acceptable identification, an elector whose name is on the voters list in your polling station and who has proper identification can vouch for you (guarantee) that you are who you say you are.

You must both make a sworn statement.

An elector can only vouch for (guarantee) one person. An elector who has been vouched for cannot vouch for another person.

**Decide which of the three options you will choose.**

List the document or documents that you will use to prove your identity and address.

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If you have chosen Option 3, name the person who will vouch for your identity:

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## **How Do I Vote?**

**There are four ways you can vote.**

The choice is yours. Most people choose to vote at their local polling station.

### **1. You can vote at your polling station on Election Day**

If you have a voter information card with your correct name and address, take it with you when you go to vote. It helps speed things up. Also, take proper identification (ID).

If you don't have a voter information card, and you didn't register earlier, you can register to vote at the polling station on Election Day. You will have to bring proper ID. If you don't have identification, someone on the voters list with proper ID can vouch for you.

## **2. You can vote at the advance polls**

If you want, you can vote earlier, at the advance polls. Advance polls are open from noon to 8:00 p.m. on the Friday, Saturday and Monday one week before Election Day. The voter information card tells you the dates, times and the address. Remember to bring your voter information card with your correct name and address and proper ID.

If you don't have a voter information card you can still register at the advance poll. To do this, you must show proper ID. If you don't have identification, someone on the voters list with proper ID can vouch for you.

## **3. You can vote at your local Elections Canada office**

If you choose to vote at your local Elections Canada office, you will use a special ballot. For the hours and address of your local Elections Canada office, see your voter information card or call Elections Canada at 1-800-463-6868.

You must be at the office before 6:00 p.m. on the Tuesday one week before Election Day. Be sure to bring your voter information card with your correct name and address and proper ID. An election officer will give you a form to fill out. He or she will help you fill out the form, if you want, and will explain how you vote by special ballot.

Even if you are not already on the voters list, you can register to vote by special ballot. Be sure to bring identification with your name and address.

#### **4. You can vote by mail**

You may vote by special mail-in ballot if you are:

- living in your riding, or
- living in Canada but temporarily outside your riding, or
- living temporarily outside Canada

Each of these three cases is slightly different. You should phone your local Elections Canada office or Elections Canada in Ottawa to get the right information for your case.

#### **Voting by mail is easy.**

- First, you fill out a special ballot registration form.
- Then you will be given or sent a ballot and instructions.
- Just follow the instructions and mail back the ballot.

You should ask for your registration form as soon as possible after the election is called, because there is a deadline for sending in your ballot. Once you apply for a special ballot, you can only vote by special ballot. You cannot vote twice or change your mind and go to your polling station.

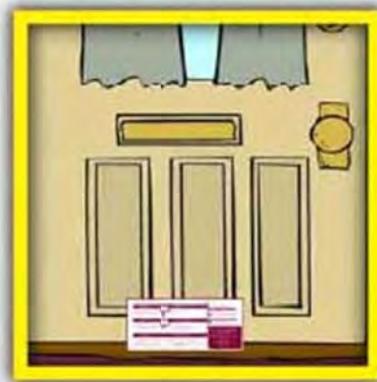
### **Can I Get Help When I Vote?**

Yes, you can.

If you need help to vote for any reason, you can ask an election officer to help you, or you can bring someone with you when you vote. Your helper could be a friend, a relative, or an interpreter. This person must take an oath at the polling station. Then he or she can go behind the voting screen and help you mark the ballot.

## What Do I Do on Election Day?

Shortly after the election is called, you should receive a voter information card in the mail. This confirms that your name is on the voters list.



This card is important. It tells you when and where you go to vote. If you do not receive this card, contact Elections Canada to find out how to get your name on the voters list so you can vote. Call 1-800-463-6868 toll-free.



On Election Day, go to your polling station to vote. The polling station address is on your voter information card. The building where you vote will have a big, yellow Elections Canada sign on it.

At the polling station, find the ballot box with the number that matches the number on your voter information card. Two people are at the table: the poll clerk and the deputy returning officer.



Wait behind the line on the floor until you are called.

Give your voter information card to the poll clerk to tell him or her your name and address.



The poll clerk finds your name on the list, checks your ID and crosses off your name to show that you have voted.

