

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

Content note

This case explains general rules. It is not legal advice for your situation.

Overview

Students read a story in which Dec, who turns 18 in October, looks past the headline race on his sample ballot. He finds a school board race, a city council race and a transit bond. They compare the ballot with a creator’s voter guide that mixes facts with picks, and they read Vote.gov’s guidance for people 18 and under. They then write a personal checklist of official sources for registration, deadlines and their own sample ballot.

Before this case

Students should already be able to:

- find official information on a government website with an adult’s help
- tell an official source from an unofficial one
- write a guide organized with headings for a specific reader

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- build a first-time voter guide for their own state from official sources only
- cover preregistration, primary rules for 17-year-olds and students away at college
- keep the guide nonpartisan

Objectives, continued

- plan for readers who cannot vote yet

Materials

- This chapter, one copy per student
- Evidence A, B, C and D
- Vote.gov, your state election office and your county sample ballot, used with an adult
- A guide template and a source checklist

The task in this edition

Task: Create a first-time voter guide for your state with an adult’s help, using only official sources.

Students make: Guide, 500—600 words

Pacing

Opener (page 166): 5 min. Short on time: 4 min. Students read What happened on their own.

Key terms (pages 167 and 168): 5 min. Short on time: 3 min. Read the key terms aloud. Skip Who is involved.

Look at the evidence (page 172): 10 min. Short on time: 9 min. Students fill in only the What it shows boxes.

Look at the evidence (page 173): 6 min. Short on time: 5 min. Read Evidence D aloud; skip its boxes.

Pacing, continued

Key idea (pages 174 and 175): 10 min. Short on time: 8 min. Skip In the news.

Sort the evidence (pages 176 and 177): 8 min. Short on time: skip.

Practice (page 178): 6 min. Short on time: skip.

Your task (pages 179 and 180): 30 min. Short on time: 28 min. Students research registration and deadlines first and add the other rules at home.

Your draft (pages 181 and 182): 35 min. Short on time: 30 min. Students draft the opening and registration sections in class and finish the guide at home.

Check your work (pages 183 and 184): 10 min. Short on time: 3 min. Students answer the four questions only.

Questions to discuss (pages 185 and 186): 12 min. Short on time: skip.

Talk about this case at home (page 187): at home.

Periods: full chapter 137 minutes; one period 90 minutes.

Standards

RI.11-12.1 Back up an analysis with the strongest evidence from the text, including where the text leaves things uncertain.

Case 9 plan, continued

Standards, continued

- W.11-12.2** Write an explanatory text that conveys complex ideas clearly and accurately.
- W.11-12.5** Strengthen writing by planning, revising, editing or rewriting, focusing on what matters most for the purpose and audience.
- SL.11-12.1.c** Keep a discussion moving with questions that probe reasoning and evidence, and make sure the full range of views is heard.
- SL.11-12.1.d** Respond to different views, pull together what each side says, resolve conflicts where possible and name what still needs research.
- D2.Civ.1.9-12** Tell apart the powers and responsibilities of local, state, tribal, national and international institutions. In this case: Students distinguish the powers of local, state and national offices on the ballot.
- D2.Civ.2.9-12** Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, including how participation has changed over time. In this case: Students analyze the role of voters and changes in who can vote over time.
- D3.1.9-12** Gather information from sources with a wide range of views, using origin, authority, structure, context and corroboration to choose them. In this case: Students select official election sources by authority.

Codes of ethics

- **SPJ Code of Ethics:** Seek Truth and Report It
- **RTDNA Code of Ethics:** Opening statement (before the guiding principles)
- **Credo for Ethical Communication:** “We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings...” (one of nine unnumbered principles)

Heat map

- **Opener (page 166):** Low
- **Key terms (pages 167 and 168):** Low
- **Look at the evidence (page 172):** Low
- **Look at the evidence (page 173):** Low
- **Key idea (pages 174 and 175):** Low
- **Sort the evidence (pages 176 and 177):** Medium
- **Practice (page 178):** Low
- **Your task (pages 179 and 180):** Medium
- **Your draft (pages 181 and 182):** Medium
- **Check your work (pages 183 and 184):** Low

Try it at your school

Find your official election information.

