

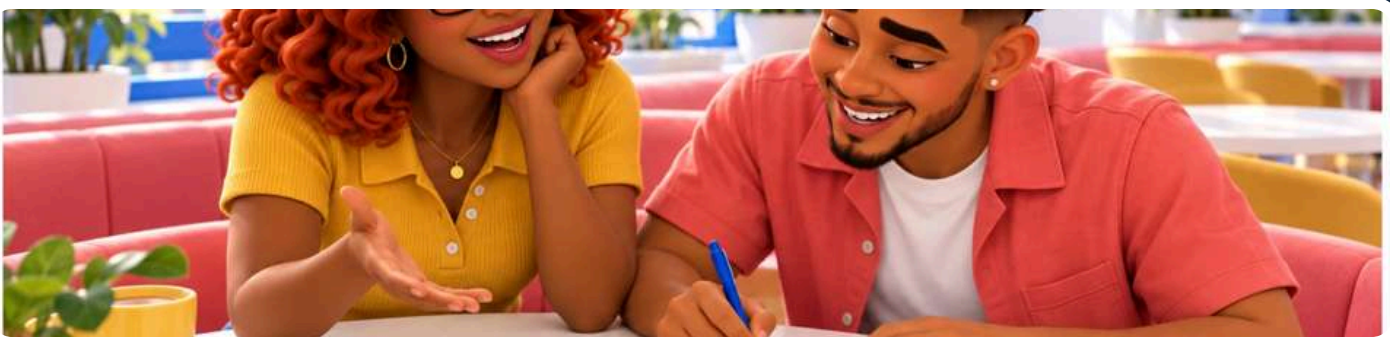
Case 9: What is on your ballot, and where do you check?

Dec turns 18 before the election on November 3, 2026, and his feed covers only one race on his ballot.

On your own Read What happened. Underline the contests Mateo finds below the big race. About 4 minutes.

Your role: You're the one who finds Dec's official sample ballot before anyone tells him how to vote.

New skill: Check an official source for your own area.



Mateo and Gia work in a notebook at a café table.

What happened

It is Sunday at the library desk. Dec turns 18 in October, before the general election on November 3, 2026. His feed is full of posts about one big race. Mateo and Gia are helping him find out what else is on his ballot.

They look at a sample ballot for the November election. The front shows the big race from Dec's feed. The second page has more: a school board race, a city council seat and Measure T, a transit bond. Mateo notices that nobody is posting about Measure T.

A creator's voter guide is also going around. It says registration closes "the 14th," but it never names a state. It also tells people how to vote on the school board race and Measure T. Gia is writing a reminder for the group chat.

Mateo has his own problem. He may still be registered at his mom's address in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Dec says he does not need anyone to pick for him. He needs to know what is on his ballot and whether he is registered in time.

Your question: What is on Dec's ballot, and where should he check his own information?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 4 minutes.

Sample ballot A sample ballot is a preview of the contests and measures that will appear on your ballot.

En español: boleta de muestra

In this case: Dec's sample ballot lists a school board race, a city council seat and Measure T below the big race from his feed.

Voter guide A voter guide is a document that explains or recommends choices in an election.

En español: guía para votantes

In this case: A creator's voter guide mixes one deadline with two picks: "vote Candidate B" and "Measure T: yes, obviously."

Registration Registration is signing up with your election office so that you are on the list of people who can vote.

En español: inscripción electoral

In this case: Dec turns 18 in October and needs to know whether he is registered in time. The guide's deadline names no state.

Jurisdiction A jurisdiction is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority.

En español: jurisdicción

In this case: Mateo may still be registered in New Bedford, Massachusetts. A different place can mean a different ballot and a different deadline.

Who is involved



Mateo

Helping Dec read the sample ballot

"Dec's feed is all the big race. Then you flip the sample ballot: school board, city council, a transit bond. Nobody's posting about Measure T."



Gia

Writing the group-chat reminder

"The creator's guide says 'registration closes the 14th.' Whose 14th? It doesn't even say which state."

