

# Designing Election Websites

A nonpartisan guide to designing websites that help voters find, understand, and use elections information on the web

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Center for  
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# Introduction

At the Center for Civic Design, we know that a well designed website gives voters the information they need to become informed and confident voters. It can be a challenge to create election information that's easy to find, understand, and use, but good design will help potential voters find answers to their top questions.

Our research has shown that a successful website and content strategy means that website users can:

- Easily find and navigate through your website
- Find answers to top questions about voting including key deadlines, registration and eligibility, where to vote, and options for casting their ballot
- Act on what they learn using either online or offline tools
- Locate contact information

A good website also benefits your election office. It is easier to maintain and update, and reduces calls to your office, since voters can more easily find the information they need.

## Who are these guidelines for?

These guidelines are designed for election offices, especially small to medium-sized jurisdictions (50,000 - 120,000 residents) that do not have a large communications team to design and maintain the website. We focused on election offices of this size because of their unique contexts and challenges, including:

- Limited or slow internet access
- People with lower digital and computer literacy
- An older population with accessibility needs in rural counties
- Specific voting information needs (such as for college students and returning citizens)

A well designed, easy to use website addresses these issues and helps all voters, especially those with less digital experience and civic literacy.



## Why follow these guidelines?

Every election website—and office—is different. But all websites need:

- Intuitive navigation
- Accessible design
- Clear and concise content
- A maintenance plan

This nonpartisan guide will show you how to do all these things and more so that your voters will be able to use your website to find the information they need, understand what they find, and take action.

We'll cover tips and recommendations you can use to make design decisions whether you're updating an existing website or designing one from scratch, and regardless of your content management system, layout, or number of people on your team.

## What are these guidelines based on?

Our research on what works for voters. See [page 48](#) for more information about the research this guide is based on.

## Look out for information boxes

These call outs provide additional resources, questions to consider, and accessibility notes.



Additional  
resources

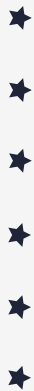


Questions to  
consider



Accessibility  
notes





# Foundations

Where to start when setting up or updating an elections website.

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Before you start updating your website, you'll want to make sure you are acquainted with the basics of how your website works. You don't need to be an IT expert, but a bit of knowledge about website foundations goes a long way when it comes to making updates.

You'll learn what questions to ask your IT department, how to familiarize yourself with the back-end of your website or select a new one, best security practices, and what information you need to start updating your website.

# When working with IT, be direct, quick, and give a time frame

Unless you have an experienced web developer on staff, you will probably work with your jurisdiction's Information Technology (IT) department. If so, these best practices for project management are especially important:

- **Prioritize tasks:** Be transparent about what's high priority, and what's low priority. In a time crunch, this will help your partners in IT deliver the most important updates quickly.
- **Give a timeline:** Make sure your timeline accounts for multiple rounds of edits, especially updates that are dictated by an election-related date.
- **Plan for busy periods:** Talk with IT about their capacity for support, especially during expected busy times.
- **Bring sketches or examples:** A quick pen-and-paper sketch or a screenshot of a great page from another jurisdiction are good conversation starters.
- **Check in early and often:** Share constructive, specific feedback about what's working and what could be improved. Check in early so that you can catch any issues that need to be reworked before IT spends more time on something.



## Questions to get started:

1. What platform is your site built on?
2. How can you ensure the website is usable and accessible for all voters?
3. Does the website work well on a mobile device?
4. If any features collect voter information, how is that data secured?





# Get to know your website platform

Chances are, your election website is built using a content management system (CMS). A CMS is software (like WordPress) that helps users organize and store content.

Spend time understanding how your website platform works. If there is someone in your office who is already in charge of making web updates, it may be useful to set up a meeting or an informal tutorial when you're getting started. Below are some questions you can ask to guide your own exploration.



## Questions to ask about your web platform:

1. Who can sign into the CMS?
2. Where are all the pages stored on the CMS? How are pages organized?
3. How do you add or edit pages?
4. How do you upload images or other types of media?
5. What is your office's approval process for making website changes?



# Connect your election website with your jurisdiction's website

Are your election pages hosted on a larger, jurisdiction-wide site?

Or do you have a standalone site dedicated to election information?

Either way, think about how your site connects to other online information put out by your jurisdiction. Two ways to do this are by using the same design elements as your jurisdiction and using the same web platform.

Here are some elements to think about to ensure your website matches the overall look of your jurisdiction's larger site:

- **Cohesive design:** Use the same fonts, colors, and other design elements as your jurisdiction. This will create a cohesive and professional look. A cohesive visual design that follows the expectations of the look and feel of a government website creates trust.
- **Adaptable to multiple devices:** Many web platforms are already mobile-friendly which means you don't have to worry about how your website will appear on smartphones.
- **Accessibility:** A CMS will often make it easier to ensure that all of the pages of the website are accessible for voters with disabilities.



# Make sure your website loads quickly

A lightweight site that doesn't require a lot of data will be faster to use for voters with slower internet, or who are accessing the website on their phones with a data plan.

Slow websites make visitors think a website isn't working when it is, or may make them lose patience and leave the page.

There are several ways to ensure your website loads quickly:

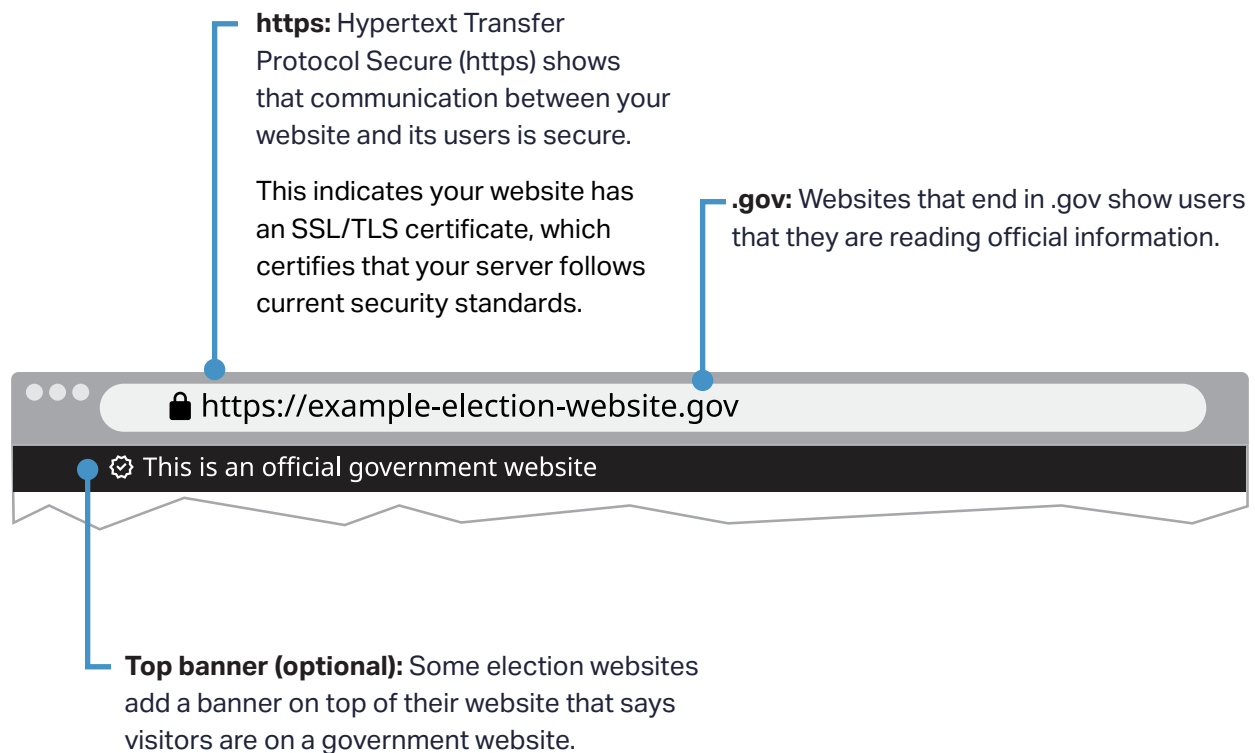
- **Know your system constraints and plan accordingly.** Plan around the speed and bandwidth of your website. Consider peak election times.
- **Use appropriate image file types.** Large images can slow down your website. Convert images to the right size and format before uploading them. You can use a free online website or an image editor to make sure your photos are properly formatted. JPEGs are a good option.
- **Consider what devices people could be using.** Websites look different when viewed on a smaller mobile screen versus a larger computer screen. If most users are checking your website on their phones, make sure your website is optimized for mobile devices. Your website analytics will show what devices people use.
- **Ask your IT team about lazy loading.** Lazy loading is a method of only loading web content when it's needed. This makes it easier and faster for users to find information they need without waiting for the whole page to load.



