



Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how “We the People” interact with the government and each other. Let’s help each other expand our civic literacy.

To vote in federal elections in the United States, there are two constitutional qualifications: you must be a citizen and you must be at least 18. This means residents of all 50 states, and the District of Columbia, have the same voter eligibility requirements. In fact, the laws that govern voter registration and pre-registration **differ across the nation** as there is no national standard.

In some states there is a pre-registration option for 16 or 17 year-olds so that once they turn 18, they are eligible to vote. For example, Florida allows 16 year-olds to pre-register, while Maine requires people to be at least 17 to pre-register.

There are some other differences among states as well. For example, some states require voters to be permanent residents living in the state in which they are registering to vote, while others prohibit voter registration if someone has been declared mentally incompetent or if they have been convicted of a felony. **North Dakota** is the only state that does not require voter registration. Interestingly, there are some **local communities** in the United States that allow non-citizens or citizens under 18 to vote in local elections. Keep in mind, though, that these individuals remain barred from federal elections. Local standards only apply to local elections.



When preparing to register to vote, it is important to know your state’s requirements and to meet their registration deadlines. Registration deadlines vary from state-to-state, so knowing how far in advance you need to register will prevent missing the opportunity to cast your vote.

In an effort to increase the number of registered voters in the country, Congress passed and President Clinton signed into law, the **National Voter Registration Act of 1993**. This act is known as the “Motor Voter” law because it requires the states to offer voter registration opportunities to eligible citizens when they apply for or renew a driver’s license at their local Department of Motor Vehicles. The law also requires states to provide voter registration opportunities when eligible people apply for federal public assistance or go to the U.S. Post Office. Because of these additional opportunities, registering to vote has been made more convenient

To Think and To Do: What are the voting registration requirements for your state? How do they compare to your neighboring states? What do you notice about the similarities and differences in the registration requirements across the states?

Learn MORE about Voter Registration.
Free registration may be required.

- [Voter Registration Requirements by State](#), from USA.gov
- [Register and Vote In Your State](#), from U.S. Election Assistance Commission



Take Part in the 2020 Mock Election!
If you are in Florida, join us with [KidsVotingFlorida!](#)

Somewhere else?
Check out [DoubleClick Democracy](#) for a program near you.

