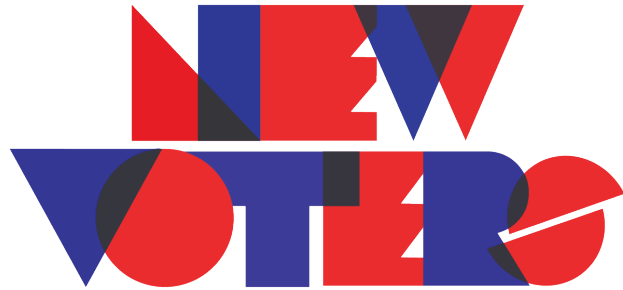


IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
A FILM BY KEN BURNS, SARAH BOTSTEIN & DAVID SCHMIDT



VOTER REGISTRATION GUIDE

FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Welcome!

Voting and civic engagement are key parts of America's revolutionary legacy. [New Voters](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, developed this step-by-step guide to help ensure all eligible high school students are registered to vote before graduation. Regardless of your age, you can lead the charge in your community!

While designed for use at high schools, plans are easily customizable for drives at libraries or other community spots! Be sure to check with your Secretary of State's office for important local voting information.

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“The people who created the American Revolution and created the American nation assumed that Americans would be involved, that they would be active citizens, not subjects. Being a citizen requires the kind of participation in the democracy that keeps it vibrant.”

—Annette Gordon-Reed, Historian, *THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*

A STORY 250 YEARS IN THE MAKING

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

A FILM BY
KEN BURNS, SARAH BOTSTEIN & DAVID SCHMIDT



THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, a six-part film from Ken Burns, Sarah Botstein, and David Schmidt, presents the story of the men and women who waged and witnessed a war that changed the world. Weaving together a wide variety of perspectives, the film tells how, against the odds, thirteen British colonies on the Atlantic Coast united in rebellion, won their independence, and established an American republic that still endures. For more information about the film and related community initiatives, please visit pbs.org/americanrevolution.

Host a screening of **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** at your school to:

- **Raise Awareness:** A school or community screening event can help bring people together and promote your voter registration drive.
 - Check out resources available in **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** Engagement Resource Center at pbs.org/americanrevolution/resources and start a group conversation about civic engagement using some of the discussion prompts that are also available.
- **Spark Dialogue:** Discuss historical parallels, contemporary issues, and the ongoing relevance of the nation's founding.
- **Build Community:** Bring students, faculty, and the wider campus community together for a shared cultural and educational experience.
- **Honor a Milestone:** Commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence by exploring the story behind the nation's founding.

Running a Registration Drive: The Basics

Congratulations on deciding to run a voter registration drive at your school! You're empowering classmates to become active participants in the youth electorate.

The most important rule for a successful drive is to be **nonpartisan**. Your goal is to encourage students to vote, not to influence who they vote for. By remaining neutral, you can encourage everyone to take their first step in becoming engaged citizens, regardless of their political beliefs.

*To be **nonpartisan** means you don't show bias or preference to any political group.
It means you're neutral and not trying to sway opinion.*

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind when conducting a voter registration drive:

1. Remain Nonpartisan—New Voters is a nonpartisan 501(c)3 organization, meaning it is not affiliated with any political parties.

- Partner with nonpartisan service organizations such as your Student Council. You can even organize your voter registration drive as a collaboration between various extracurricular school clubs.
- Encourage eligible students from all backgrounds to register to vote.
- Remind students that they *do not* need to register with a political party to register to vote.
- Support nonpartisan student organizations at your school.
- Remind students that it is completely normal to change their political perspectives on their journey of civic engagement!
- Avoid wearing attire that may imply political preferences

2. Ensure that You Are Eligible to Run a Drive

- Check out [this resource](#) to find eligibility for running a drive in your state. Some states may require you to obtain additional training, or may only register voters via paper forms.

3. Ensure that Only Eligible Students Register to Vote

- You have to be a U.S. citizen.
- You need to meet your state's voter registration age requirements. While you must be at least 18 years old to vote on Election Day, many states allow you to register or pre-register earlier (at age 16 or 17, depending on [local laws](#)).
- You must be a resident of the state you are registering in.

In addition to the requirements above, refer to state-specific guides to stay informed about voter registration age requirements. Please emphasize that any recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) are not eligible to vote in federal elections and may not be eligible to register to vote in most states due to their citizenship status.