# Ensure your website is secure and trustworthy

Security best practices are essential for any website but especially for government sites with official voter information. Without proper security measures, users may not trust your website or be told by their service provider that the website isn't safe.

These are the essential security measures your website needs:



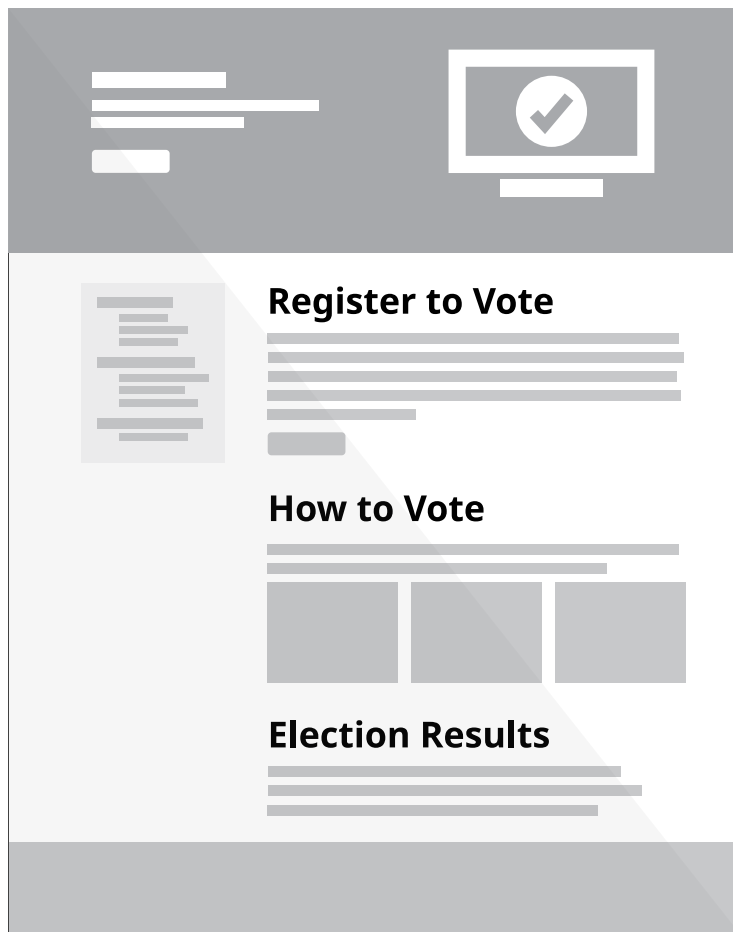
## Register a .gov:

If you need to register your website as a .gov, you can do so at [get.gov](https://get.gov).



# Decide if your content lives on 1 page or across several pages

One of the first decisions you'll have to make is whether to put all of your information on one page or spread it across multiple pages. While either option can work well, here are a few factors to consider for each:



## One-page website

### Design:

Typically simpler, with all of the information presented in a single scroll

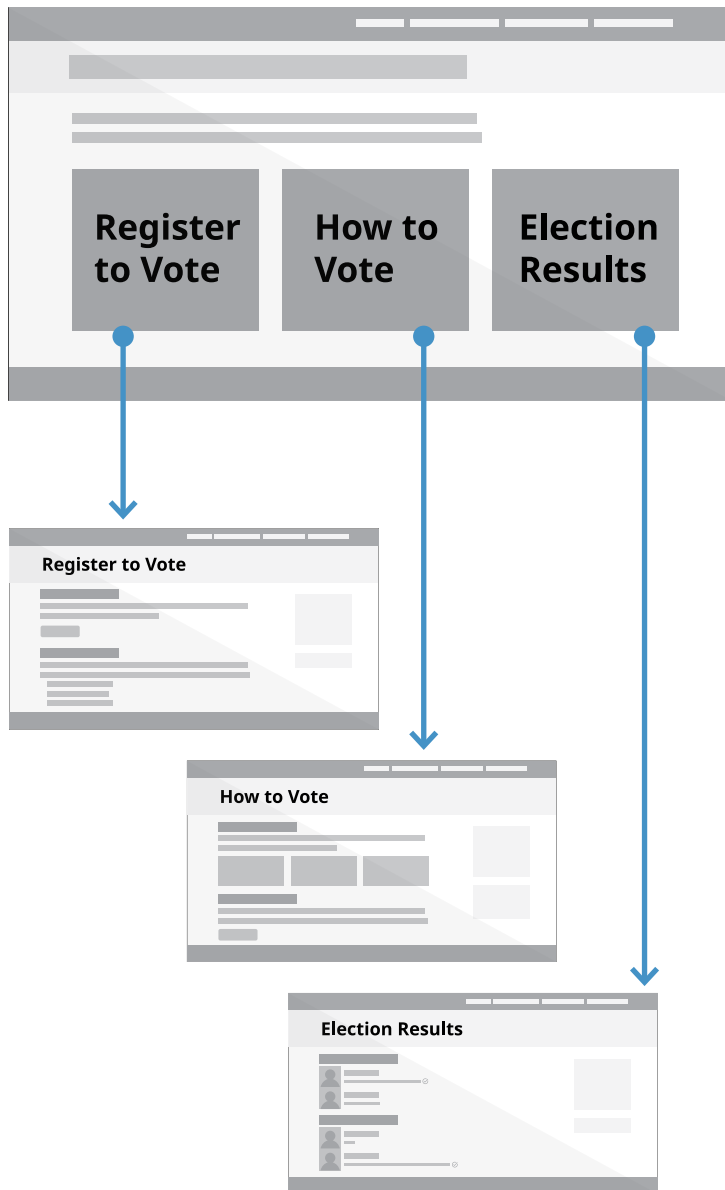
### Great for offices:

- With limited time and staff
- That only have a single page, for example, as part of a larger county website
- That have voters with limited internet access since one page is easier to load

### Keep in mind:

- Can get cluttered easily if not maintained





## Multi-page website

### Design:

Allows for more detailed and comprehensive information

### Great for offices:

- With more content
- With time and capacity to update multiple pages

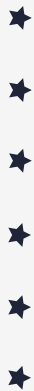
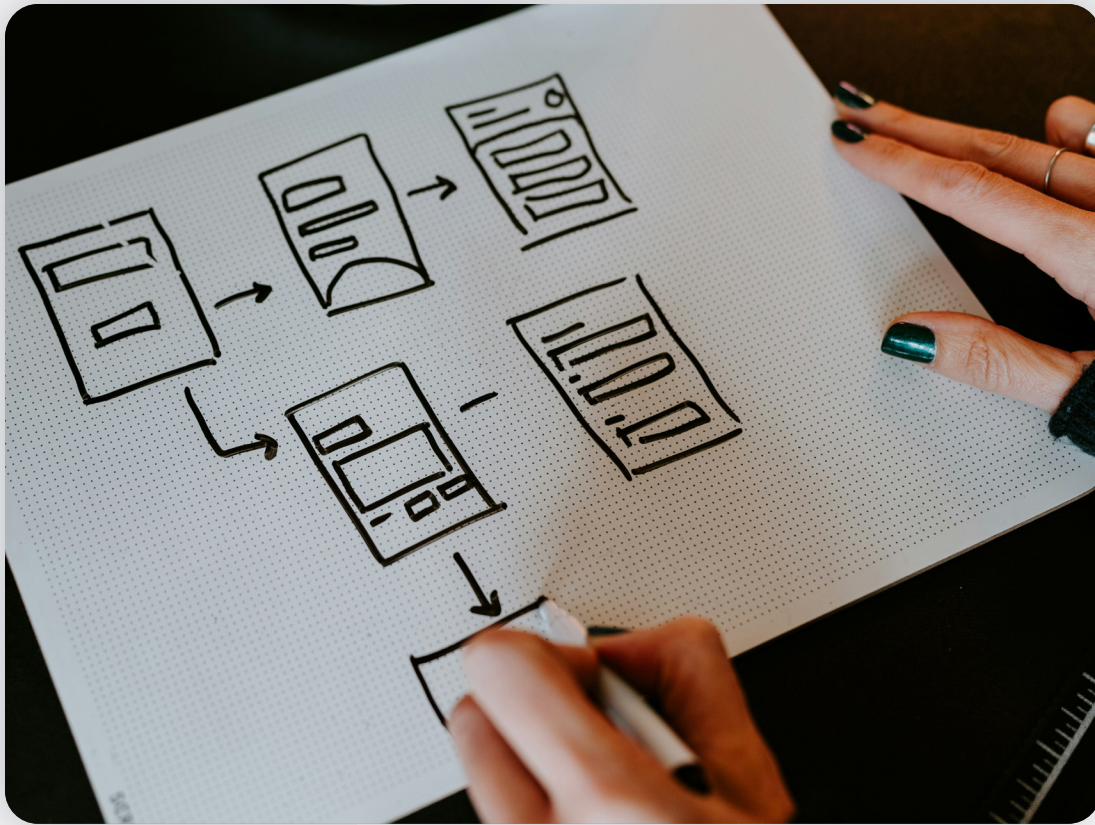
### Keep in mind:

- If not organized well, site visitors may not be able to find the information they need
- Information can get buried if there isn't a solid plan of what information goes on each page

Regardless of the format you choose, every great website will help site visitors do the following things (and we'll show you how in the upcoming sections!):

- Voters can easily find and navigate through your website
- Site visitors can find answers to top questions about voting including key deadlines, registration and eligibility, where to vote, and options for casting a ballot
- Site visitors can locate contact information for further questions





# Navigation

Your website has lots of information, but first voters need to find it.

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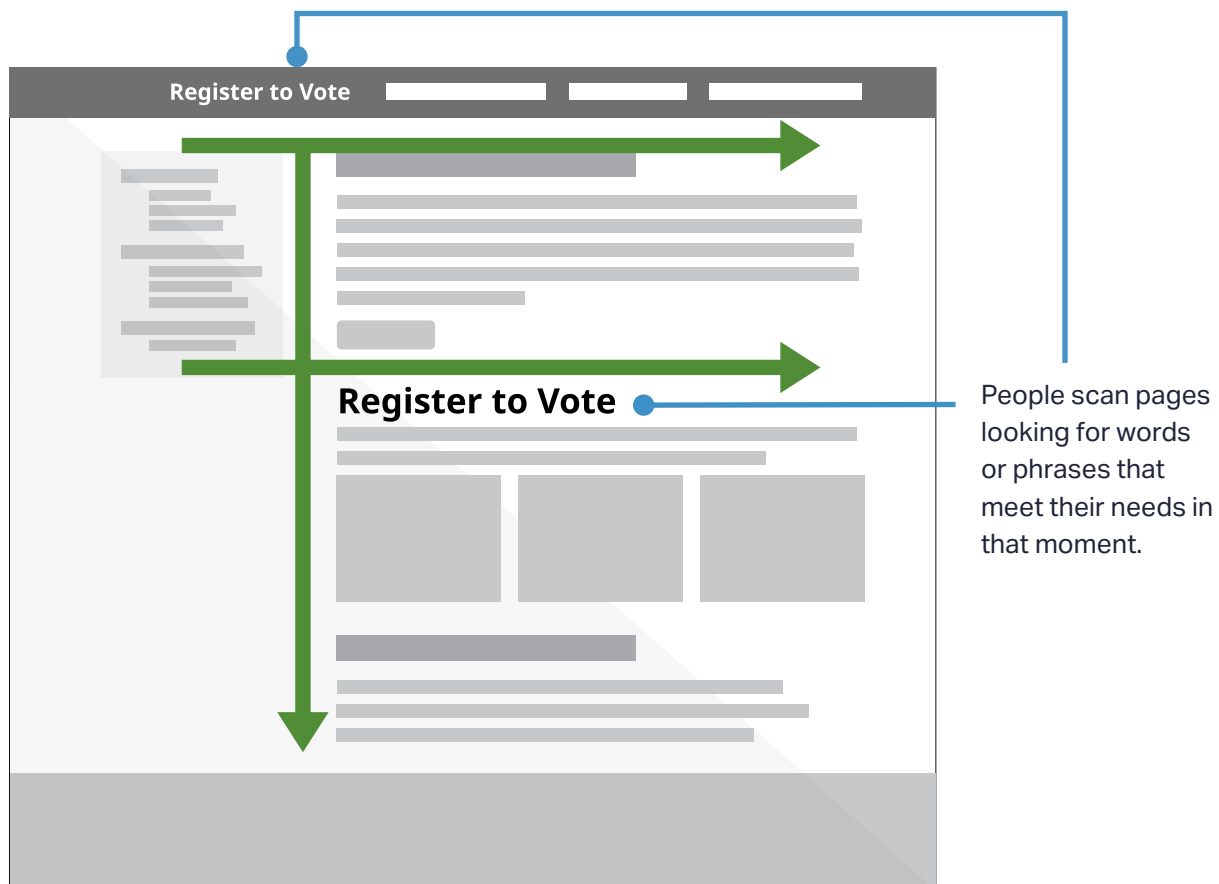
Whether you have a one-page or multi-page website, it can be challenging to organize information so that voters can find exactly what they're looking for quickly.

This section will guide you through creating menus, headers, links, and other navigation elements that help voters get to the right place on your site. We'll also cover tips on how to organize and group topics.

# Make top-level navigation easy to scan

Most internet users do not read every word on a website. Instead, they scan for keywords that are relevant to them. You can use this to your advantage if you know what keywords matter most.

Put keywords in the menu and headers. When users don't see the words they are looking for, they take longer to find what they need, or give up. When creating your navigation, think about the words and phrases that are most important for your audience, knowing that they won't be reading every word.



The green arrows show how people typically scan a page. They start by reading the first header on the page. If it doesn't immediately seem like it will answer their question, then they will skip down to the next header on the page. We call this the F-pattern of reading.





# Use words voters know in menus and headings

Menus and headings are the first place users scan on a website, which is why it's crucial to use words they know and expect to find. To write them, shift from thinking like an election official to thinking like a voter.

For example, our research found that voters were less familiar with words like "Clerk" or "Registrar" and instead searched for terms like "voting" and "elections." Even if your official office name is County Clerk and doesn't have the word elections in it, we recommend you include "elections" in your jurisdiction's top navigation menu.

Using the words voters know and use will also help make it more likely that your website will show up as a top search result on Google or another search engine.

Here are suggested alternatives to terms we found confused voters based on our research:

Use these words or phrases	Instead of these
Voter registration	Voter application
Elections office	Registrar or Clerk
Early voting location	Central Operations
Ballot	Sample ballot



# Organize navigation by groups of related topics

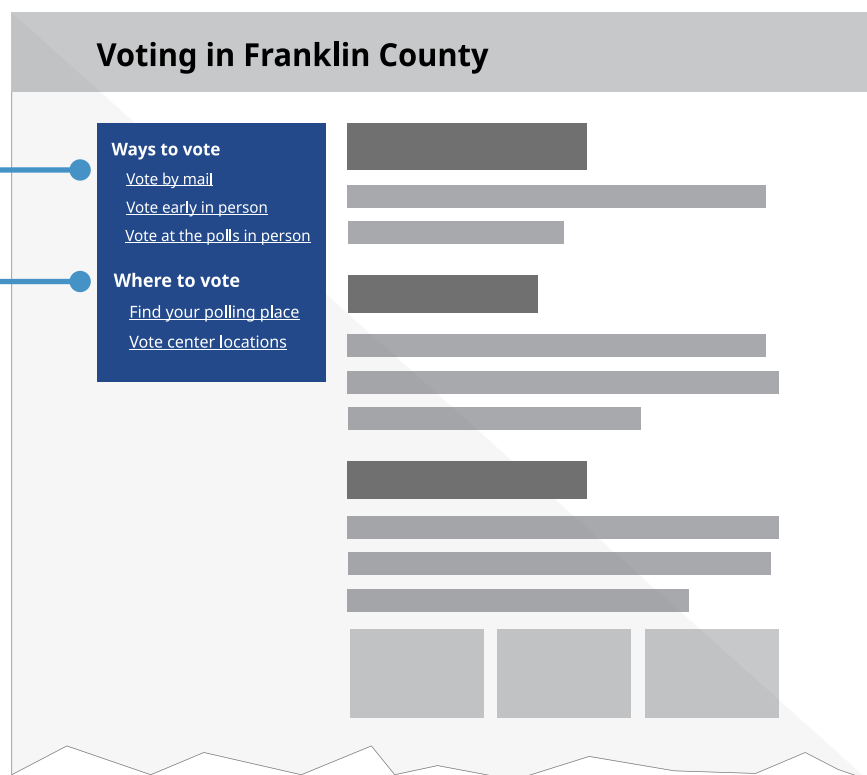
When you're planning out the website's structure, consider which topics overlap. When you find there are a few topics with a similar theme, group them under one main header. This will make it easier for users to quickly scan for the information they need.

