

# Designing an Improved Voter Guide

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# Agenda

Who are we? Who are you?

Exploring the voter guide

Top tips for creating voter information

- Bridge the civic literacy gaps
- Use design to make information easy to read
- Write in language voters understand

Introducing the best practices manual

# Introductions

Who is here today?

# Creating a best practices manual

About this project

# League of Women Voters of California Education Fund

**Goal:** To better serve California's diverse voters, voter information must be more accessible in design and delivery.

- Aim to make voter information more effective and more inviting
- Provide trainings, webinars, and other technical assistance in implementing the recommendations
- Identify impediments to adopt best practices including regulatory, legislative, and financial barriers

# Center for Civic Design

**Goal:** Research to learn:

- How Californians find information about elections
- Information needs of voters, people who register but do not vote, and eligible potential voters
- How to design to make voting easier for voters with literacy, language, or reading challenges?

# Qualitative research

1 year

14 locations

38+ partners

58 counties

100 research participants

- Voters, non voters, infrequent voters
- Young, new citizens, low literacy, people with disabilities, language minorities
- Close match to California demographics

# Research process

- Stakeholder input
- Landscape analysis
- Research with voters and non-voters
  
- Created a prototype voter guide
- Wrote recommendations



# Recommendations to:

- Organize voter guides to help voters find their way to the information they need
- Present information so it is easy to recognize and identify
- Write information so it is easy to read and understand
- Personalize information for voters appropriately
- Close civic literacy gaps through structure and content

# Let's try it out

Portraits of voters

Prototype voter guide

Questions voters ask

# Try using the prototype voter guide to answer voters' five top questions

Use the voter portrait as your "character."

Think about what they know and what they need to know.

Take notes on how hard the information is to find.

And whether the information answers their questions.

1. What's on the ballot?
2. Where do I go vote?
3. How do I vote (mark and cast my ballot)?
4. What are my options for voting?
5. How do I vote by mail?

# How did that go?

Voter question	Easy to find?	Hard to find?	What kind of problems?
What's on the ballot?			
Where do I go vote?			
How do I vote (mark the ballot)?			
What are my options?			
How do I vote by mail?			

# Questions are phrased in many ways

Question	# Asking	Variations of the question
What's on the ballot?	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What's on the ballot?</li><li>• Who do I support or vote for?</li><li>• Who is running?</li><li>• Who will I be voting for?</li><li>• Who are the candidates?</li><li>• Who supports the candidates?</li><li>• What are the candidates' positions on [specific issue]?</li><li>• What are the ballot measures?</li><li>• What are the pros and cons for the measures?</li><li>• Does this measure mean a tax increase?</li><li>• How does the official guide compare to the TV ads?</li><li>• Who is in office right now?</li></ul>

# Three big insights

Civic literacy is a huge challenge

Layout and visual presentation are important for comprehension

Plain language can't be overemphasized

# Civic literacy

Elections are not intuitive, so voter guides have to bridge knowledge gaps

# Voters – especially new voters – want

Information that will help them:

- **Understand their choices** about how, when, and where to vote
- Learn about **what is on the ballot** for each election, so they can make decisions
- Identify non-partisan official **information they can trust**



# Different voters, different needs

## Not yet voting

Connect to the community

- Demystify the act of voting
- Justify the value of voting
- In-language and plain language materials

## Voting sometimes

Connect daily life to issues

- Simple, clear information about candidates and issues
- Explanations of options for voting

## Avid voters

Connect to the democratic process

- Complete information
- Encouragement to be role models
- Information about being a poll worker

# New voters have knowledge gaps.

## They didn't know:

- You need to register to vote, in advance.
- You don't have to vote on everything on the ballot.
- You can get help from a poll worker.
- You can't vote after Election Day.
- You can vote by mail.
- You don't have to have an appointment to vote.
- Registering to vote doesn't sign you up for jury duty.
- Election materials may be in some languages.
- You don't need an ID to vote in California.