Before you look at the evidence, what do you think is on Dec's ballot?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Jurisdiction, information and the first ballot

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Sample ballot:** A sample ballot is a preview of the contests and measures that will appear on your ballot.
- **Voter guide:** A voter guide is a document that explains or recommends choices in an election.
- **Registration:** Registration is signing up with your election office so that you are on the list of people who can vote.
- **Jurisdiction:** A jurisdiction is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority.
- **Claim:** A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Material connection:** A material connection is a relationship with a brand, like payment or a free product, that viewers might not expect.

The story: Two first-time voters, two ballots

Dec turns 18 in October, before the general election on November 3, 2026. His feed has taught him that the election is about one race. At the library desk on Sunday, Mateo, 22, and Gia, 21, help him read a sample ballot that says otherwise. Beneath the federal race sit a state senate seat, a judicial retention, two school board seats, a city council seat and Measure T, a transit improvements bond. Mateo observes that no one is posting about Measure T.

A creator's voter guide circulates in the group chat. It combines one apparent fact, that registration closes "the 14th," with two unexplained recommendations: a school board candidate described as "the only one who cares about students" and "yes, obviously" on Measure T. Dec rejects the premise that he needs someone to choose for him. His questions are practical and prior to any choice. What is on his ballot, and is he registered in time?

Mateo's situation adds a complication many college students share. He moved from New Bedford, Massachusetts, for school and may still be registered at his mom's address. If so, his ballot, his deadline and even his election office differ from Dec's. He plans to check that night.

Your role is to find Dec's official sample ballot before anyone tells him how to vote.

❓ **Stop and think.** Is a voter guide with unlabeled recommendations misleading, or simply incomplete, and why?

Information versus recommendation

A **sample ballot** is a preview of the contests and measures that will appear on your ballot. A **voter guide** is a document that explains or recommends choices in an election. Treating the two as interchangeable is the core error the case targets. The sample ballot defines the decision set. A guide proposes a way through it.

The analysis draws on the ladder of earlier skills. Case 1 established that a **claim** must be checked against an original source. The guide's deadline fails that test because it lacks a jurisdiction, so it cannot be confirmed for any reader. Case 8 established the importance of a **material connection**, a relationship with a brand, like payment or a free product, that viewers might not expect. The guide omits its author and funding. That omission does not show bias, but it removes the information a reader needs to weigh its recommendations.

A **jurisdiction** is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority. Jurisdiction operates twice here. It determines which contests a voter sees, since ballots are assembled by address. It also determines which office can act on an issue. A voter concerned about transit needs to know which body runs the buses before evaluating Measure T or a council candidate.

Registration is signing up with your election office so that you are on the list of people who can vote. Gia's reminder models responsible civic communication under uncertainty. It gives no deadline, because none would be accurate for everyone. It points to Vote.gov for each person's own registration and ballot, and it asks people not to post their addresses in the chat.

❓ **Stop and think.** How does jurisdiction shape both what appears on a ballot and what a voter should research?

Rights, rules and professional norms

The Twenty-Sixth Amendment sets a national floor, protecting the vote for citizens 18 and older (National Constitution Center, no date listed). Its history is tied to the wartime argument "old enough to fight, old enough to vote" (The National WWII Museum, October 27, 2020). Implementation belongs largely to the states. Most allow preregistration, and some permit 17-year-olds to vote in primaries if they will be 18 by the general election (Ballotpedia News, September 26, 2025). States have pursued other measures to raise youth registration as well (NPR, August 6, 2023).

Participation is substantial and uneven. CIRCLE estimates that about 47 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds voted in 2024, with wide variation across states (CIRCLE, April 14, 2025).

Rights, rules and professional norms, continued

National Voter Registration Day coverage has emphasized registering people for elections “up and down the ballot” (PBS NewsHour, September 19, 2023).