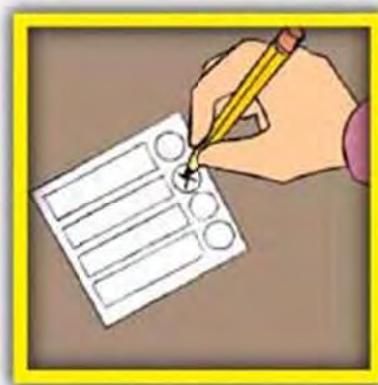


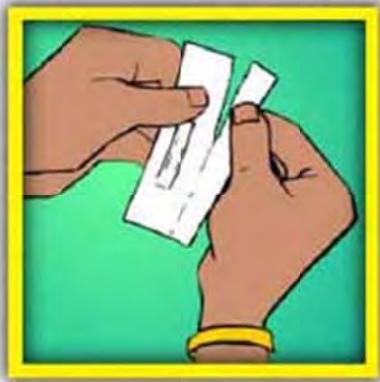
The deputy returning officer gives you a folded ballot. He or she can help you if you have trouble voting. Otherwise, a friend or family member can help.

Next, you go behind the voting screen.

Mark an X in the circle beside the name of the candidate you choose. **Make sure you stay inside the circle.**

When you have finished voting, re-fold your ballot.





**Take your folded ballot back to the deputy returning officer**

**The deputy returning officer tears off the black tab without opening your ballot. The deputy returning officer gives you back your ballot**

**You put your ballot in the ballot box yourself!**

**You just voted!**



<b>Election Vocabulary</b>	
<b>acceptable identification</b>	Papers showing proof of who you are and where you live.
<b>ballot</b>	The paper you mark your vote on.
<b>campaign</b>	The time when candidates compete for votes in an election.
<b>candidate</b>	A person who is running in an election for a seat in the House of Commons.
<b>Elections Canada</b>	The independent agency that runs federal elections.
<b>elector</b>	A person who can vote, usually called a voter. In Canada, this means a Canadian citizen who is 18 years of age or older on Election Day.
<b>electoral district</b>	Usually called a riding or constituency – an area represented in the House of Commons by one elected member (MP).
<b>MP</b>	Short for Member of Parliament; MPs are the people we elect to represent us in the House of Commons.
<b>poll, polling station</b>	The place where you vote; the address depends on where you live.
<b>registering to vote</b>	Getting your name on the voters list, at the right address.
<b>Returning Officer</b>	The person in each riding who is responsible for organizing voting and making sure it is fair. Returning officers work for Elections

<b>Election Vocabulary</b>	
	Canada.
<b>voter information card</b>	A card with your name and address that Elections Canada sends to you during an election. It shows that you are on the voters list and tells you where and when you can vote.
<b>voters list</b>	Also called the National Register of Electors. Elections Canada's confidential computerized list that is used to prepare the voters lists for every riding and polling station. It is kept up to date with information from other federal and provincial government files (such as driver's licence files). People who have recently moved or turned 18 years old may need to contact Elections Canada to make sure they are on the voters list.

## Election Activities

Here are some activities to help adult learners find out more about voting and the issues.

### Scavenger Hunt

**Your Task:** Look in newspapers and other news resources for election-related news, photos, editorials, and more.

Try to find some of these:

- news articles about an important issue in the election
- news articles about an individual candidate's campaign
- photographs about the election
- editorial cartoons that relate to a candidate
- editorial cartoons that relate to a campaign issue
- election ads and flyers for candidates from a news source or campaign office
- information ads from Elections Canada

In your classroom, make an election news board where you can post information collected by everyone in the class.

## To vote or Not?

Many Canadians are concerned that not enough people vote in elections.

**Your Task:** Conduct a survey by asking your classmates, friends and family what they think about voting. Make a list of the reasons they give for voting or not voting. What about you? How do you feel about voting?

To Vote or Note?	
Reasons for voting	Reasons for not voting

## Follow the candidates

Election candidates try to convince voters of their ideas and opinions. Which candidate do you most agree with?

**Your Task:** Track the candidates in your riding from the beginning of the election campaign until Election Day. Keep track of what these candidates say about issues that are important to you.

1. Contact Elections Canada for a list of all the candidates in your riding and their addresses. You can also use this information to send letters to the candidates.
2. Who is the incumbent? (person who held the job last) Is this person running again as a candidate?
3. List the candidates running in your riding and the parties they represent. Remember, a candidate can be independent.

Candidate's Name	Party

4. Which candidates do you think get the most media attention? Why?
5. Do you know anything about the candidates? What? Make a list of anything you know or assume about them.
6. Where did you get the information you listed above? From the media? From your family? In the mail?

### **How Do I Decide Who to Vote For?**

First of all, think about what matters to you.

- Look for information on the opinions of candidates and the parties they represent on your most important issues.
- Listen to the radio, watch TV, and read the newspaper.
- Talk to people you trust.

In the end, your vote is a private decision and only you can make it.