# Show the structure of election info

8 What's on the ballot for this election?

You will receive two voter information guides for this election:

**Franklin County Guide (this guide)**  
Local and county races and measures are in this guide.

**Offices (see pages 12-15)**  
Member of the State Assembly  
Member of the Board of Supervisors

**Local Measures (see pages 16-22)**  
E. Community College District Bond  
F. Renewal of the Abandoned Vehicle Abatement Program

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

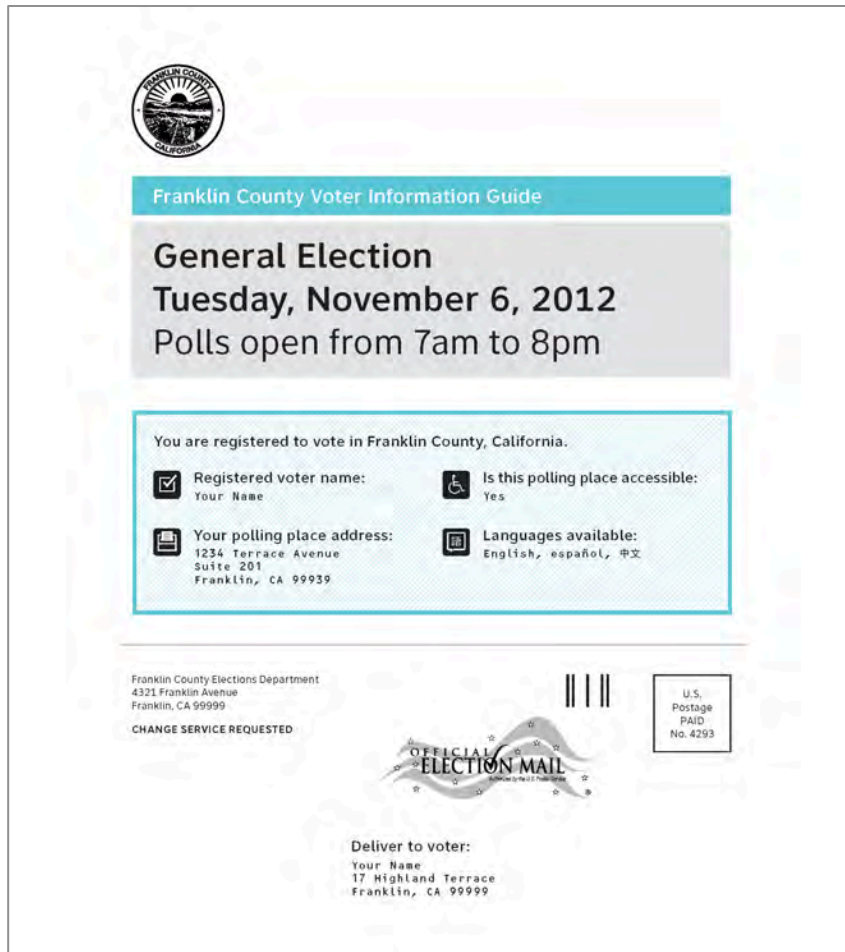
**Offices**  
President and Vice President  
United States Senator

**State Propositions**  
30 Temporary Taxes to Fund Education, Guaranteed Local Public Safety Funding, Initiative Constitutional Amendment.  
31 State Budget, State and Local Government, Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute.  
32 Political Contributions by Payroll Deduction, Contributions to Candidates, Initiative Statute.  
33 Auto Insurance Companies, Prices Based on Driver's History of Insurance Coverage, Initiative Statute.  
34 Death Penalty, Initiative Statute.  
35 Human Trafficking, Penalties, Initiative Statute.  
36 Three Strikes Law, Repeat Felony Offenders, Penalties, Initiative Statute.  
37 Genetically Engineered Foods, Labeling, Initiative Statute.  
38 Tax to Fund Education and Early Childhood Programs, Initiative Statute.  
39 Tax Treatment for Multistate Businesses, Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency Funding, Initiative Statute.  
40 Redistricting, State Senate Districts, Referendum.