- With a trusted adult, visit [vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov) and choose your state or territory

Try it at your school, continued

- Check eligibility, preregistration and registration rules for your age
 - Find a sample ballot for your address and circle one local office
 - Learn what that office does before researching candidates
- Who to ask:** Your county or local election office, a civics teacher, a school librarian
- Safety:** Never share your address, birthdate or voter information in group chats. Use official government sites (.gov) for registration.
- ### Sources
- [Vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov), “Your state or territory’s voting information,” No date listed
 - [Vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov), “Preparing to vote: age 18 and under,” No date listed
 - [USAGov](https://www.usa.gov), “Sample ballots and voter guides,” No date listed
 - National Constitution Center, “The 26th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution,” No date listed

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 5 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?

Pacing

Full chapter: 5 min.

 Short on time: 4 min. Students read What happened on their own.

Say this

"Dec's feed is full of one race. What else do you think is on his ballot?" — List guesses on the board. Keep them for the sample ballot.

Watch for

Misconception: Students think a ballot holds only the big national races. **Listen for:** "It's just president or Congress."
Then: Point to the second page of the sample ballot in the story: school board, city council, Measure T.

Support

- Read What happened aloud while students follow along.
- Explain that a measure is a question voters decide directly, like Measure T.

Heat check

 Low.

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 5 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."

Pacing

Full chapter: 5 min.

✂ Short on time: 3 min. Read the key terms aloud. Skip Who is involved.

Say this

"Which key term explains why Mateo's ballot might not match Dec's?" — Wait for jurisdiction.

Watch for

Misconception: Students treat a voter guide and a sample ballot as the same document. **Listen for:** "The guide is the ballot." **Then:** Ask which one lists the contests for an address and which one tells you how to vote.

Support

- Pair students who share a language to explain each term in their own words.
- Many election offices publish Spanish materials. Show where to find them.
- **Cognates:** election (elección), candidate (candidato), jurisdiction (jurisdicción), official (oficial), district (distrito), amendment (enmienda), constitution (constitución), vote (voto).

Heat check

■□□ Low.

Answer key

Any first guess is fine. Students return to it on the My take page.

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

➤ My first guess is the big race plus a few local offices, but I would not know which ones without his address.

[illegible]

Reading passage

Down the ballot and back to the source

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 6 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: One race in the feed, five on the ballot

Dec, a high school senior who drums on weekends and helps build theater sets, turns 18 in October. The general election is November 3, 2026. His social feed treats it as a single contest, one big race covered from every angle. On Sunday, at the library desk, Mateo and Gia help him find out what the feed leaves out.

The sample ballot for November is organized by level of government. Federal: U.S. Representative. State: State Senator and a Superior Court judge up for retention. Local: two seats on the Board of Education in District 3 and a City Council seat in Ward 5. And one measure: Measure T, a transit improvements bond. Mateo notices that the lower half of the ballot has almost no online presence. Nobody is posting about Measure T.

What is circulating instead is a creator's voter guide. It promises "all you need for November," announces that registration closes "the 14th" and tells readers to vote for Candidate B for school board and "yes, obviously" on Measure T. Dec's response sets the terms for the case. He does not need anyone picking for him. He needs to know what is on his ballot and whether he is registered in time.

Mateo has a problem of his own. He moved from New Bedford, Massachusetts, for college and may still be registered at his mom's address there. Different state, different ballot, different deadline. Your role is to find Dec's official sample ballot before anyone tells him how to vote.

⌚ Pacing

Reading: about 6 min (757 words). Short on time: read it aloud together, pausing at each Stop and think.