If you are asking yourself whether the information belongs under one header or two, it is a strong indicator that there are actually two ideas, and each should get its own header.

A benefit to grouping topics is that users have to scan fewer headers, but can still find what they need.

The menu on the side provides a quick overview people can use to quickly jump to the right section of the page

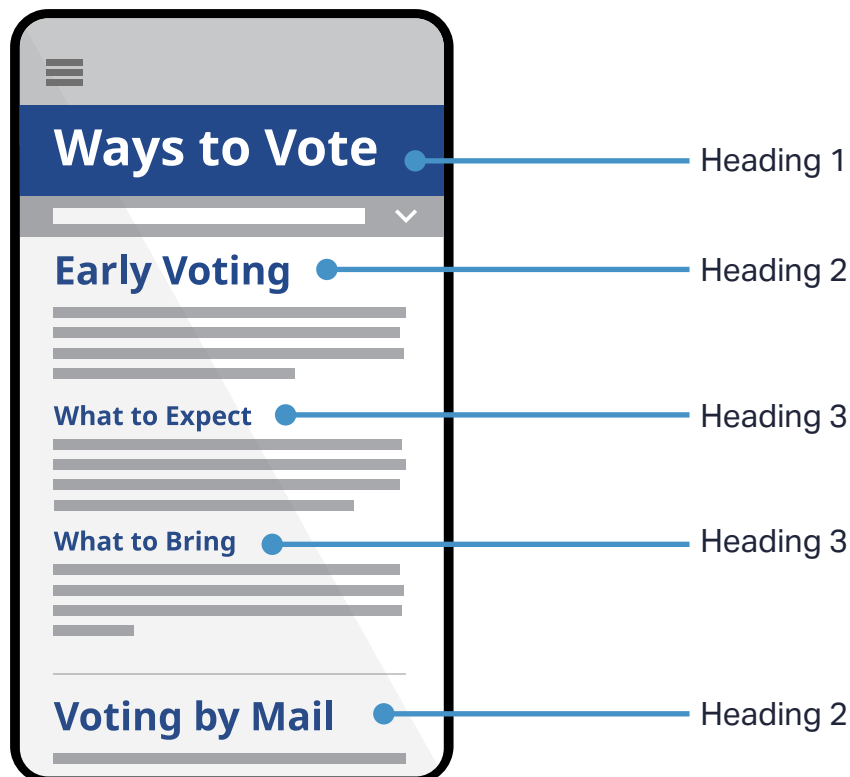
Every bold, far left menu item is an H2.  
Every indented header is an H3



# Make headings easy to find using visual design cues

Headings should be easy to find on a page. Change font size, color, bold, and spacing to make headings stand out from other text on the page.

There should only be one heading 1 (h1) per page. Each new section should then have a heading 2 (h2), and sub-headings for that section should be a heading 3 (h3).



## Page Headings:

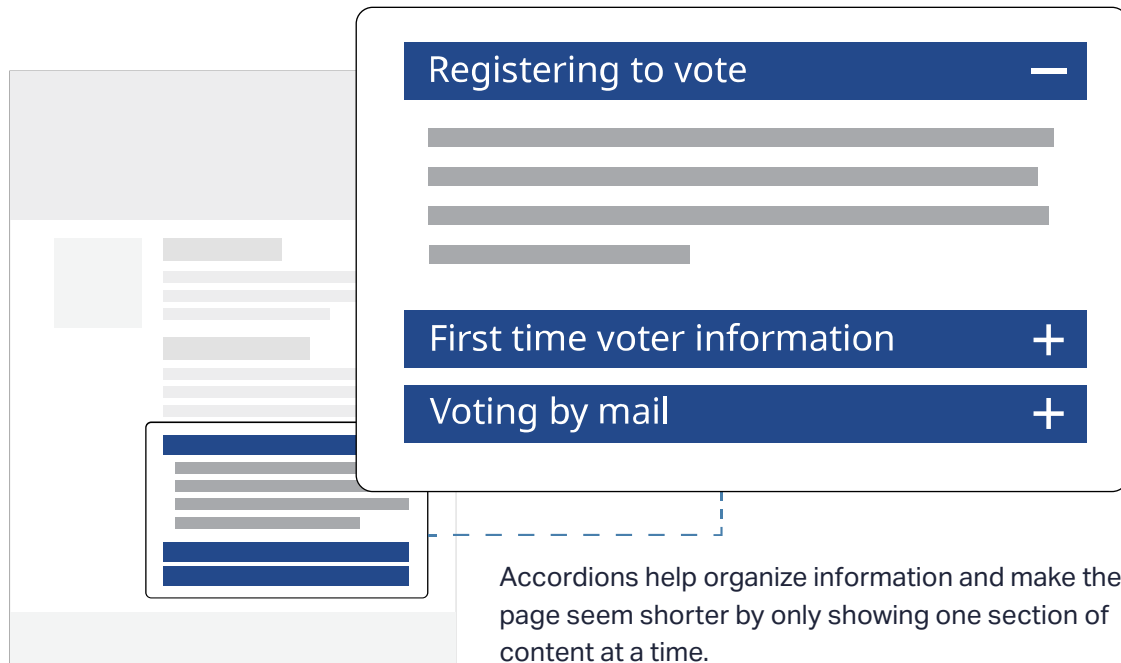
Headings are an essential tool to help people using screen readers navigate the page.



# Use accordions to help voters scan a range of options and select the information they need

An accordion organizes a long page of information by showing the subtopics but hiding the body text. This way, the main subject is visible, and the user can click for more info if they need it. Accordions are also a great solution for small sites that need to fit everything on one page.

Accordions give you the advantages of good headings, but keep the page short so that it's easy for voters to scan the headings before deciding what to read. Your accordion headers should be formatted as H2s or H3s, not as body text. Write headings as questions or as phrases with verbs.



# Let people know when they are leaving your website

Local election websites often link to external websites like the state election website, or resources like maps or forms. It's best practice to let users know that they are leaving your website.

Good links are specific. Emphasize in the link text that the voter is about to be taken to a new website. If the link opens to a file in a new window, include the file format (such as a PDF) in the text link. Keep the format of the link text consistent throughout the website.

For example, if the voter registration page is on a different website, such as one run by the state:



[Go to the STATE online voter registration form](#)

Explain what website they are navigating to before leaving.



[Register to vote \(at the StateVotes website\)](#)

Tell voters what site they will be taken to if they follow the link.