General Election • Franklin County • Tuesday, November 6, 2012

- Make options clear by showing them side by side
- Connect the state and local booklets

# Put the most important information on the cover



- Name or type of the election
- Date and time of the election
- The voter's polling place
- Languages offered
- How to contact the election office

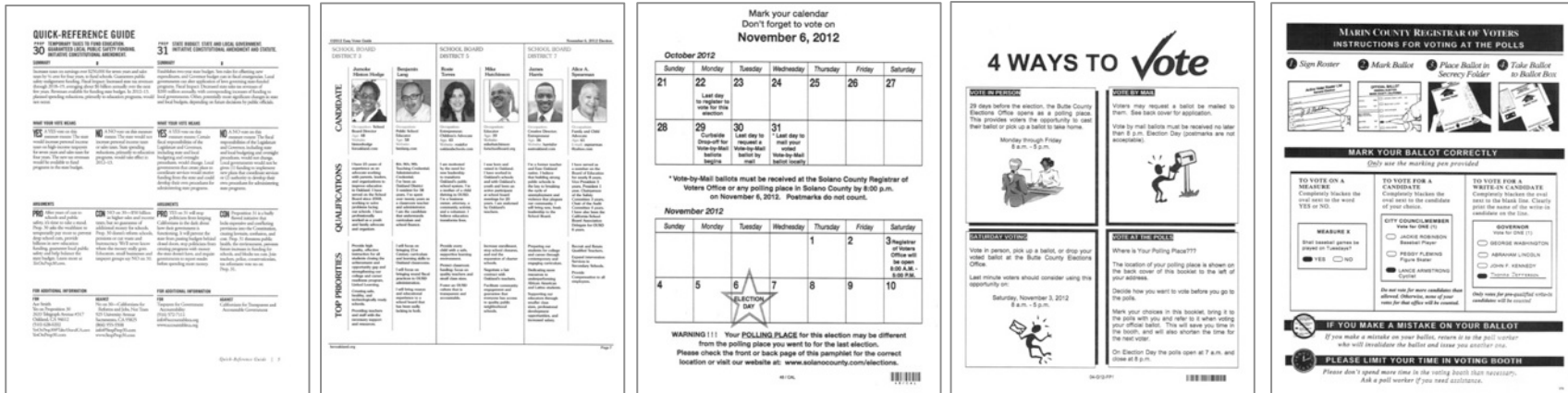
# Layout and design

Making information easy to recognize and identify

# Be consistent

- Year-to-year consistency builds familiarity and trust
- Consistency in layout and use of design elements assists in ease-of-use and clarity

# Use layout to convey content



- Layout can communicate the type of content on a page
- Layout can differentiate page types from one another

# Help readers find their way

<b>What's in this guide?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3 ways to vote</b>	<b>3</b>
Voter Bill of Rights	2
How to vote by mail	4
How to vote early in person	5
How to vote in person at the polls	6
Accessibility and language voting assistance	7
<b>What's on the ballot for this election?</b>	<b>8</b>
Who are the candidates?	9
Local ballot measures: E	10
Local ballot measures: F	11
Paid candidate statements	12
Practice ballot	20

DMV17042 03-20140711

General Election - Franklin County - Tuesday, November 6, 2012

- A clear and concise table of contents acts as a roadmap for the guide
- Organize information in an easy-to-follow path
- Use a clear, easy-to-read heading for each page
- Use running headings to connect parts of a section



# Use design to guide the voter

**3 ways to vote**

**Vote by mail**  
Request a vote-by-mail ballot by **October 29**.  
Return it by mail, drop it off at one of the secure ballot drop-off locations, or deliver it on **November 6** to any polling place.  
Vote-by-mail ballots must be received at the elections office or a polling place by 8pm on **November 6**.  
For more details, see **Page 4**.

**Vote early in person**  
You may vote early at the elections office, or at the voting centers listed on page 5.  
**October 7 until November 5**  
**Monday – Friday, 8am to 5pm**  
Franklin County Elections Department  
4321 Franklin Avenue  
Franklin, CA  
For more details, see **Page 5**.