❓ Stop and think

1. **After "The story: One race in the feed, five on the ballot":** Why does the lower half of a ballot get so little attention online?
2. **After "Separating information from advocacy":** The guide's picks are not labeled as advocacy. How would labeling them change how Dec reads the guide?
3. **After "The constitutional floor and the state rules":** Anika is 16. How can she take part in this election before she can vote?

❓ **Stop and think.** Why does the lower half of a ballot get so little attention online?

Separating information from advocacy

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. The distinction matters because the two serve different purposes. The sample ballot tells you what you will decide. A guide tells you what someone thinks you should decide, and sometimes also what the choices mean.

The new skill here builds on two earlier ones. From Case 1, you go to the original source and treat each statement as a **claim** that can be checked. The guide's deadline is a claim with no jurisdiction attached, so it cannot be verified and should not be repeated. From Case 8, you ask about a **material connection**, a relationship with a brand, like payment or a free product, that viewers might not expect. Here, the guide leaves out who wrote and who funds it. That missing information does not make its picks wrong. It does mean they should be read as advocacy from an unnamed source.

A **jurisdiction** is the place or area where a particular government or rule has authority. Your address determines which contests appear on your ballot, which is why Mateo cannot assume his ballot matches Dec's. Jurisdiction also shapes research. A school board and a city council have different powers, so a voter who cares about buses should learn which body runs them before comparing candidates. Mateo starts Measure T with two questions: what it would pay for, and who runs the buses.

Registration is signing up with your election office so that you are on the list of people who can vote. Because rules and deadlines vary by state, Gia's group-chat reminder deliberately contains no deadline. It sends everyone to Vote.gov for their own registration and sample ballot, and it asks people not to post their addresses.

❓ **Stop and think.** The guide's picks are not labeled as advocacy. How would labeling them change how Dec reads the guide?

The constitutional floor and the state rules

The Twenty-Sixth Amendment protects the right of citizens 18 and older to vote (National Constitution Center, no date listed). The National WWII Museum traces its origins to the wartime argument that people old enough to fight were old enough to vote (The National WWII Museum, October 27, 2020). Above that floor, states set the details. Most allow preregistration before 18, and some let 17-year-olds vote in primaries if they will be 18 by the general election (Ballotpedia News, September 26, 2025). NPR has reported on state efforts to raise youth registration, including preregistration (NPR, August 6, 2023).

Turnout data show both engagement and variation. CIRCLE estimates that about 47 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds voted in 2024, with large differences by state (CIRCLE, April 14, 2025).

This page continues page 169. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 169.

The constitutional floor and the state rules, continued

Journalism codes draw the same line the case draws. The SPJ code tells journalists to “label advocacy and commentary” (SPJ Code of Ethics, September 6, 2014). The RTDNA code says journalism “empowers viewers, listeners and readers to make more informed decisions for themselves; it does not tell people what to believe or how to feel” (RTDNA Code of Ethics, June 11, 2015). A nonpartisan guide for Dec should meet that second standard.

 **Stop and think.** Anika is 16. How can she take part in this election before she can vote?

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

SPJ Code of Ethics

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

RTDNA Code of Ethics

This page continues page 169. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 169.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 10 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

➤ A layered ballot: federal, state and local contests and one bond measure.

What it leaves out

➤ The address it covers and what each office is responsible for.

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

➤ One fact and two picks it never labels as opinion.

What it leaves out

➤ The deadline's state, and the guide's author and funder.

Case 9 | Look at the evidence | Grades 11–12 educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 10 min.

✂ Short on time: 9 min. Students fill in only the What it shows boxes.

💬 Say this

“Put one finger on a line you could check and one on a line that tells you how to vote.” — Use two highlighter colors if you have them.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students treat the guide's picks as facts because the guide sounds sure. **Listen for:** “It says obviously, so it's true.” **Then:** Ask what source could prove “Measure T: yes.” None can; it is a pick.