[Register to vote](#) 

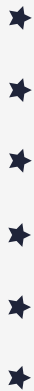
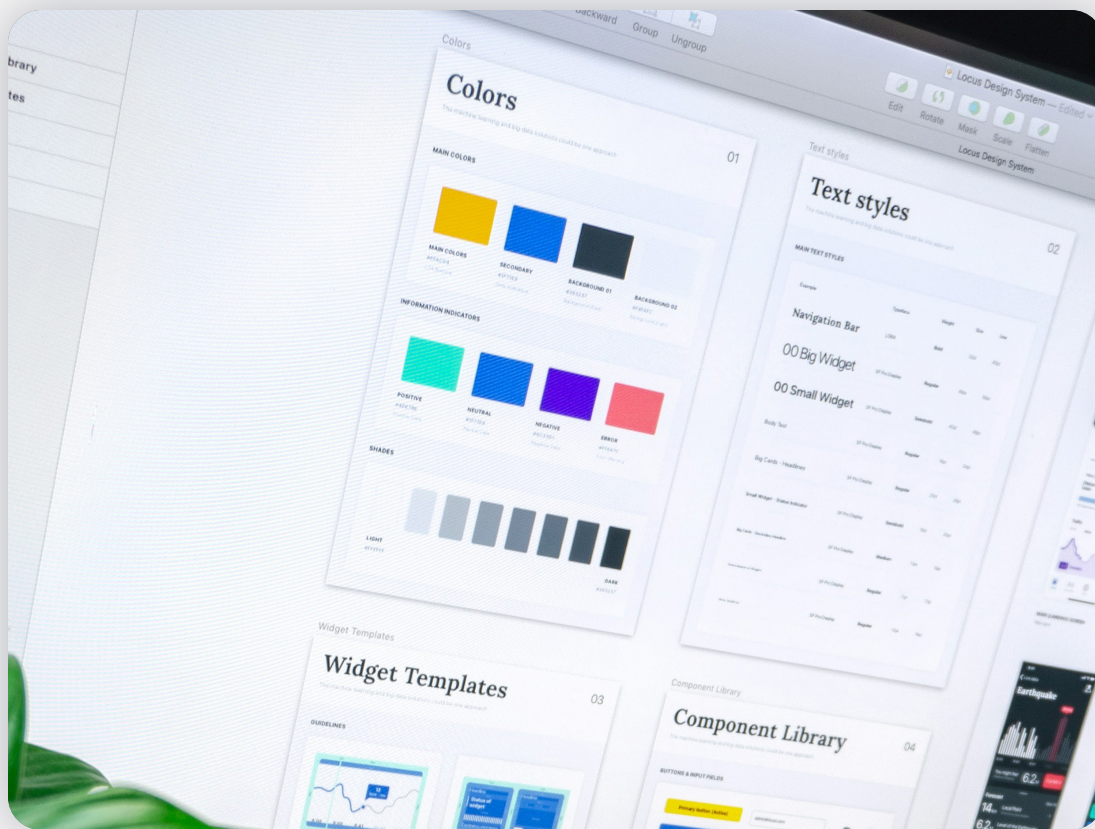
An icon with a small arrow in the top right corner pointing out of a box is often used to indicate an external link.



[Register to vote](#)

There is no way of knowing if this goes to another website.





# Design and page layout

A cohesive website design can communicate trust and authority.

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Visual consistency is an important part of communicating the trust, professionalism, and authority of a website. This section highlights different design elements and page layout options to consider when building or updating your website.

# Elements of strong information design

Using consistent visual design elements throughout your website not only looks good, but also has a practical purpose. It helps site visitors process information more quickly because they begin to recognize patterns (e.g. this combination of font and color means that a new section is starting).

Consistent use of visual design elements also helps build trust and recognition. If your website, social media, and printed materials all use similar design elements, it helps voters to recognize when something is coming from your office. This section dives into best practices for the following essential design elements:

## Page layout

Every webpage has a layout. Layout simply means the order and placement of text and media on a page. Layout has a big impact on how users process and understand information on your website.

## Information hierarchy

Information hierarchy refers to how information is organized and divided by headings so that it's easier to read and follow.

## Fonts

Fonts communicate messages. They can be playful, bold, or authoritative, for example. For an election website, stick with clear and simple fonts.

## Imagery

Imagery like icons and photos helps break up text and can make it easier to read. They also help users scan your website for information they need.

## Colors

Color can help set the tone and establish a cohesive look or brand identity.



# Use consistent fonts

Using the same fonts throughout your website helps establish trust and authority. Here are a few key tips when selecting which fonts to use:

- Use just 2 fonts to keep your design looking cohesive.
- Use the same fonts as your jurisdiction's website. This will help communicate to website visitors that the information is coming from the same source.
- Use a sans-serif font. Sans-serif fonts do not have little extension lines or flourishes at the end of the strokes. They are easier to read on a screen, especially for people with dyslexia or whose primary language doesn't use the English alphabet.
- Make sure heading font sizes are consistent. Each heading (H1s, H2s and H3s, for example) should follow a consistent style (including the same font, size, and color).



## Ways to Vote

Placeholder text for the first section.

### Voting on Election Day

Placeholder text for the second section.

### Vote by Mail

Placeholder text for the third section.

### Early Voting

Placeholder text for the fourth section.

The same font is used for all headings. The font size changes between Headings 1 and 2.



## Ways to Vote

Placeholder text for the first section.

### Voting on Election Day

Placeholder text for the second section.

### Vote by Mail

Placeholder text for the third section.

### Early Voting

Placeholder text for the fourth section.

Each heading uses a different font and font size. This makes it harder for site visitors to recognize the relationship between different sections. It also looks cluttered.



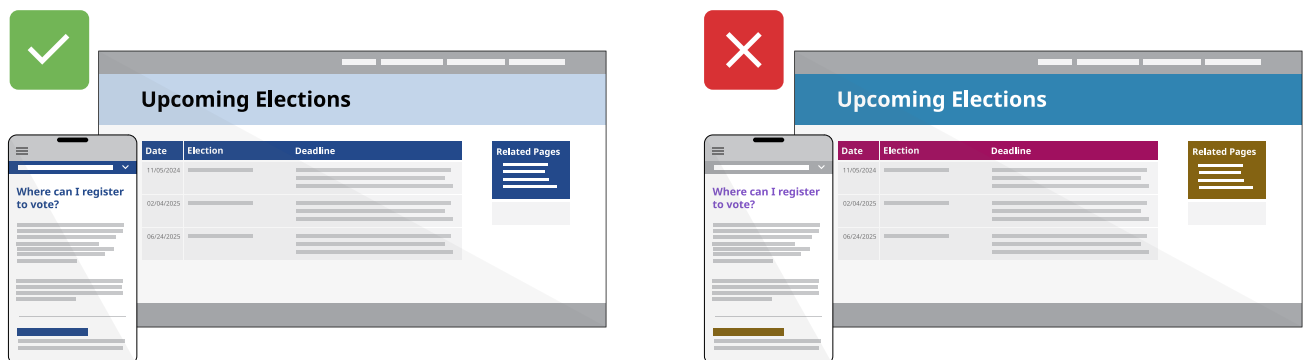


# Use consistent colors

Color is a large part of creating visual consistency. Colors can communicate different messages. On a government website, users expect a color palette that communicates trust and authoritative material.

If you use multiple colors on your site and materials (which you probably will because color helps add interest and variety!), be sure to choose colors that work well together, and that are easy to read.

For consistency, use the same colors and fonts as your jurisdiction's website.



## Check color contrast:

You can check whether there is enough contrast between the text and the background using free tools like [WebAIM's WAVE](#).

A tool to choose accessible colors can help you select a group of colors that work well together, including text and background colors that make text easy to read.

If your website is maintained through a CMS, you'll likely have pre-defined site styles that help maintain consistency.



# Use icons to help readers scan information

Icons are a powerful tool for communicating civic information. They are impactful because we process visual content 60,000 times faster than written text. Icons help readers skim material so they can find what they need more quickly.

Icons draw attention to important ideas or actions to take. You can use them in headers or to help break up body text. Make sure the icons you choose are the same style and size.



## Free icons:



There are many resources for free icons to download and use on your website.

[Civic icons and images library](#) is a collection of free, adaptable icons specifically designed for election materials.

[Google's icon library](#) is a huge collection of icons covering a range of topics.



# Put the most important information in the main menu or center section of the page

Mobile phone users and people with low literacy read web pages straight down the middle of the page. The main menu or center of the page should include the items below.