4. Your Job Is To Get People To Register

- *Do not* encourage people to vote for a particular candidate or endorse a political party—your job is to register students, *not* influence their political decisions!
- If anyone asks who should vote for/which party they should consider, please *do not respond with your opinion*. Refer them to the link below, which provides information on how individuals can research candidates.
 - usa.gov/voter-research

“The revolutionaries believed that the American people would have to be educated. Without education, there could be no virtue in the populace and without virtue in the populace, the government would fail. Republics are based on authority coming from the bottom up. Not like monarchies, from the top down. So you require an educated, virtuous—they use that term over and over, drawing it from antiquity—virtuous population to sustain a republican government.”

—Gordon Wood, Historian, *THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*

Drive Planning Outline

Onboarding

☐ [Sign up with New Voters to run a drive](#). By signing up you will:

- Be paired with a mentor* to guide you through the drive process to plan and run a high-impact voter registration drive at your school.
- Gain access to a series of New Voters voter registration resources, including a unique link to track your impact.
- Get community service hours.
- Join a national network of 1,000+ high school and college changemakers!

**After you sign up with New Voters, you'll be matched with a mentor who will be there to advise you every step of the way. You can also reach out to a school librarian, teacher or administrator to get their support in organizing your drive.*

- ☐ Complete the [Drive Planning Worksheet](#) (see page 16) and send it to your New Voter mentor.
- ☐ Have a call with your mentor/event sponsor to discuss drive planning.

Prep for drive

- ☐ **Make your team!**
 - **Pro Tip:** See if your homeroom or civic/history teacher may want to sponsor this as an activity for the whole class!
- ☐ **Email your administration for any required approvals or permission.**
- ☐ **Create a Team Recruitment Tracking Document*** to list groups you can reach out to or partner with on the drive.
 - *Print copy available on pg. **17**
- ☐ **Time to recruit!** Use this [spreadsheet](#)* to brainstorm eligible students and assign teammates to contact each individual.
 - *Print copy is available on pg. **18**
- ☐ **Personalize your messages* when sharing your team's registration link.**
 - *Template copy provided below.
- ☐ **Select a date!** Check with teammates and allow plenty of lead time for planning and promotion.
 - **Pro Tip:** Be mindful of your school calendar, including game days, holidays, and exam periods. For added impact, consider tying your event to a significant historical moment, like a key anniversary of the American Revolution.
- ☐ **A few weeks before your voter registration drive, meet with your team to walk through the plan.** Ensure the outreach list is finalized so every teammate knows exactly which students they are responsible for contacting.

Run drive

- ☐ **Make sure all your eligible teammates are registered to vote!**
- ☐ **Everyone on your team registers 5 of their friends.**
- ☐ **Kickoff your drive and register voters!**
- ☐ **Complete all daily challenges.**
- ☐ **Register 65+% of your (eligible) school population.**

Awards and Follow Through

- ☐ **Fill out [Complete A Drive Form](#) to receive a certificate from New Voters!**
- ☐ **Let those who registered to vote know about upcoming elections.**

Onboarding

After you've [registered with New Voters](#) to run a drive, you will be paired with a mentor. Expect an intro email from your mentor, but in the meantime . . .

1. Fill out your [Drive Planning Worksheet](#). You should send it to your mentor before you meet.
 - Select "Make a Copy" when prompted.
2. Meet with your mentor.
3. Invite peers from other schools to run their own drives.

Sample message to customize and send to peers at other schools in your area (reach out to your mentor if you need help brainstorming!):

Hey _____! Have you heard about the upcoming [national/state/local, etc.] election this [the month it occurs in]? Issues that affect our generation's future will be on the ballot and I'm working with the national nonprofit [New-Voters.org](#) to run a non-partisan voter registration drive. I thought of you because you're a leader at [their school name]. If you're interested, I can connect you with the organizers so you can learn more and see if it's something you'd like to do. It's a great way to help our peers get their voices heard!

Prep for Drive

1. Make your team.

- Calculate your team size: (eligible students/10) → this is a suggested number, but you can of course adapt it based on the size of your school.
 - Example: 100 eligible students, 10 people on your team.
 - The more members on your team, the less work each person has.

