

Templates for running a school election are available on the Elections ACT website at [www.elections.act.gov.au](http://www.elections.act.gov.au). These will provide you with the ballot paper, count cards and the scrutiny sheet. You can choose a scrutiny sheet where you enter the results of the election and it will calculate the result.

You can have your own election using the Hare-Clark system. You can choose any topic to base your election on (you might use the Electorate of Waterworld resources available on the Internet) or you could use the system to actually elect representatives for a School or Class Parliament or a Student Representative Council (see also *factsheet* School Elections).

### Step 1.

Decide what/who you would like to elect. Call for nominations if you are going to elect people to certain positions. If you are just going to have a mock election decide on the topic and nominate appropriate 'candidates' (you might choose famous Australians, entertainers, television and radio personalities or sports people or even food).

### Step 2.

If you are electing people decide which candidates will form a 'party' and which will stand as an Independent candidate. Decide how many candidates are to be elected. Create and make copies of your ballot paper. Party names go across the top with candidates listed below their party name in a random order (draw out of hat) in columns.

### Step 3.

Allow time for the election campaign if you are electing people. Set a date and time for the election and work out where the election could be held. A hall is good because you will need space to set up the polling place (an area where people can vote) and the tally room (an area where the votes are counted). Even if you are having a mock election it is fun to set up an area where people can vote and count the votes.

### Step 4.

Develop an electoral roll. This is a list of names of people who are eligible to vote in your election. It is usually written up in alphabetical order using surnames first.

### Step 5.

Set up your polling place. You will need a ballot box. This is a box with a slit in the top where votes can be placed. The box should also be secured in some way so people cannot take out any votes before it is officially opened. You will also need a couple of tables where names can be marked off the electoral roll (you might get students from another class to do this). Another important thing to have is what we call voting screens. This allows people to have a secret vote. No-one is allowed to look at anyone else's ballot paper. So only one person is allowed in a voting screen at any one time (you could make your own using cardboard boxes). Save voting screens from a federal election if your school is used as a polling place.

### Step 6.

Set up your tally room. You will need a couple of large tables where all the votes can be placed and counted. It makes it easier if you have every candidate's name on a piece of paper so when the votes are counted they can be quickly placed in the correct piles. You will also need a wall or some screens to display the tally sheets (these are pieces of paper where you write down how many votes each candidate gets).

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## Step 7.

After everyone has voted and placed their ballot papers in the ballot box you can begin to count the votes. The first thing to do is to open the ballot box and empty all the ballot papers onto a table. You will need quite a few people to help with the next step. You now need to look at every ballot paper and decide if it is a formal one. If it is a formal ballot paper then find where the number 1 is and place that ballot paper on the table next to the name of the candidate. Keep doing this until all the ballot papers have been sorted (if you have any informal ballot papers put them to one side and keep them separate from the formal votes).

## Step 8.

Work out the number of votes needed to be elected (the quota) and what happens to surplus votes (those extra votes not needed to elect a candidate). Work out which candidates will have to be excluded (because they have the fewest votes) and who will receive those votes. The tallied votes can be entered into the template scrutiny sheet mentioned above.

After all the votes have been counted and you have elected the right number of candidates you can declare the poll (that is announce the winning candidates).

## Notes for teachers:

1. An informal vote is one which:
  - does not use numbers but uses ticks, crosses or other marks;
  - has more than one number 1 on the ballot paper (it becomes exhausted later if it duplicates a later preference);
  - has no numbers shown at all; or
  - has the voter's name on it.
2. To work out the quota you first of all have to count the **formal votes**. You can then use the following formula to calculate the quota.

$$\frac{\text{total number of formal votes} + 1}{\text{number of vacancies} + 1}$$

eg: formal votes = 125 (you need about 120 votes to make the election work)  
vacancies = 7

$$\frac{125}{7 + 1} + 1 \rightarrow \frac{125}{8} + 1 \rightarrow 15.6 + 1 = 16.6 = 16^*$$

**So the quota would be 16** (\* The final number is rounded down if there is a decimal remainder).  
**That is 16 votes are needed to be elected.**

3. If a candidate gets 16 votes after all the first preference votes are counted then they are elected straight away. If a candidate gets, say 20 votes, then they have a **surplus**. These surplus votes are not needed to elect a candidate so they can be distributed to other candidates according to the second preferences. In a real election all the surplus votes would be counted (they are given what is called a fractional transfer value which is calculated using another formula). But in a school election there is no need to do this, rather, just the number of surplus votes are selected at random from the elected candidate's votes and these are then sorted according to second preferences. If no candidate gets a surplus or after all the surplus votes have been distributed, the candidate with the fewest number of votes has to **be excluded**. If two candidates have the same number of votes you can exclude alphabetically or toss a coin (you would have to explain to students that in a real election this would be unusual because such large numbers of votes are involved). The excluded candidate's second preferences are then allocated. This continues until all the necessary candidates are elected.
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