📄 Support

- Give each document on its own half-page.
- Read the sample ballot aloud, one level of government at a time.
- **Cognates:** election (elección), candidate (candidato), jurisdiction (jurisdicción), official (oficial), district (distrito), amendment (enmienda), constitution (constitución), vote (voto).

🔗 Stretch

- Ask why Gia's reminder leaves out a deadline on purpose, and what each reader has to do instead.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

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

➤ A route to official information instead of a copied deadline.

What it leaves out

➤ Dates, on purpose: each reader looks up their own state.

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

➤ A first-time voter asking for information, not recommendations.

What it leaves out

➤ His state, whether he is registered and his deadline.

What is still missing from the evidence?

➤ Dec's state, status and deadline, his own sample ballot, what each local office controls where he lives, and who wrote and funds the guide.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 6 min.

✂ Short on time: 5 min. Read Evidence D aloud; skip its boxes.

💬 Say this

"Put one finger on a line you could check and one on a line that tells you how to vote." — Use two highlighter colors if you have them.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students treat the guide's picks as facts because the guide sounds sure. **Listen for:** "It says obviously, so it's true." **Then:** Ask what source could prove "Measure T: yes." None can; it is a pick.

📖 Support

- Give each document on its own half-page.
- Read the sample ballot aloud, one level of government at a time.
- **Cognates:** election (elección), candidate (candidato), jurisdiction (jurisdicción), official (oficial), district (distrito), amendment (enmienda), constitution (constitución), vote (voto).

🔗 Stretch

- Ask why Gia's reminder leaves out a deadline on purpose, and what each reader has to do instead.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

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 fact is ____; the picks are ____.

➡ The checkable fact is the deadline, but it names no state. The picks are the school board and Measure T lines, and nothing labels them as opinion.

Case 9 | Key idea | Grades 11–12 educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 10 min.

✂ Short on time: 8 min. Skip In the news.

💬 Say this

"The SPJ code says to label advocacy. Which lines in the creator's guide are advocacy?" — Wait for the two picks.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students treat the SPJ code as a law that creators must follow. **Listen for:** "The creator broke the rules." **Then:** Say: "SPJ's code binds no one by law. It shows how journalists label opinion."

📖 Support

- Read the quotation aloud. Point out the label: a real source, quoted word for word.

🔗 Stretch

- Use the RTDNA row: what would a guide that helps Dec decide include about the school board race?

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

Real source | NPR | August 6, 2023

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

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

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.

[illegible]

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 8 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

[Vote.gov](#), which links to his state or local election office

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

[Vote.gov](#), which links to his state or local election office

Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

 Short on time: skip this page.

Say this

“Dec has two questions. Which rule or office answers each one?” — Model the registration question together.

Watch for

Misconception: Students think the Twenty-Sixth Amendment sets every voting rule. **Listen for:** “The Constitution says when you register.” **Then:** The amendment protects the vote at 18. States set registration rules and deadlines.

Support

- Let students draw the arrows before they write sentences.

Heat check

 **Medium.** The missing-perspective question can turn to students' own eligibility.

Cool-down: Keep answers about Dec and his friends. No student shares their own or a family member's eligibility.

Whose perspective is missing?

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

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

→ The school board's. I would ask what the board decides, so Dec can judge the race before he researches candidates.

Notes

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 is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This page continues page 176. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 176.

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

➤ B. Jurisdiction decides the ballot, so A can miss local contests, and C puts picks before facts. B checks the address, the election and the deadlines.

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

➤ That is my state's deadline.
Yours may differ, so check vote.gov.

Rewrite phrase 2

➤ Share the official lookup link instead, so nobody posts an address.

Pacing

Full chapter: 6 min.

✂ Short on time: skip this page.

Say this

"A friend sends their sample ballot and says, "Just use this one." What do you do?" — Take a vote before any discussion.

Watch for

Misconception: Students choose A because the friend lives in the same state. **Listen for:** "Same state, same ballot."

Then: Point to the key idea: a friend two districts over may see different local races.

Support

- Read the three options aloud before students choose.

Heat check

■□□ Low.

