

How to Conduct an Alaska-style Mock Election

Hosting a mock election is a great way for participants to become familiar with Alaska's new election system by getting hands-on experience, which is the best way to help voters learn the process.

STEP 1: Decide if you want to do a primary.

Alaska elections have two steps: the open, pick-one primary followed by a Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) general election.

If you are conducting a virtual (online) election, both steps are pretty simple to conduct together. It's also simple enough for a multi-day event, where the primary and the RCV general are on different days. You just need to remember to print the RCV ballots after the primary. For a single-day event using a paper ballot, focusing on step 2: the RCV ballot is recommended.

STEP 2: Pick your election/candidates.

The best mock elections have a connection to your voters. The process can be used to decide pretty much anything: from the best door prize, the next read for your book club, or what project will be the next priority for your group.

STEP 3: Design your ballot.

Depending on your meeting style, you can use a paper ballot with hand counting or an online ballot which will count the results and display them for you. Sample ballots are available in Google Sheets format for easy editing.

For online ballots, the Alaska Division of Elections and ABE both use www.rankedvote.co. While there are free options, if you want to have a two-step process or a ballot that looks like Alaska's, there is a fee. ABE has already set up numerous mock elections that you are welcome to use or can create a custom election for you for free.

STEP 4: Conduct the election:

A. Paper Ballots/hand counting:

a. Primary

1. Explain that the Primary is used to choose the candidates for the general election. All candidates will be on one unified ballot and all voters receive the same ballot. All voters pick their favorite and vote for one candidate.
2. "Close the Polls" by collecting all the ballots.
3. Count all the ballots; the top four vote getters advance to the general election.

b. Ranked Choice Voting

1. Explain that their favorite is their first choice and the rest should be ranked in order of their preference.
2. "Close the Polls" by collecting all the ballots.
3. Count all the ballots, ask participants to determine what the winning threshold is (50% +1 vote).
4. Make piles according to all the voters 1st choice votes.
5. Count each pile out loud. Write down the number of 1st choices each candidate has in round 1 below.
6. Ask if any of the candidates reached the winning threshold.
 - a. If yes, declare the winner, explaining that this could happen if a candidate had a majority of 1st choice votes. Then, illustrate the counting process below as if there wasn't a winner in the first round.
 - b. If not, ask what needs to happen next. Eliminate the least popular candidate, add those voters' ballots to their next preference. In the +/- column after round 1, subtract the eliminated candidates' votes and add the number of 2nd or 3rd choices that the remaining candidates received from the eliminated candidate's voters.
7. Count the remaining piles again out loud. Write down the total number of votes each candidate has in round 2 below.
8. Ask if any of the candidates reached the winning threshold and, if yes, declare the winner. If not, repeat the process for round 3.

Ranked Choice Voting Hand Count Worksheet

Candidates	Round 1 ONLY 1st Choices	Eliminated Candidate Votes +/-	Round 2	Eliminated Candidate Votes +/-	Round 3
Candidate 1					
Candidate 2					
Candidate 3					
Candidate 4					
Write-In					

STEP 4: Conduct the election (continued):

B. Online/Virtual Ballots:

a. Primary

1. Explain that the Primary is used to choose the candidates for the general election. All candidates will be on one ballot and all voters receive the same ballot. All voters pick their favorite and vote for one candidate.
2. "Close the Polls" by asking if everyone has voted.
3. Have everyone open the results link to show which candidates advance to the general election.

b. Ranked Choice Voting

1. Explain that their favorite is their first choice and the rest should be ranked in the order of preference.
2. "Close the Polls" by asking if everyone has voted.
3. Have everyone open the results link or refresh their browsers if they already peeked at the results. Note the total number of votes and the winning threshold – explaining that it is 50% +1 vote.
4. Ask if any of the candidates reached the winning threshold.
 - a. If yes, declare the winner, explaining that this could happen if a candidate had a majority of 1st choice votes. The virtual election will still show how the votes would be counted in rounds so you can explain the votes as if there wasn't a winner in the first round.
 - b. If not, explain the votes by round as shown in the results graphics: "Candidate A had the least votes and was eliminated in round 1. If you picked candidate A as your first choice, your vote instantly went to your second choice. You can see that ## votes from candidate A moved to candidate B and ## votes moved to candidate C."
5. Announce when a candidate reaches the winning threshold.

Please reach out to Alaskans for Better Elections if you need any help setting up your mock election by emailing: info@alaskansforbetterelections.com.