Professional codes offer a template for a nonpartisan guide. The SPJ code instructs journalists to “label advocacy and commentary” (SPJ Code of Ethics, September 6, 2014). The RTDNA code holds that journalism “does not tell people what to believe or how to feel” (RTDNA Code of Ethics, June 11, 2015). The NCA credo endorses “sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant decisions, while also respecting privacy and confidentiality” (NCA Credo for Ethical Communication, 2024). Gia’s request that no one post an address applies that last clause to a group chat.

 **Stop and think.** What obligations, if any, should creators who publish voter guides have to disclose authorship and funding?

Sources

Real source | [Vote.gov](#) | No date listed

Your state or territory’s voting information

Real source | [National Constitution Center](#) | No date listed

The 26th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution

Real source | [The National WWII Museum](#) | October 27, 2020

“Old Enough to Fight, Old Enough to Vote”: The WWII Roots of the 26th Amendment

Real source | [Ballotpedia News](#) | September 26, 2025

Most states allow teenagers to pre-register to vote before turning 18, and some let them vote in primaries

Real source | [NPR](#) | August 6, 2023

Some states are trying to boost youth voter registration. Here's what they're doing

Real source | [CIRCLE \(Tufts University\)](#) | April 14, 2025

New Data: Nearly Half of Youth Voted in 2024

Real source | [PBS NewsHour](#) | September 19, 2023

New state and local efforts try get more people to vote

Real source | [Society of Professional Journalists \(SPJ\)](#) | 2014

SPJ Code of Ethics

Real source | [Radio Television Digital News Association \(RTDNA\)](#) | 2015

RTDNA Code of Ethics

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Sample ballot

Sample ballot for the November general election

Federal: U.S. Representative. State: State Senator; Superior Court judge (retention). Local: Board of Education, District 3 (vote for two); City Council, Ward 5. Measures: Measure T, transit improvements bond.

Look closely: Which contests sit below the big race, and which one touches Dec’s school?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence B | Voter guide post

A creator’s voter guide

All you need for November!! Registration closes the 14th. School board: vote Candidate B, the only one who cares about students. Measure T: yes, obviously.

Look closely: Which line could you check, and which lines tell you how to vote?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Group-chat draft

Gia’s reminder

Check your registration and your own sample ballot at vote.gov. Deadlines depend on your state. Please don’t post your address here.

Look closely: What does Gia share, and what does she ask friends to keep private?

What it shows

What it leaves out

Evidence D | Statement

What Dec needs

“I turn 18 in October. I don’t need someone picking for me. I need to know what’s on my ballot and whether I’m registered in time for November.”

Look closely: What two questions does Dec need answered, and which source answers each?

What it shows

What it leaves out

What is still missing from the evidence?

Key idea: sample ballots

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics. Then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

A **sample ballot** is a preview of the contests and measures that will appear on your ballot. A measure is a question that voters decide directly, such as Measure T. A **voter guide** is a document that explains or recommends choices in an election. The two have different purposes. Start with the ballot for your address, and then check a guide's facts apart from its picks.

Your address decides which contests appear on your ballot. A **jurisdiction** is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority. A friend two districts over may see different local races. A school board and a city council have different jobs, so each one makes different decisions. Before you research candidates, find out which office has power over the issue you care about.

Registration is signing up with your election office so that you are on the list of people who can vote. Rules and deadlines vary by state, so do not copy a friend's deadline. The Twenty-Sixth Amendment protects the right to vote for citizens 18 and older. Most states let people preregister before they turn 18. Several states let 17-year-olds vote in a primary if they will be 18 by the general election.

Professional standards

Real source | Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ)

SPJ Code of Ethics: Seek Truth and Report It

"Label advocacy and commentary."

In plain words: Journalists who follow the SPJ code mark opinions and recommendations so readers can tell them apart from facts.

Question: The creator's guide mixes a registration deadline with "vote Candidate B." Which lines are checkable facts, and which are picks?

Your answer

The checkable line is ____; the picks are ____.

Explains preregistration and other state steps that let teens sign up before they turn 18.