**Vote at the polls in person**  
Polls are open on Election Day:  
**November 6, 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.franklinvotes.org](http://www.franklinvotes.org)  
• Using the automated phone service: 1-222-555-1216  
For more details, see **Page 6**.

Deliver Type 2 - (225) 381-6071  
General Election - Franklin County - Tuesday, November 6, 2012

**How to vote by mail**

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 return it by mail, drop it off at any polling place, or deliver it to the elections office.


**How to get your ballot**  
You can request a ballot online or by mail.  
You must request a ballot by **October 29**.  
You can:  
• Go to [www.franklinvotes.org](http://www.franklinvotes.org)  
• Send a letter to the elections office.  
-OR-  
• Send a letter to the elections office and where you want your ballot.  
Registration:  
4321 Franklin Avenue  
Franklin, CA 95502  
After you apply to vote by mail, you will receive a ballot packet by mail.

**How to return your ballot**  
Place your ballot in the envelope and return it by mail, drop it off at any polling place, or deliver it to the elections office.  
You can:

**How to vote early in person**

You can vote in person before Election Day, from **October 7 through November 5**.  
You may vote at any of the locations shown below from **October 7 until November 5, Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm**. You may vote at any early voting location that is open on the day you vote. You do not need to make an appointment.

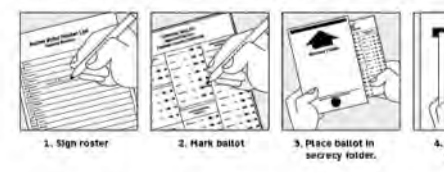
**Early voting locations**



**How to vote in person at the polling place**

Polling places are open from **7am to 8pm on Tuesday, November 6**.  
Find your polling place:  
• On the front cover of this booklet.  
• [www.franklinvotes.org/myvote](http://www.franklinvotes.org/myvote)  
• Automated service: 1-222-555-1216

**At the polling place:**  
If you have questions, ask a poll worker.  
Some poll workers at this polling place speak Spanish. They have special ballots for you.  
Anyone can use the alternate (accessible) voting system to mark their ballot. That system will read the ballot to you in English, Spanish, or Chinese.



1. Sign roster
2. Mark ballot
3. Place ballot in secrecy folder
4. Vote

# Make the information visual



- Visual elements help guide readers through the content
- Useful images and icons are precise and relevant to the content, not decorative
- Icons or other images signal the type of content next to them

# Use accurate instructional illustrations



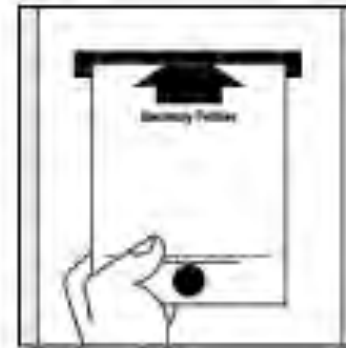
1. Sign roster



2. Mark ballot



3. Place ballot in secrecy folder.



4. Take ballot to ballot box

- Visual instructions help low-literacy *and* general-population voters
- Illustrations must be accurate in their details to avoid misleading voters
- Photo images are not recommended

# Make the text big enough

- Pages with small, tightly packed text are difficult to read
- Readers are more likely to read sections in larger type, and read the text more accurately
- In print, try to make the text size at least 12 points

# Use upper- and lowercase letters

- Lowercase letters are more legible than all capital letters because they are easier to recognize