Answer key

A revised version: Election reminder: registration deadlines and voting options depend on your state, so check yours at vote.gov, which links to your state's election office. You can also look up your sample ballot for your own address there. It shows everything you'll vote on, including school board and local measures, not just the big race. If you use a voter guide, check the facts it gives and remember its picks are someone's opinion. Under 18? Many states let you preregister, and some let 17-year-olds vote in primaries. Check your state's rules. No need to share your address here.

Grades 11–12

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 30 minutes.

Create a first-time voter guide for your state with an adult's help, using only official sources.

Use: Vote.gov, your state election office and your county sample ballot.

You'll make: Guide, 500–600 words

Time: 90 minutes

- 1 Go to vote.gov with an adult. Choose your state or territory.
- 2 Record each official source in the planner: the site, the page and the date you checked.
- 3 Find your state's rules on registration, deadlines and preregistration.
- 4 Find out whether 17-year-olds may vote in your state's primaries.
- 5 Find how a student living away from home learns where to register.
- 6 Draft your guide's first sections on the Your draft page.
- 7 Write the full guide of 500 to 600 words, with no picks, in the workspace or on paper.

Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

My state's official election source

🔗 My state's election office website, which I reached through vote.gov and checked with an adult.

Registration and deadline, and where I found them

🔗 The deadline is on my state election office's voter registration page. I copied it from there, not from a post.

Case 9 | Your task | Grades 11–12 educator edition

🕒 Pacing

Full chapter: 30 min.

✂ Short on time: 28 min. Students research registration and deadlines first and add the other rules at home.

💬 Say this

"Every fact in your guide needs an official page behind it. Where did each date come from?" — Students work with an adult and record the page and the date checked.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students cite a news story or a creator for a state rule. **Listen for:** "I saw it in a video." **Then:** Ask for the .gov page that states the same rule. If there is none, cut the claim.

📎 Support

- Guide template
- Source checklist

🔗 Stretch

- Include preregistration, primary rules for 17-year-olds if any, and how students away at college can find out where to register.

🔥 Heat check

■ ■ □ **Medium.** Students may add picks for candidates or measures they support.

Cool-down: Remind students the product is nonpartisan. Replace any pick with where to check the facts.

- Accurate for your state
- Official sources only
- Nonpartisan
- Addresses students' situations

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 35 minutes.

Opening: who this guide is for

🔗 **First-time voter guide.** This guide is for anyone in our state who will vote for the first time, or who will be able to soon. It uses official sources only: vote.gov and our state election office. It does not recommend any candidate, party or ballot measure. Check every date yourself, because official pages are updated.

Registration, deadlines and your ballot

🔗 **Registration.** Rules and deadlines vary by state, so use ours, not a friend's. Find the deadline on the state election office's registration page, which vote.gov links to. Do not copy a date from a post. Your ballot. Your address decides your contests. Look up the sample ballot for your own address. It lists every contest, including school board races and local measures, not only the big race.

If you are under 18 or away at school

🔗 **Under 18?** The Twenty-Sixth Amendment protects the vote at 18. Vote.gov explains that most states let people preregister before 18. Several let 17-year-olds vote in a primary if they will be 18 by the general election. Check our state's rule. Away at school? Ask the election office

🕒 Pacing

Full chapter: 35 min.

✂️ **Short on time:** 30 min. Students draft the opening and registration sections in class and finish the guide at home.

💬 Say this

“Read your guide as Anika, who is 16. What can she do this year?” — Check that each guide speaks to readers under 18.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: The guide states one rule for every state.

Listen for: “You can vote at 17 in primaries.” **Then:** Ask which state that is true for. Vote.gov says several states, not all.

📁 Support

- The sample guide shows the structure. Each student's guide names their own state's rules, which you check.

🔥 Heat check

■ ■ □ **Medium.** Students may add picks for candidates or measures they support.

Cool-down: Remind students the product is nonpartisan. Replace any pick with where to check the facts.