Show the name of the jurisdiction

Include the authority behind the site, such as the clerk, registrar, or board – by title and name

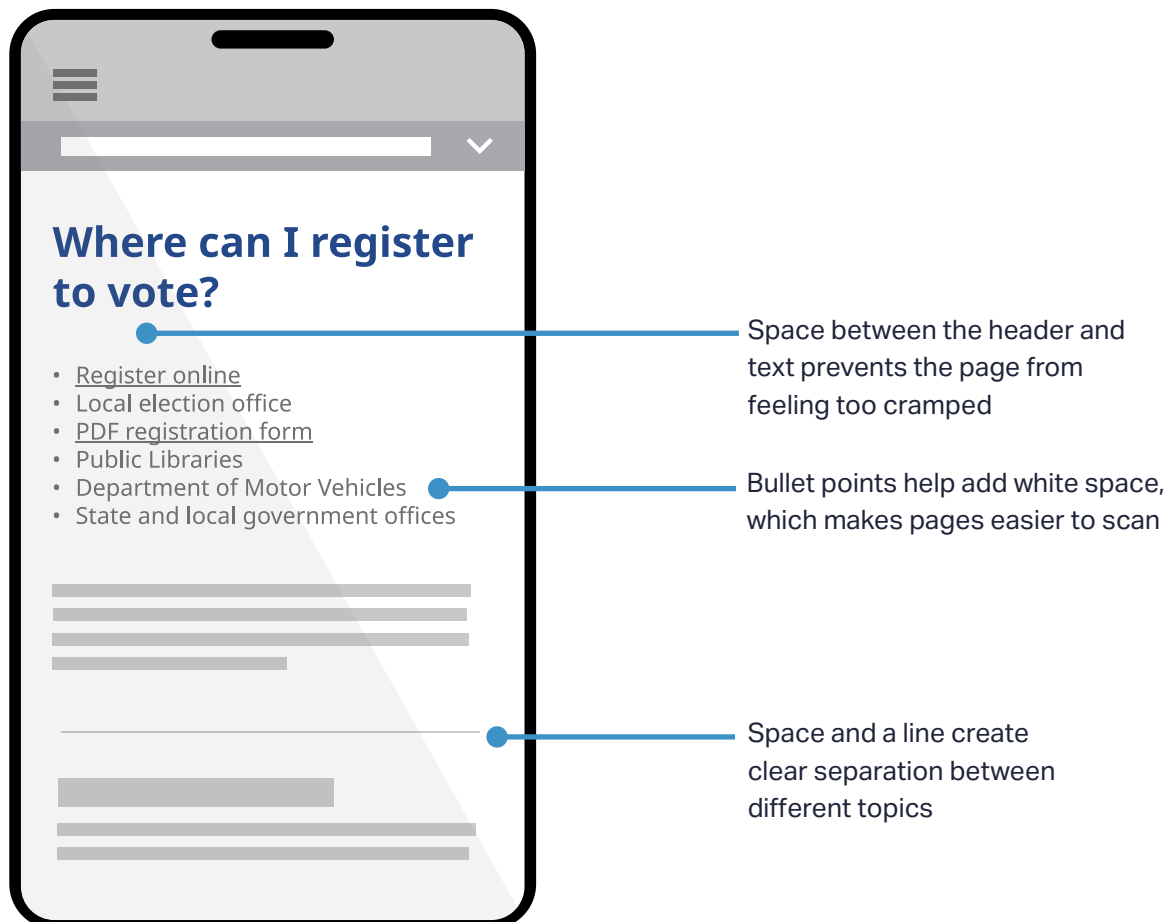
Add in-language links to language access resources

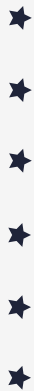
Leave the most room on the page for content that answers voters' questions



# Incorporate white space to make web pages easier to read

There are multiple ways to break up text so that it's easier to read and skim. Make sure each section has enough white space before and after headings. Use bullet points to organize the information on the page to help website users skim. You can turn any list of more than two items into a bulleted list.





# Content

Feature content on your site based on what your site visitors need.

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Voters come to your website looking for answers to specific questions. Poll workers, candidates, and the media will have their own set of questions. This section will help you get in the mind of your site visitors, so that you can select and write the most relevant content for them.

# Focus on answering voter questions

Voters come to your website searching for answers to their questions.

**Some common voter questions include:**

- What's on the ballot?
- Where and how do I vote?
- How do I get a sample ballot?
- When is the election?
- Who can I contact with questions?

We've learned from our research that voters start by asking what is on the ballot, how to vote, and when to vote. Make sure they can find the information from the main page of your website, either with specific answers to popular questions or links to pages with answers. For each topic, you can include answers to common questions, either as headings, in expanders, or in a short list of questions and answers.



# ‘What’s on the ballot?’

## Tell users and show an example

Often, a voter’s top question is about what’s on the ballot. Help voters find their exact ballot so that they can feel prepared before voting. This is especially important for new voters. Have a page or section dedicated to answering this question. It should include a sample ballot as voters like to have one to practice on, or a link to a voter lookup portal.

### Ballot Lookup

Enter your zip code to view the list of measures and contests that you will be able to vote on in any upcoming elections.

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

[View my ballot](#)

### Ballot Lookup

#### District 12

[View Sample Ballot](#)

#### District 13



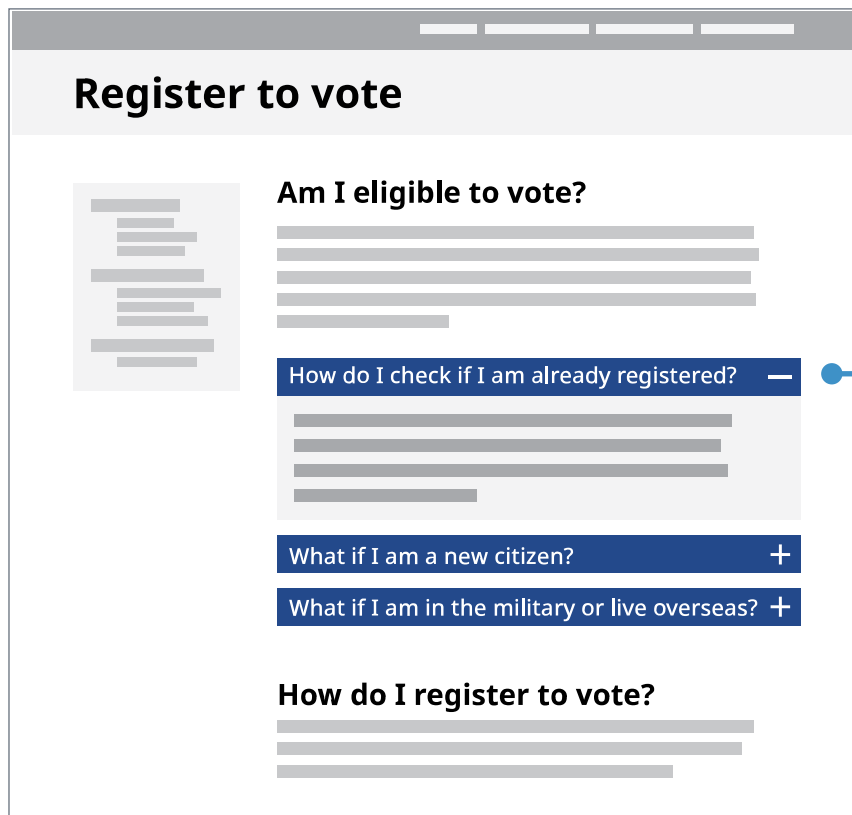
# Answer questions where people are going to ask them

Start with general information that applies to most people when you introduce a new topic, like registering to vote or the vote-by-mail process.

But also anticipate what questions might come up for people about their specific situation. An out-of-state student and a returning citizen will have different questions about registering to vote.

Provide answers to related questions close to where people will ask them. That could take the form of:

- A list of questions with answers
- Accordions that open to show answers
- Links to dedicated pages for specific voter groups



List relevant common questions with answers in an accordion format on each topic page.





# Build dedicated pages for voter groups

Some groups of voters will have questions about multiple steps of the voting process.

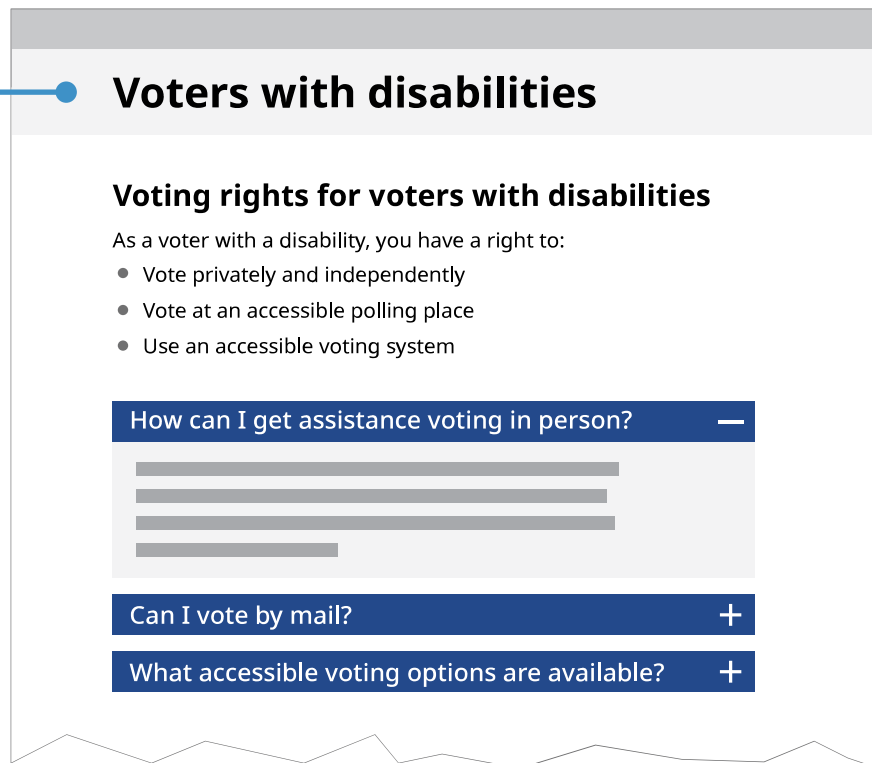
In those cases, consider creating a separate page dedicated to voters in specific situations. This might include voters with disabilities, or voters whose primary language is not English.