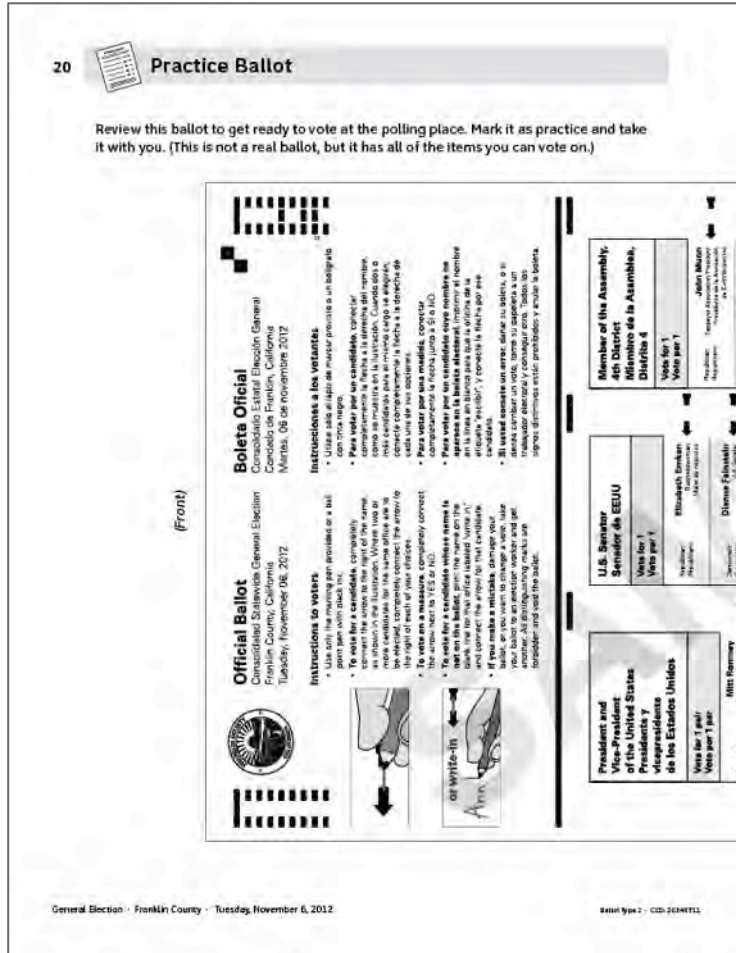
# Avoid centered type

- Left-aligned type is more legible than centered type, which forces the eye to stop reading in order to find the start of the next line

# Pick one sans-serif font

- Switching between fonts can require the eye to stop reading and adjust, or can unintentionally imply a change in content
- Sans-serif fonts are easier to read for shorter-length content like a voter information guide
- The prototype guide uses ClearView ADA from Terminal Design

# Include a practice ballot



- Present a sample ballot in a way that voters easily understand what it is and how to use it




# Plain language

Clear information helps bridge the civic literacy gap


# Define election terms

**3 ways to vote** 3


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 **Vote by mail**  
Request a vote-by-mail ballot by **October 29**.  
Return it by mail, drop it off at one of the secure ballot drop-off locations, or deliver it on **November 6** to any polling place.  
Vote-by-mail ballots must be received at the elections office or a polling place by 8pm on **November 6**.  
For more details, [see Page 4](#).

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 **Vote early in person**  
You may vote early at the elections office, or at the voting centers listed on page 5.  
**October 7 until November 5**  
**Monday - Friday, 8am to 5pm**  
Franklin County Elections Department  
4321 Franklin Avenue  
Franklin, CA  
For more details, [see Page 5](#).