2. Create a [Team Recruitment Tracking Document](#) and share with your mentor.

- Select "Make a Copy" when prompted

Customize this message to recruit your core team:

Hey _____! Have you heard about the upcoming [national/state/local, etc.] election taking place this [the month it occurs in]? I'm working with the national nonprofit [New-Voters.org](#) to run a non-partisan voter registration drive to help all eligible students at our school get ready to vote before the [date] registration deadline.

I'm looking to put together a team to help lead this effort. Our goal is to increase student civic participation and make sure everyone's voice is represented.

I'd love it if we could work together on this so let me know if you would be interested.

3. Connect with teachers at your school to make a larger impact.

- Focus on gathering support from teachers—social studies teachers (history, government, and humanities) are an excellent resource.
 - Ask them to share the voter registration link and put up flyers in classrooms, student centers, and to share the link electronically.
- You can coordinate with teachers to create incentives for their students.
 - E.g. If their students pledge to register to vote/sign up to register via the link, they can receive extra credit points.
- Grade-level/class competitions are a great way to stimulate more interest for your drive.
 - E.g. “Math vs. English Department”
 - Connect with student council executives to determine the best way to coordinate and publicize friendly competitions among the student body.

4. Get a list of eligible students and students in your grade.

- Email your school administration (template copy below)

Dear [Name],

*My name is [Name] and I am a [grade level] at [school name]. [Number of your teammates] of my peers and I are planning to **run a voter registration drive both online and in person to register all eligible students** at our school to vote AND **empower every student at the high school to turn out their eligible parents to vote**. I am being guided by the nonpartisan 501(c)3 organization [New Voters](#) and have a personal mentor who is making sure we remain completely non-partisan and fair, while providing us with social media templates, and scripts to use; but we need your help in order to register all eligible students.*

What we need:

- 1. A list of students who were born on or before [birth date based on state voter registration requirement] along with their school email.**
- 2. A list of all the students in the senior class**

We'd really appreciate your support in helping us get the student body civically engaged. We aim to personally contact each of these students (the information would only be held by us, the students), to encourage those who are eligible to register, while inviting ineligible students to help spread the word about the drive. We believe this will instill lifelong civic habits in our peers and lead to an

unprecedented number of student registrations.

Additionally, we would greatly appreciate it if you could **send an email to all these students** saying that a group of students is coordinating a registration effort, and asking them to register to vote using our school's specific link—I can send you a draft email if helpful/you're interested!

Many other schools have had **similar collaborations between administration and students** to register all eligible students to vote (the link shows Conestoga High School in Chester County, PA receiving an award from the PA Secretary of State because of their efforts, which were completely supported by their administration!). Support by the administration has resulted in local and state press and awards being given to the school, which New Voters would help us receive after we run our drive. Thank you for your support! Please let me know if there is any additional information I can provide and if this would be possible.

Best Regards,

(Name)

5. Create *another tracking document* to list all students in your grade for your registration efforts and share with your mentor.

- Select "Make a Copy" when prompted
- Paste in all the students from the list your school administration shared with you.
 - Note: If the administration won't provide a student list, manually compile one. Use Facebook groups and yearbooks to list every student in your grade. Have your team spot-check the names for accuracy. Your goal is a comprehensive list of everyone (both eligible and ineligible voters) to ensure total outreach.
- Assign each of your team members their respective students to register, or student organizations to reach out to about partnering to promote the drive to their members.

6. Review the 10 Day Challenge with your team (page 10) to register 100% of your eligible student population to vote and schedule your kick off Text Bank (Day 3).

7. Make text bank sample messages personalized to your team (sample messages below).

#1: Generic outreach for text bank:

Hey ____! This is _____. Have you heard about the upcoming [insert your national/state/local election here] election this [election date]? We are trying to get every eligible student from our high school registered to vote so we are heard, no matter our opinion, on these decisions by the [deadline date] deadline. Do you have 5 minutes to register to vote via this link [insert school-specific link]? Please reach out with any questions and let me know when you complete it - thank you so much!

#1a: Sample response if they've already registered:

That's great! Are you planning to vote in this election on [election date]? On the link, if you click the pledge to vote button that pops up [insert school-specific link], you'll be reminded to vote via text! You will also be redirected to a site where you can check your registration status to make sure you're in the system (there's been a trend with first-time voters getting removed!).