The purpose of the page is to

- gather the info that is specific to their circumstances in one place
- provide links directly to general pages so they have easy access to the same information as other voters

Use key words like "student" or "new citizen" in the navigation to help site visitors find the information that is most relevant to them, and to increase the likelihood of this page appearing in internet searches.

Create pages of the site dedicated to specific topics.



# Write exact dates and deadlines

Voters want to know the actual dates to help them make sense of all the steps in an election. Don't make them calculate a date by counting on their fingers.

Include dates on the center of your home page and relevant areas.



11/05/2024



Tuesday, November 5, 2024



The third Thursday of...



# Give details about physical locations

Help voters plan by providing location information. Voters with disabilities, voters new to an area, voters who use public transportation, and others benefit from additional information about physical locations.

Include this information about the physical location of polling locations and your office:



# Prioritize web native content over PDFs

Avoid burying content in a PDF. Important information should be on a website and easy to find without downloading a PDF.

If important information is in a PDF, website users will need to take an extra step to view or download it. Text in a PDF is also not indexed on search engines, which means if a website user is searching for a question answered in a PDF, they won't see it.

The exception to this are downloadable PDFs that need to be filled out. In these cases, make sure to let site users know they are about to download a PDF.



## **Making PDFs accessible:**

If you do need to make a PDF, these resources can help you make them more accessible:

- Vol. 105 [Creating accessible forms for print + PDF](#) from the Center for Civic Design
- [Microsoft Office](#) accessibility tools from the Center for Civic Design
- [Google Workspace](#) accessibility tools from Adobe
- Making accessible PDFs in [Adobe Acrobat](#) from Adobe



# Create a pre-election checklist

When all of the election information voters need is on your website and easy to find, election day will go more smoothly. On the other hand, when information is out of date, it will create confusion and potentially more questions.

Before the election, check your website to make sure all of the essential information voters need is up-to-date. Here's a checklist you can use:

## Website information update checklist

### Registration

- ☐ Last day to register before election day
- ☐ Same day registration (if applicable)

### What's on the ballot

- ☐ Table of all races and candidates
- ☐ Links to ballot look up

### Vote by mail

- ☐ Link to vote by mail application
- ☐ Deadline to apply for a mail ballot
- ☐ Deadline to return a mail ballot

### Early Voting

- ☐ Table of all early voting locations with addresses, dates, and times of operation

### Voting on election day

- ☐ Voting location and hours

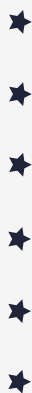
### Election calendar

- ☐ List of voter-specific dates (voter registration deadline, vote by mail application deadline, early voting deadline, canvass dates, etc.)

### About us

- ☐ Contact name and email addresses of election office
- ☐ Physical address, mailing address, phone number, fax number for office





# Maintenance

Create a plan to keep your website updated.

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Election websites need to be continually updated with the latest information about each election, including correct dates, times, locations and other essential details. This section covers recommendations for how to manage your website's content over time.

# Keep a list of essential dates that require updates

When a website user goes on your site and sees that election dates are from 1 or 2 years prior, they will assume all the information on the website is out of date, too. And, more importantly, they won't get the critical information they need! Keep a list of which pages need to be updated for every election and the information on each page, including primary, general, and special elections, to make it as easy as possible to update.

## Website date/time update list

### Homepage

- Election calendar
- Election date and time

### Voter registration

- Table of all races and candidates

### Vote by mail page

- Deadline to apply for a ballot by mail
- Deadline to return a ballot by mail

### Early Voting

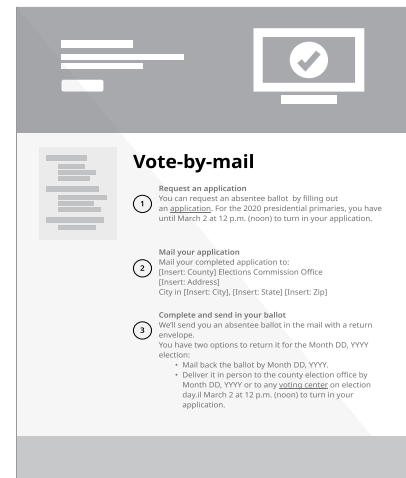
- Dates, and times of operation

### Voting on Election Day

- Election date
- Polling location hours

### Election calendar

- Table of voter-specific dates (voter registration deadline, vote by mail application deadline, early voting deadline, canvass dates, etc.)
- Table of candidate-specific dates (filing deadlines, campaign finance disclosure deadlines, etc.)



Organize your update list by webpage to make it easy.

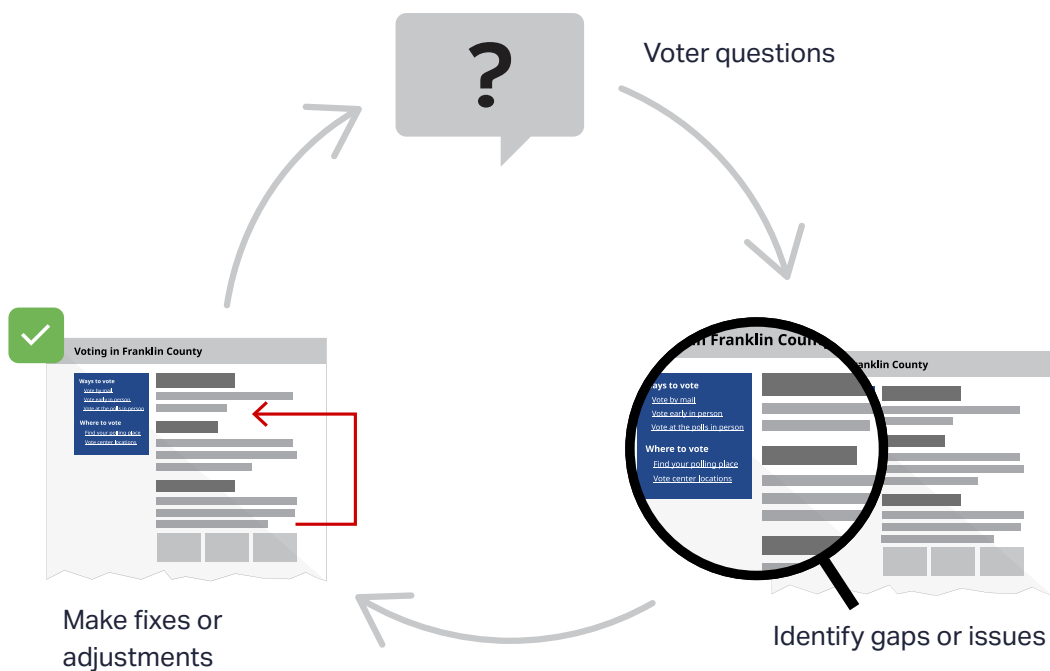


# Use voter questions as feedback to update your website

Make a list of the top questions you get asked over email, phone calls, and other sources. This list will help you identify any points of confusion that continue to come up. These questions are feedback about what's findable on your website and where users are frequently getting confused.

For example, if the voter registration link is on your website, but your office continues to receive calls asking how to register, consider making the link more findable. It could be that the button is too small and users keep missing it, or maybe the text isn't large enough. Voter questions are a starting point for revising your website and making it more usable.