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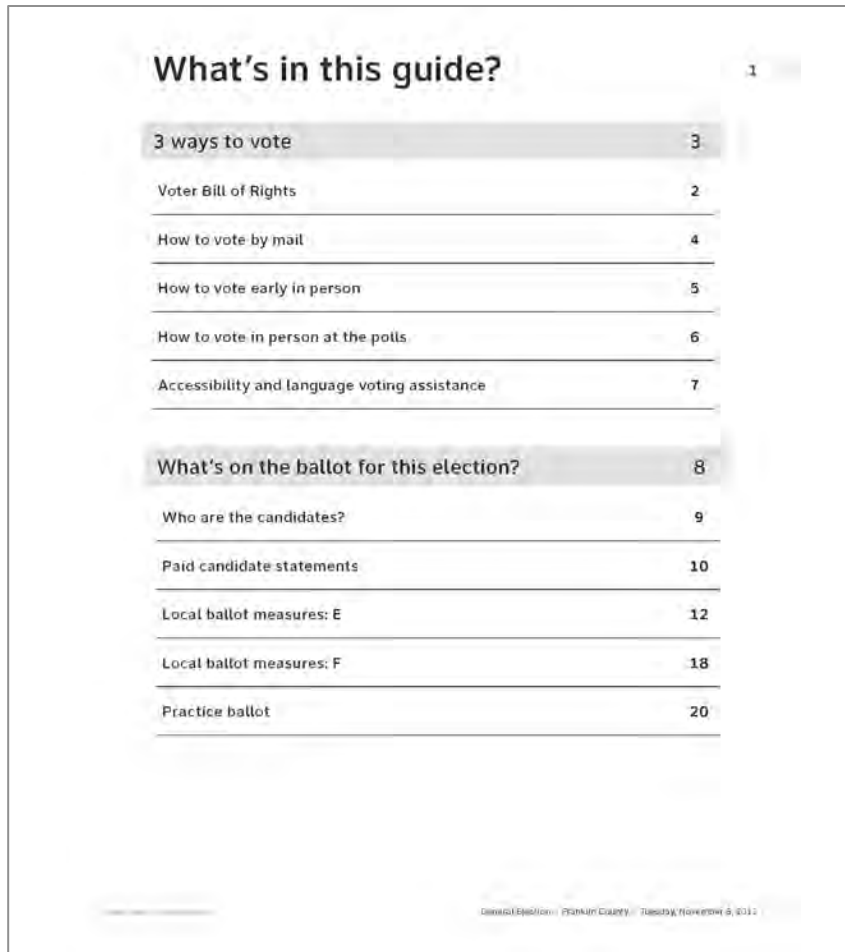
 **Vote at the polls in person**  
Polls are open on Election Day:  
**November 6, from 7am to 8pm**  
The location of your polling place is printed on the back cover of this guide.  
Or, you can look up your polling place:  
• On the web: [www.franklinvotes.org](http://www.franklinvotes.org)  
• Using the automated phone service: 1-222-555-1216  
For more details, [see Page 6](#).

Ballot Type 2 - 000-01040712 General Election - Franklin County - Tuesday, November 6, 2012

What is the difference between:

- vote by mail
- early voting
- vote at the polls

# Help people answer *their* questions




The image shows a screenshot of a document's table of contents. The title is "What's in this guide?" with a page number "1" in the top right corner. The table lists various sections and their corresponding page numbers. The sections are: "3 ways to vote" (page 3), "Voter Bill of Rights" (page 2), "How to vote by mail" (page 4), "How to vote early in person" (page 5), "How to vote in person at the polls" (page 6), "Accessibility and language voting assistance" (page 7), "What's on the ballot for this election?" (page 8), "Who are the candidates?" (page 9), "Paid candidate statements" (page 10), "Local ballot measures: E" (page 12), "Local ballot measures: F" (page 18), and "Practice ballot" (page 20). At the bottom of the page, there is a footer that reads "General Election | Plumas County | Tuesday, November 8, 2011".

<b>What's in this guide?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3 ways to vote</b>	<b>3</b>
Voter Bill of Rights	2
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General Election | Plumas County | Tuesday, November 8, 2011

- Anticipate and answer voters' questions.
- A table of contents acts as a roadmap.

# One page: One topic

4  **How to vote by mail**


**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.


**How to get your vote-by-mail ballot**

You can request a vote-by-mail ballot starting on **October 7**.  
You must request a vote-by-mail ballot by **October 29**.

You can:

-  Go to [www.franklinvotes.org](http://www.franklinvotes.org) and request a vote-by-mail ballot.

-OR-


-  Send a letter with your signature that includes your address and where to send the vote-by-mail ballot:  
**Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk**  
**4321 Franklin Avenue, Franklin, CA 95999**

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


**How to return your vote-by-mail ballot**

Place your ballot in the official envelope, following the instructions on the vote-by-mail packet. Your ballot must be at the Elections Office or a polling place by 8pm on Election Day, November 6, to be counted.


