

DAY IN THE LIFE OF A POLL WORKER



Poll workers make our elections possible by ensuring polling places run smoothly. They're hard at work before voters arrive and are ready to help every person who comes to cast a ballot.

IF IT'S YOUR FIRST TIME BEING A POLL WORKER, HERE'S AN OVERVIEW OF WHAT TO EXPECT!

Poll workers typically work a long day (although early voting locations may have shorter shifts). In most cases, there will be an elections official or an experienced poll worker that you will report to. Make sure to ask who this will be at your training (but note that you may not meet that person until the day you're serving).

RISE & SHINE

Depending on what time polls open in your state, and how close you live to your polling location, you can expect a very early morning. Don't hit that snooze button and make sure you have a clear plan (and a back up plan) to get to your polling location. If you show up late, it creates problems for the rest of the poll workers at your polling site, so make sure you're on time - or better yet get there early.

OPENING THE POLLING LOCATION

Poll workers are responsible for opening and setting up their polling location. This may involve setting up voting stations and check-in tables, distributing supplies, hanging signs so voters know where to vote, and making sure all voting machines are set up and ready for the first rush of voters. Many voters vote in the early morning before they head to work, so making sure polling locations open on time is critical.

WORKING THE POLLS

Once the polling place opens, you'll be assigned any number of tasks including checking in voters, answering voter questions, assisting with issues, and passing out "I Voted" stickers! Here are some examples of what to expect during the day:

- 1 Checking in voters & distributing ballots:** When voters arrive, you'll check them in and provide their paper ballot or instructions for voting machines.
- 2 Providing directions/assistance:** Help voters check in and ensure they're at the right polling location. Help them look up their correct polling location if they are not at the right location.
- 3 Registering voters:** Some states have same-day registration. If this is the case in your state, you may handle same-day voter registration.

- 4 Maintaining a safe and orderly polling place:** Your help may be especially needed if long lines are forming or it's a crowded polling location.
- 5 Providing special assistance to voters who need it:** Some voters may require assistance operating a voting machine, especially if voters have a disability or require help in a language other than English.
- 6 Troubleshooting voter questions:** Voters may have questions about how to properly fill in a ballot and how to submit their completed ballot. (i.e. what pen to use, what notations are allowed)
- 7 Providing provisional or affidavit ballots:** Each state has different rules on when to use a provisional or affidavit ballot; make sure you understand when they should be used.
- 8 Passing out "I Voted" stickers!**

Throughout the day, the number of voters will ebb and flow. Whether you're sitting at the check-in table, greeting voters in line, or helping with voting machines, be sure to check with your fellow poll workers about taking breaks when needed. And be sure to eat and drink water when you can.

FINAL PUSH

As you near the time that polls close in your area, you'll have your last rush of voters - and the good news is that, by now, you're a total pro at handling every part of your job as a poll worker. You may need to monitor any lines that form, and make sure that any voters who are in line to vote by the time the polls close know that they can still vote, and to *stay in line*.

CLOSING THE POLLS

Once the last voter in line has cast their ballot, you'll help with closing down the polling location and ensuring ballots and other materials are secured safely. This includes cleaning up, making sure all materials are safely and securely shut down and transported, and making sure that the polling location is locked. During your training, make sure you know your role in helping to shut down the polls before you head home for a good night's sleep - you deserve it!

HOW TO MAKE YOUR POLL WORKING EXPERIENCE A SUCCESS:

Get ready for a LONG day! Rest up and be prepared. Wear comfortable shoes and layers in case it's chilly inside. Most polling locations do not allow any clothing, hats, buttons or stickers supporting a political candidate, issue, or organization. You want everyone to feel welcome - so leave those items at home.

Pack smart for the day. You're going to be spending a full day at your polling location, so make sure you have what you need. Ask in advance if there will be any food, and make sure to bring snacks or a water bottle to help you power through the day. You may not have a secure area to stow your belongings, so pack light, but be sure to bring any key items you need for the day.

Do your homework. Be as prepared as possible and look over any training materials you received from your local elections office. Save any important numbers (like your supervisor, central office, or voter information hotline) in your phone. Make sure to ask questions before and during the day if you're unsure of how to handle something.

Consider your needs. If you're unable to stand for long periods of time, ask if you can have a role that's seated for most of the day. If you'd rather be up and about, ask if you can support voters in a more mobile role.

Be a team player with a great attitude! We know it'll be a long day and working with a new group of people can be tough. Think of ways you'll spread good vibes and help keep morale high!

Check your politics & your biases at the door. As a poll worker, your job is to make sure every voter can cast a ballot, no matter who they're voting for or what perceptions you may have about them. Think about how to make sure every voter feels safe and welcome at your polling location.

Make every voter's experience a positive and empowering one. Voting should be an easy way for people to participate in democracy and in their community. As a poll worker, you can help shape their experience, create positive memories of voting, and make lifelong voters out of everyone you meet!

Thank you for powering the polls!



www.powerthepolls.org

Note: These are supplemental resources and are not intended to take the place of any official poll worker training or resources that your elections office provides. Rules and laws vary from place to place, so for any specific questions related to your service as a poll worker or the rules and resources in your jurisdiction, always defer to your local elections office.