

# Houses of the Oireachtas

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## How to hold a mock Oireachtas election

Holding a mock election is a great way of demonstrating that politics is far from a spectator sport and explaining the voting system we use in Ireland.

The voting system in Irish elections is proportional representation with a single transferable vote (PR-STV) in multi-seat constituencies.

### **Select candidates**

First, decide how many seats are going to be filled. Candidates who wish to run can then put their names forward for election.

### **Form committees**

The students should form the following committees:

#### **Election committees**

Each candidate can form a small team to help with their election campaign. The team will draw up a manifesto or action plan for the candidate, publicise the candidate and their manifesto and canvass on behalf of the candidate.

#### **Register of electors committee**

This group of students will collect the names and address of every student who is entitled to vote and publish the list as a register of electors. This committee will also design the ballot paper to be used for the election with a picture and the name of each candidate on it. The committee will also establish a polling station, with a ballot box, on polling day and ensure that only those registered to vote cast a ballot.

#### **Election count committee**

This committee will count the votes. This group of students will appoint a presiding officer who is in charge of the count and officially announces the result. The presiding officer will also establish the quota.

## Calculate the quota

The formula for calculating the quota is as follows:

$$(\text{valid poll} \div [\text{seats} + 1]) + 1 = \text{quota}$$

Say your election is to fill 3 seats and 30 ballot papers are cast, 2 of which are spoiled and therefore invalid. In this case, you calculate a quota of 8, as follows:

$$(28 \div [3 + 1]) + 1 = 8$$

## Vote

Each registered voter receives a ballot paper and writes 1 opposite their first choice, 2 opposite their second choice, 3 opposite their third choice and so on. Voters may stop marking after 1 or go right down the ballot paper, giving a preference to each candidate.

## Count the votes

The count committee counts the votes in public. The presiding officer declares the result of each count.

The first count details the first preference votes gained by each candidate.

If no candidate is elected then the lowest ranked candidate is eliminated. All the candidate's votes are examined and the 2nd preferences are added to the remaining candidates in the race. If there are no 2nd preferences on a ballot paper (i.e. someone has just given their number one vote to one candidate and not used any of their other preferences) then no candidate is awarded that vote and it is called non-transferable.

If a candidate exceeds the quota they are deemed elected. The number of votes by which a candidate has exceeded the quota is known as a surplus. The elected candidate's surplus is distributed. This involves looking at the second preferences on the surplus votes and adding them to the votes of the remaining candidates.

This process of elimination and distribution of surpluses continues until the seats are filled.

## More information

For a full explanation of the PR-STV system see the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government website at [housing.gov.ie](http://housing.gov.ie).