Rules differ by state, so where you live decides when you can register and what you vote on.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Sort the evidence

On your own Match each of Dec's questions to the rule or office that answers it. Then write whose view is missing. About 6 minutes.

Separate the two questions Dec has: what is on his ballot, and can he vote. Which rules and offices answer each, and which source should he check first?

Which contests and measures appear on Dec's ballot

Who decides

His address and district lines, drawn through redistricting

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whether Dec can register and vote in November

Who decides

Under which rule

Twenty-Sixth Amendment: the vote at 18 cannot be denied on account of age

State rules on preregistration, deadlines and 17-year-old primary voting

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

[illegible]

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what you would do with a friend's sample ballot. Then fix the two marked phrases. About 6 minutes.

You live at a new address. A friend sends their sample ballot and says, "Just use this one." What should you do?

- ☐ **A** Use it, because you and your friend live in the same state.
- ☐ **B** Check your registration and find the official sample ballot for your address.
- ☐ **C** Use a creator's voter guide instead, since it covers the whole election.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Guys the election is coming up and it's a big one!! **1** Registration closes on the 14th so do it now. Here's the voter guide I use, it tells you exactly who to vote for so you don't have to research. Also **2** drop your addresses and I'll check if you're registered for you. Only the big race really matters anyway, the rest is small stuff. My cousin in another state said the same deadline works for her too, so just use mine. Let's go vote!!

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 15 minutes.

Write a nonpartisan voting-information guide for a student organization’s social accounts or a campus library display. Add a short note explaining how the guide avoids the problems in the creator’s voter guide.

Use: Case documents: the sample ballot, the creator’s voter guide, Gia’s reminder draft and Dec’s and Mateo’s statements. Real sources: Vote.gov’s page for people 18 and under, the Twenty-Sixth Amendment, CIRCLE’s report on youth voting (April 14, 2025) and Ballotpedia’s report on preregistration (September 26, 2025).

You’ll make: Guide, 300—400 words, plus a note of about 100 words

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 List the official sources your guide will use: Vote.gov and each reader’s own election office.
- 2 Write down the facts you can state for every reader, from Vote.gov and the amendment.
- 3 Explain how a student away from home finds out where to register, using Mateo as the example.
- 4 Draft the guide on the Your draft page, with no picks.
- 5 Write a note of about 100 words on how your guide avoids the creator’s guide’s problems.
- 6 Finish the guide at 300 to 400 words for a social account or a library display.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Official sources the guide uses

Facts I can state for every reader

[illegible][illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does every rule in your guide come from an official source?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your guide say that rules vary by state?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it make no recommendation on any candidate or measure?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it tell readers not to post their address, birthdate or voter information?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Copies one person's deadlines.	☐ Mentions official sources vaguely.	☐ Points to official sources for each person's state.	☐ Points to official sources and explains why rules differ.
Reasoning	☐ Treats a guide as the ballot.	☐ Mentions the ballot but not local contests.	☐ Separates ballot, guide and registration.	☐ Explains why local offices matter to the audience.
Audience & purpose	☐ Collects private info.	☐ Generic hype.	☐ Useful, private, nonpartisan.	☐ Includes people not yet eligible.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Adds a link.	☐ Replaces copied deadlines with official routes.	☐ Explains how each change helps friends in different situations.

One change I made after feedback

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Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 10 minutes.

1 Which contest on the sample ballot could affect Dec's school or his bus?

2 Mateo may still be registered in New Bedford. Why might his ballot differ from Dec's?

3 Anika is 16. How can she be part of this election before she can vote?

4 When could a voter guide that recommends choices help a first-time voter?

My take

My claim: ____.

My take, continued

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

I would change my mind if ____.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 9: What is on your ballot, and where do you check?

In this case, a teen about to turn 18 finds local races on his ballot that his feed never mentions. Your student compared a sample ballot with a voter guide, then wrote a guide that points to official sources without telling anyone how to vote.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What offices appear on a local ballot, besides the big races?
- 2 Where can someone find official information about registering to vote?
- 3 How can you tell a fact in a voter guide from a recommendation?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.