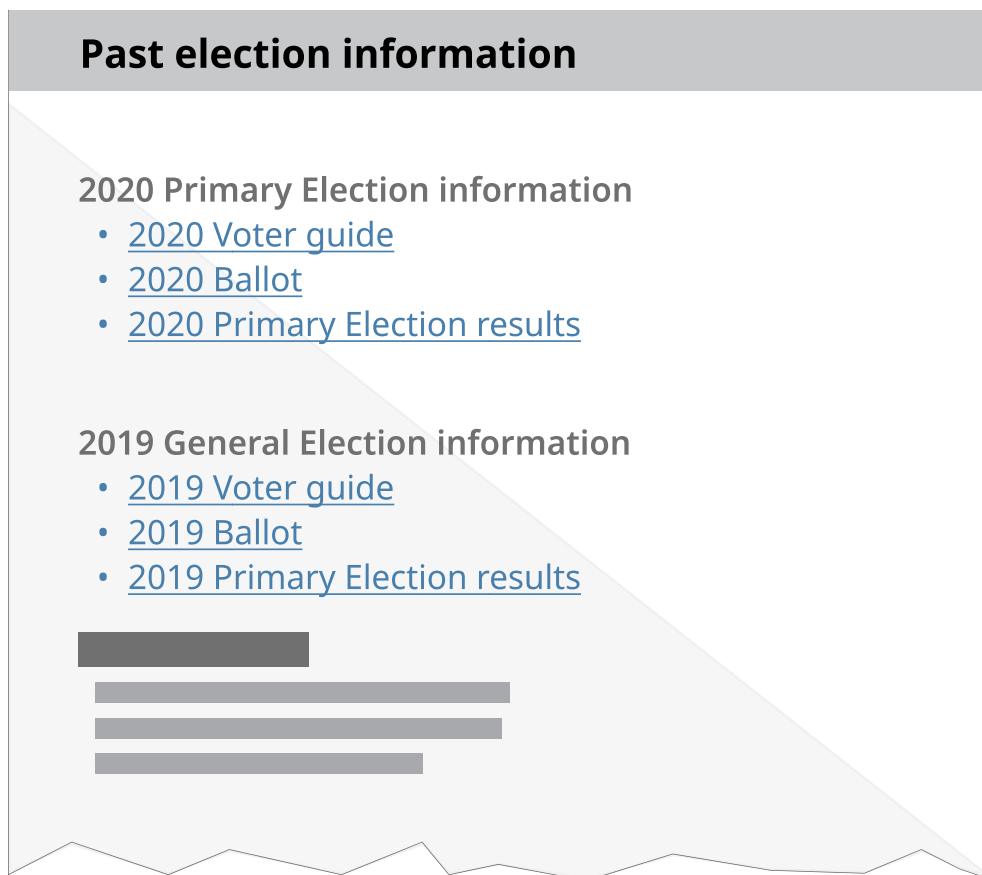
If you find through voter questions that crucial information is out of date, make sure you have a plan to update this information right away.

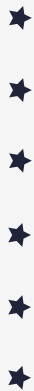




# Create an archive section for past elections

An archive is an efficient way to make election information available on the website after an election is over. It also helps people find the history of your elections. Previous election results, voter guides, and ballots can all fit into an archive section.





# Improvement

Keep adapting your website to meet your audience's needs.

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User feedback is one of the most helpful ways to improve your website before you launch new content. When you know what website users are responding positively to and what is confusing them, you can make necessary changes so your website can run more smoothly. This section covers two ways to collect user feedback: Testing your website and collecting website analytics.

# Test your website with voters

The best way to make sure your website is easy to use is to ask the people who will use it. Asking your community about their experience using your website will help you make improvements so that you can better meet your community's needs.

This process is called usability testing and it's easier than you think. Here are the basic steps:

1. Identify a few tasks that are essential to navigating your website, such as finding the date of the next election.
2. Recruit participants. Ask them to complete the above tasks and observe their process. When you conduct a usability test, you're looking for both what worked (successes) and what didn't work (failures). For example:
  - Failure to find information
  - Places where the participant didn't follow instructions
  - Any signs that the participant doesn't understand the information or actions needed
  - Any errors specific to the material being tested
3. Review your observations. If participants struggled with specific tasks, make revisions to your website based on what you learned.



## Getting started with usability testing:

- [Usability testing toolkit](#) from the Center for Civic Design
- Field Guide Vol. 3: [Testing ballots for usability testing](#) from the Center for Civic Design
- Workbook Vol. 107: [Conducting multilingual usability testing](#) from the Center for Civic Design



# Use analytics to identify possible areas to improve your website

Tracking analytics can lead to valuable insights about how your audience is using your website, what's working, and what can be clearer.

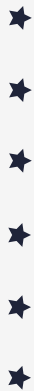
You don't have to be an expert in analytics to make use of the free information available through tools like Google Analytics. These tools can tell you which pages are the most popular and which ones may not be getting any attention. From there, you can adjust your website accordingly.

Here's an example:

Let's say your homepage is where you keep all essential voter information. Ideally, website visitors land here first. However, your web analytics reveal that visitors are actually arriving to a different page first. Knowing this, you can take a number of different steps:

1. Find out why visitors are landing on 1 page and not another and make necessary changes to direct users to the page you want them to visit
2. Move essential information to the current most visited page so that users see the essential information they need regardless





# Resources

This guide is just the start of your website design journey.

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We've compiled a list of resources to help support your website updates. The resources are organized by the chapters of this guide.

# Helpful resources

## Types of resources



Article



Website







Online  
course






Video

## Foundations ([page 7](#))

-  [Get.Gov](#): A source on how to transfer to a .Gov domain
-  [Vol. 7 Designing election department websites](#): A guide for election offices on creating voter websites by the Center for Civic Design
-  [Communicating Trusted Election Information](#): A 6-part series about using your website and social media to fight disinformation and build trust by the Center for Tech and Civic Life
-  [Cybersecurity for Election Officials](#): A 4-part online series where you gain new skills that empower your election office to manage cyber threats and communicate with the public about cybersecurity by the Center for Tech and Civic Life

## Navigation ([page 15](#))

-  [Plainlanguage.gov](#): A government resource of trainings and guidelines on writing in plain language
-  [a11yproject.com/checklist](#): A comprehensive technical checklist that uses The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), a shared standard for web content accessibility for individuals, organizations, and governments, as a reference point
-  [WAVE® Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools](#): A suite of evaluation tools that helps authors make their web content more accessible to individuals with disabilities



## Design and page layout ([page 22](#))

- 📺 [Creating quality voter outreach graphics](#): A tutorial for creating quality visual graphics on Canva
- 📺 [How to: Design impactful voter education materials](#): A toolkit to help create engaging, accessible, and action-oriented voter education materials

## Content ([page 29](#))

- 📺 [Creating a Google Map for your elections website](#): A video tutorial to help offices create a personalized Google map by the Center for Civic Design
- 📺 [Election Official Toolkit: Using Google Maps to Display Election Information](#): A guide to using Google Maps as an option to show different data sets on online maps and how to update the information on a regular basis by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission

## Improvement ([page 42](#))

- 📺 [Usability.Gov](#): A collection of government resources on usability testing
- 📺 [An IRS case study](#): A video on how to continuously improve your website by using customer feedback and web analytics





# The research behind this guide

This research, like our earlier Field Guide Vol. 7 Designing Election Department Websites, is based on a substantial body of knowledge on creating accessible websites, including our own research watching voters with disabilities try to use local election department websites. Two research projects were especially important:

## Audit of small-to-medium sized jurisdiction election websites (2023)

What makes a great election website for small-medium jurisdictions? As part of a project with the U.S. Alliance for Elections Excellence, we revisited our past website recommendations and assessed how they might need to change to work for offices of different sizes. For this research, we looked at the user experience and information design of 20 election websites in small-medium jurisdictions. We then conducted usability testing on a selection of those sites with voters in Indiana, Missouri, and Connecticut.

## Usability of county election websites (2013)

We cataloged 147 county websites, and then conducted a large-scale, distributed usability test with 41 voters from across the U.S. using their own county's website. We sought to learn about what local election jurisdictions were offering for content, what terminology they used to describe it, and how useful and usable that content was to voters.

Read more about our research on [civicdesign.org](https://civicdesign.org).







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In collaboration with the  
Center for Civic Design

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