You can:

-  Send it by mail to:  
**Franklin County Elections Dept.**  
**123 Main Street, Franklin, CA**

-OR-

-  Drop it off at the secure ballot drop-off location, from October 7 to November 6  
**Franklin County Elections Department**  
**123 Main Street, Franklin, CA**

-OR-

-  Drop it off at any polling place on Election Day, November 6, from 7am to 8pm

General Election - Franklin County - Tuesday, November 6, 2012

- All of the information for one topic on one page
- Only one topic per page

# Include both overview and details

Level	Where in the Guide	Example
<b>Bite</b>	Cover	General Election Tuesday, November 4, 2014 Polls are open from 7am to 8pm
<b>Snack</b>	Three ways to vote page	<b>Vote in person at the polls</b> Polls are open on Election Day, November 4, from 7am to 8pm The location of your polling place is printed on the front cover of this guide. Or, you can look up your polling place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On the web: <a href="http://www.franklinvotes.org">www.franklinvotes.org</a></li><li>• Using the automated phone service: 1-222-555-1216</li></ul>
<b>Meal</b>	Detailed instructions on page 6	<b>How to vote in person at the polls</b> [ instructions on the voting process and how to mark the ballot ]

# Write headings to support action

Heading Style	Example
Question	What is the last day to request a vote-by-mail-ballot?
Quasi-Question	How to request a vote-by-mail ballot
Instruction	Request a vote-by-mail ballot by October 29

# Simplify and define election terms

- Sample Ballot or Practice Ballot
- Top Two Primary
- Explain offices, especially local offices
- Test words like polling place, absentee

# **The Best Practices Manual for Official Voter Guides**



# HOW VOTERS GET INFORMATION



★ Best Practices Manual for Official Voter  
Information Guides in California ★

2015

This project is supported by a grant from The James Irvine Foundation. Our project on how voters get information is in collaboration with the Center for Civic Design and the Future of California Elections.





## Use the checklist

Ask yourself the right questions, so your voter guide has the answers voters need.

### VOTER GUIDE RECOMMENDATION CHECKLIST

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Use this checklist of our recommendations when creating or reviewing a voter guide.

#### Include the right information at the appropriate level of detail

- Is the information organized by activity or task?
- Does the cover page include the following information?
  - County name and seal (or other official insignia)
  - Name or type of election
  - Date of election day and times the polls are open
  - Polling place information
  - How to contact the election office
  - Languages offered
- Is it clear how the county and state guides are different and connected?
- Are the headings written as questions or active instructions?
- Are the plain language principles incorporated? This includes
  - Writing short sentences
  - Using short, simple, everyday words
  - Writing in active voice and writing in the positive
  - Keeping paragraphs short
  - Separating paragraphs by a space, so that each one stands out on the page
- Are there definitions and descriptions for election terms and processes?

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#### Organize information in an easy-to-follow path

- Is there a table of contents?
  - Are there questions, quasi-questions, or instructions as headings?
  - Does each page have a clear topic?
  - Are there visual elements to make each section easy to see?
  - Is the voter information organized to include both an overview and details?
-

# Thank you.

Last questions?



## League of Women Voters of California Education Fund

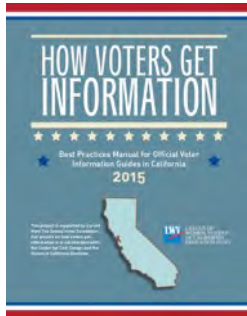
[cavotes.org](http://cavotes.org) | [easyvoterguide.org](http://easyvoterguide.org) | [smartvoter.org](http://smartvoter.org)



## Center for Civic Design

[civicdesign.org](http://civicdesign.org) | [@civicdesign](https://twitter.com/civicdesign)

[civicdesign.org/projects/how-voters-get-information/](http://civicdesign.org/projects/how-voters-get-information/)



## How Voters Get Information

Best Practices Manual for Official Voter Information  
Guides in California