#1b: Sample response if they're ineligible:

You can still make a huge difference in this election! You can forward this link [insert school-specific link] to friends and family so that they can register to vote! Please reach out with any questions and let me know when you complete it—thank you so much!

8. Schedule with your whole team the time of your group outreach bank!
9. Make sure everyone on your team has the school-specific outreach messages.
10. Have your team put their name in Contact #1–4 of the tracking sheet of everyone in your grade.
 - Ensure your team puts their name next to every single person they know (both closely and not closely).

Run Your Drive: 10 Day Challenge

Note: The following is a sample drive schedule, but the day-by-day descriptions of tasks is still a useful guide to follow along.

Day 0	Schedule a date and time for your team's outreach bank. Make sure everyone on your team has the tracking sheet and puts their name next to every single person they know (both closely and not closely) Finalize plans: ■ Check in with school administration to make sure everything is all approved. ■ Contact your voter registration drive sponsor about the plans. ■ Make sure each team member is aware of their own responsibilities. ■ Send a reminder to the team regarding the date and time. ■ Double check that your school-specific online voter registration link is working!
Day 1 Goal: 10%	Have all your team members register using the personalized registration link and send it to 5+ of their closest friends—add their names and confirm their initial outreach next to those people on the tracking sheet (make sure they update the sheet every day)!

Day 2 Goal: 50%	Kickoff outreach text bank (sample messages below). Each team member should put their name next to every student on your tracking sheet they can contact (text, Instagram, Snap, in person, in class) until there is no one without someone reaching out. If no one on your team knows someone, ask others to help out and grow your team.
Day 3 Goal: 65%	Email all the eligible voters (check pre-registration age requirement for your state) in your school with the sample email. Have everyone on your team post on social media and get on the morning announcements. Consider reaching out to significant school organizations and asking them to promote the drive by informing their members. Make sure team members who missed the text bank have followed up with everyone they claimed in the tracker.
Day 4 Goal: 70%	Assign each team member a specific sports team to manage. They will coordinate with captains to distribute the registration link to all players. <i>Pro Tip: To drive engagement, offer a public shout-out or celebration for the team with the highest registration rate.</i>
Day 5 Goal: 75%	Assign team members to specific performing arts clubs (e.g., theater, band, choir). Each member will coordinate with club leaders to share the registration link with all participants. <i>Pro Tip: To drive engagement, offer a public shout-out or celebration for the team with the highest registration rate.</i>
Day 6 Goal: 80%	Assign team members to specific service or academic clubs (e.g., Student Government, NHS, MUN, DECA, etc.). They will coordinate with club leaders to distribute the registration link to all members. <i>Pro Tip: To drive engagement, offer a public shout-out or celebration for the team with the highest registration rate.</i>
Day 7 Goal: 85%	All team members re-reach out to all of their assigned students who have not registered yet. (Check in with your mentor to take note of who has/has not registered).

Day 8 Goal: 95%	REGISTRATION DEADLINE All team members re-reach out again to all of their assigned students who have not registered yet
Day 9-10 Goal: 100%	Make a plan to continue with your mentor and complete post-drive work! Maintain civic engagement within your school community.

Awards And Follow Up

Fill out the [Drive Completion Form](#) and visit the New Voters website to learn more, including incentives from New Voters for successful drives. Each school that hosts a voter registration drive will receive a certificate of recognition from New Voters.

Troubleshooting

If your problem is school administration:

- Try to gather support from your peers and leadership, then email the administration.
- Make it clear that the drive is nonpartisan/New Voters has worked with 300+ schools.
- Alleviate legal concerns by clarifying that New Voters is not collecting any student information.
- Attempt to set up a meeting with school administration to alleviate their concerns and develop a plan to move forward. There may be specific district policies, etc. that need to be followed when running the drive/their ability to support you may be limited.
- Offer to connect your administration with New Voters to discuss the drive's possibility.
- Offer to run through your "why you should vote" pitch to the administration, or make a formal school presentation, to reinforce that it is nonpartisan.

If your problem is student outreach:

- Get on the morning announcements.
- Ask the homeroom teachers to talk about it in their classes.
 - See if they'd be willing to offer extra credit for students who participate in a civic engagement activity, such as checking their registration status/pledging to vote.
- Make sure the school administration has promoted the drive via social media and official announcement to parents in the school community - students will be more likely to participate if their parents remind them.
- Ask students if they encountered any issues in signing up.
- Check that students know what they'll need to register (ex. License, etc.).