## What Are the Important Issues?

**Your Task:** With your class, brainstorm for a list of important issues the next government of Canada will face.

My community	My riding	My province or territory	Canada

1. Ask each learner in the class to vote for the 3 issues he or she thinks are the most important. Make a list of the 5 most important ones for your class.
2. Then hold another vote. Each person can vote for the single issue he or she feels is the most important one.
3. Ask each person to create a bar chart to represent that final vote.

### **Election Campaign Promises**

What are the major issues? Where does each candidate stand?

**Your Task:** Create a chart with the issues and write down what each candidate has said about the issue.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Position or Solution</b>

## **Types of Election Campaign Ads**

**Your Task:** Learn to recognize different types of political advertisements, and to understand why candidates may choose to use these types of ads in their campaigns.

There are four main types of ads:

- 1. Negative:** one candidate portrays another in an unfavourable light.
- 2. Warm and fuzzy:** candidates try to make the voters feel good about their campaigns or about the country.
- 3. Humorous:** candidates' ads make you laugh or smile.
- 4. Scary:** candidates make you feel afraid (usually combined with a negative ad).

Can you think of an example of each of the four types?

After you have looked closely at some political ads, answer the following questions:

- What are the key messages in each advertisement?
- Which type of ad was easiest to remember? Why?
- Which do you think would be best at convincing viewers to vote for (or against) a candidate?
- What did you learn from the ads? Did they help you to decide which candidate to support?
- What do all types have in common? Do they give facts or do they play on your emotions?
- At what time of day do you see or hear the most radio or TV ads?
- What are the limitations of a 30-second commercial?

- **How important is a candidate's look in these ads? What type of image is he or she trying to create?**

**If you were the campaign manager for a candidate in your riding, what type of ad would you want to create?**

## Election Word Search

**Your Task:** Circle the vocabulary words in the word search below. The words may go down or across or diagonally. Cross them off the list as you find them.

I	S	B	C	A	M	P	A	I	G	N	F
D	O	C	V	R	Z	H	U	N	T	E	C
E	E	I	A	G	D	F	L	F	A	P	R
N	C	T	D	N	V	F	E	B	D	E	Y
T	L	I	D	B	L	I	S	T	V	L	V
I	A	Z	R	E	A	X	J	I	A	E	C
T	L	E	E	C	V	L	K	H	N	C	A
Y	F	N	S	J	A	O	L	A	C	T	N
Q	V	Q	S	B	D	R	T	O	E	I	A
V	R	F	I	T	N	X	D	E	T	O	D
P	P	O	L	L	I	N	G	P	P	N	A
R	I	D	I	N	G	C	H	Y	P	U	A

ADDRESS

CARD

IDENTITY

VOTE

ADVANCE

CITIZEN

LIST

BALLOT

CAMPAIGN

POLLING

CANADA

ELECTION

RIDING

## How Can I Get More Information?

### Contact Elections Canada

Telephone: 1-800-463-6868 (toll-free in Canada and the United States)

TTY: 1-800-361-8935, for people who are deaf or hard of hearing (toll-free in Canada and the United States)

Mail: 257 Slater Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0M6

Fax: 613-954-8584 or 1-888-524-1444 (toll-free in Canada and the United States)

Web site: [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)

For some great learning activities on Parliament, democracy, governance and citizenship, visit the Parliament of Canada Web site at [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca) (click on “About Parliament”, then click on “Education”).

To find out more about the structure of Canada’s government, visit [www.gc.ca](http://www.gc.ca) (click on “About Government”, then “Structure of the Government of Canada”).

## Other Resources about Elections

Resources available from Elections Canada:

- *I Can Vote!* is a user-friendly guide to voting in Canada, developed in collaboration with community groups, educators and advocates to make the electoral process more accessible to all Canadians (available on-line in HTML and PDF, and print formats).
- *Canada at the Polls!* is an election simulation kit to be used by learning groups at all levels. It includes a section on how to organize a mock election, and sample election supplies (available on-line in HTML and PDF).
- *The Electoral System of Canada*, is a detailed reference for stronger readers, providing a good overview of our electoral system and parliamentary government (available on-line in HTML and PDF).
- *Exploring Canada's Electoral System* is a multimedia user-friendly CD-ROM that comes highly recommended by literacy educators who have used it.
- *A History of the Vote in Canada* highlights some of the milestones along the path that Canada followed to build its model electoral system.
- The Elections Canada Web site includes an on-line form to order publications in print and CD-ROM formats. Publications can also be requested by phone, by calling 1-800-463-6868.

Resource available from the NWT Literacy Council:

- *How To Kit – Election*