🔗 Answer key

What to notice in the sample:

- States the guide's sourcing rule up front.
- Answers the copied-deadline problem from the case.
- Covers students away from home without stating a rule the writer cannot source.

If you are under 18 or away at school, continued

• which address and process apply to you. Never post your address or birthdate in a group chat.

Notes

This page continues page 181. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 181.

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 10 minutes.

- Does every rule in your guide come from an official source? ☒ Yes ☐ No
- Is your guide accurate for your state, with dates you checked? ☒ Yes ☐ No
- Does it cover preregistration, 17-year-olds and students away from home? ☒ Yes ☐ No
- Does it avoid recommending any candidate, party or measure? ☒ 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.

Pacing

Full chapter: 10 min.

 Short on time: 3 min. Students answer the four questions only.

Say this

“Mark your level honestly. Then make one change and say why.” — Ask for one official source added or one pick removed.

Watch for

Misconception: Students keep a copied deadline. **Listen for:** “Registration closes the 14th.” **Then:** Point to the Evidence row. Replace the date with the official place to check it.

Heat check

 Low.

Answer key

How to assess: The guide is scored for state-specific accuracy checked by the educator, exclusive use of official sources, nonpartisanship and coverage of preregistration, primaries and students away at college.

Proficient looks like:

- **Evidence:** Points to official sources for each person's state.
- **Reasoning:** Separates ballot, guide and registration.
- **Audience & purpose:** Useful, private, nonpartisan.
- **Revision:** Replaces copied deadlines with official routes.

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 is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then finish My take. About 12 minutes.

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

➤ The school board race and Measure T. A voter guide that covered only the big race would skip both.

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

➤ Jurisdiction follows the registration address. A New Bedford registration puts Mateo in a different state, with different contests and deadlines.

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

➤ Preregistration, if her state allows it, and learning what the board decides. She can also help friends find official information without sharing anyone's address.

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

➤ When it names its author and labels its picks as advocacy. Then a first-time voter can use it as one view, after checking the ballot and deadlines.

My take

My claim: ____.

➤ A nonpartisan guide for Dec should send him to official sources and keep facts apart from picks.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 12 min.

✂ Short on time: skip this page.

💬 Say this

“Answer with a detail from the evidence, not a candidate or party you like.” — Post the question numbers and take one answer per question.

➤ Stretch

- Ask what one local office on the ballot decides, and how a student could learn that before researching candidates.
- Going further: Which election office covers your address? Find it through Vote.gov. If you live away from home for school, write one question asking that office which address and rules apply to you.
- Going further: Plan an election reminder for your own group chat. Who might a group chat miss? Link to an official source so nobody has to trust a screenshot.
- Going further: Record a one-minute audio guide that tells listeners how to find their own sample ballot. Then write the same steps as a checklist. Check that both lead to the same official page.
- Going further: With a trusted adult, go to Vote.gov and choose your state or territory. Check the registration rules for your age, then find the sample ballot for your address. Never share your address or birthdate in a group chat.
- Find your county's sample ballot for the next election
- Research the history of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment

My take, continued

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

☞ The creator's guide, because its one fact names no state and its picks carry no label.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

☞ Picks help first-time voters who have no time to research.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

☞ No document tells us Dec's state, so we cannot give him a deadline.

I would change my mind if ____.

☞ Dec had asked for recommendations instead of information.

Notes

This page continues page 185.

Heat check

■ ■ □ **Question 3: Medium.** Some students cannot vote for reasons other than age, and may feel singled out.

Cool-down: Keep answers about Anika. No student shares their own or a family member's eligibility.

Question 4 cool-down: Say: "We are not discussing any real candidate or party." Return to the creator's guide in Evidence B.

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.

Case 9 | Talk about this case at home | Grades 11–12 educator edition

Pacing

At home: this page takes no class time.

Say this

“Take this page home or read it with someone you trust.” —
Nobody needs to share their own voting information or
anyone else’s.