If your problem is volunteers/team recruitment:

- Coordinate with teachers (especially in government classes) to offer incentives or extra credit for student involvement. Request a few minutes during their class or on Zoom to share the registration link and discuss why voting matters.
- Reach out to a variety of clubs and use friends of friends to get people involved.
- See if a service club at your school can provide volunteer hours for students that help with registration efforts.

If your problem is student responsiveness:

- Make your text bank a week-long push and schedule time for follow-ups.
- Double-check how long your text messages are and make sure they're short enough to get all the info across but not too long.
- Leverage the power of social media and send out messages via different avenues (text message, email, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook).
- Partner with the Student Council at your school and create a competition for different groups (graduating classes, majors, sororities/fraternities, sports teams, etc.) to see which can get the highest number of students to register.

FAQs You May Get from Students When Registering People to Vote

1. I don't know enough about this election (primary/general election).

Send them ballotpedia.org and say "here is some additional nonpartisan/unbiased information on the importance of this election along with details on candidates and their platform!"

2. I don't believe in the government.

The government has control over many key aspects of our lives including the environment, healthcare, and education. Also, the government also refers to your state and local institutions with elected officials that you can vote for, who often control the way school is run and the roads you drive on. Those decisions are all made based on informed votes and your registration today can allow you to do so!

3. Why should I register when no election is coming up?

There are incredibly important elections taking place this year! Keep in mind that when you register today you will be able to participate in the local elections as well as the state and national elections.

4. What should I do after I register?

First and foremost, make sure you have a plan to vote and that you cast your ballot! If you're interested in voter engagement work, there are many ways to continue work after registering that include getting out the vote (GOTV) in our area and advocacy work! You can join our team if you would

like to push for GOTV efforts in our school community and also be a part of initiating advocacy work within our school! Advocacy work includes working towards causes we are passionate about and learning about the most efficient ways to make change.

5. What if I am not eligible to register?

Voting is only one act of civic engagement, and there are many other ways to get involved. First, you could help others register! The link will also give you additional information if you complete it. Additionally, there is lots of advocacy work to be done to make the change we wish to see and if there is a cause you are passionate about we can work together to engage the school community in advocating for it!

6. “I don’t have a driver’s license—how can I register?”

No worries! You just need to know the last 4-digits of your social security number.

7. “Registering to vote is going to take so long, I just don’t want to do it.”

Actually, registering to vote only takes 3–5 minutes. If you know your driver’s license and/or social security, it won’t take long at all! Either way, it’s worth the time to register. Your vote will have an impact and it’s important to be civically engaged.

PRINT OUTS

These handouts can be used as-is or can be recreated to suit your particular needs.

Drive Planning Worksheet

STATE VOTING INFORMATION	
Does your state have pre-registration? (Y/N)	
Are there restrictions on who can register people to vote? (For example, do you need to be certified by your county?)	
When is your upcoming election's voter registration deadline? <i>Remember, a primary election is still an election!</i>	
When is your upcoming election?	
What components are required on your state's voter registration form (Driver's License, county, etc):	
SCHOOL INFORMATION	
How many students go to your school?	
How many students are in your school's senior class?	
(If your state has pre-registration for students 17+): How many students are in your school's junior class?	
(If your state has pre-registration for students 16+): How many students are in your school's sophomore class?	
List 3 potential students who could help you run your drive:	
List at least 1 teacher who could support you in running your drive:	
Set a target date for your drive to happen (<i>We recommend running a drive for at least 1 school week to maximize impact!</i>):	
Provide a name and mailing address for us to send you your New Voters Drive Box.	

Team Recruitment Tracking Document

SCHOOL CLUB	CONTACT INFO	WHO'S REACHING OUT?	CONTACTED?	AGREED?	NOTES
Choir					
Band					
Orchestra					
Marching Band					
Theater					
National Honor Society					
Student Council					
Key Club					
Model UN					
Football					
Soccer					
Swimming					
Tennis					
Lacrosse					
Mock Trial					
Debate					

Note: Think about other big clubs at your school that a lot of students are a part of and add them to the list above!

Eligible Students Tracking Document

Keep a track of eligible students by listing them and naming members of your team who can reach out in the contact columns! If possible you should assign up to two people to be responsible for contacting each eligible student.

[illegible]