Students Power Elections
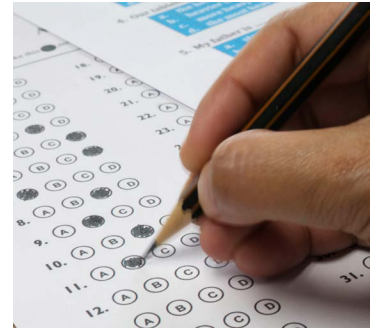
Name:

A **ballot** is a ticket or piece of paper used to vote in an election. It's kind of like a multiple choice test where you fill in the bubble next to the correct answer. The difference is that the correct answer might be different depending on who is choosing, but it's still important to "study" the options before you make your choice.

Once you're registered, you may get a voter's guide sent to your home that includes information about voting in your state. It's good to read the text directly, but let's be honest: those booklets can be boring, with dense language that takes a lot of time to read! Some states don't send that information directly to your address, and even if they do, the information you need is already on the website for your Secretary of State.

Voter Notes. Follow this link **USA.gov/election.office** and select your state from the list. Fill the information in the table below.

Link to your state's Secretary of State Elections page	
Date of nearest election	

Ballot Measures.

The ballot you receive contains only the proposed laws and candidates that will represent you. There are a few different types of proposed laws, also called **ballot measures**. Some states have **initiatives,** which are proposed laws drafted by citizens. A **referendum** is a proposal the legislature puts on a ballot. These proposed laws are direct ways that people have a say in the laws that govern them.

Voter Notes. Are there any proposed laws on the ballot in your district? Check by going to **ballotready.org** and typing in your address. Find any ballot measures for the upcoming election and write their titles and a few words explaining what the law will do in the correct column in the table. If your nearest election is a primary, there won't be any ballot measures. *Don't close the ballotready.org window!*

Initiative	Referendum

Name:

Role of Office.

What else is on the ballot? Candidates! There are a lot of government offices and a lot of people who want to get elected. Where do you even begin?? First, you need to know what you're voting for. Make sure you understand the role of that government position and what the person who holds the position can actually do once they're in office.

Voter Notes. Open the **ballotready.org** window again and complete the table for *at least one* of the offices in your upcoming election. You may need to research some of the answers.

Name of Office (Senator, Governor, Mayor, etc.)	
Purpose/Powers of office (What is their job?)	
Federal, state, or local	
Branch of government (Executive, Legislative, Judicial)	
Term limit	

Candidates.

Next, you need to know *who* you're voting for. Researching candidates can be difficult. You're helping decide who will lead your community, state, or even the nation! You need to know the candidates, and you need to know yourself.

Use the Report Card on the next page to help grade the candidates based on what you care about. Look out for interesting facts about the candidate or their campaign.

- In **Section A**, select three issues you care most about and think about your position on those issues.

- In **Section B**, identify the top qualities you value in an elected official.

- For each issue and quality you selected, research where the candidates stand. In **Section C**, identify if you agree (+) or disagree (-) and explain your reasoning.

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

Project Vote Smart

www.votesmart.org

Non-partisan information on candidates in local, state, and federal races.

Vote 411

www.vote411.org

Search for candidates by location and compare. Provided by the League of Women Voters.

Candidate/Party Websites

Helpful, but remember, these should be used as partisan resources that are meant to convince as well as inform.

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Name:

Candidate Report Card

A. Issues that matter to me:	B. Qualities I look for in a candidate:
❑ Crime	❑ Consensus builder
❑ Education	❑ Endorsed by groups/organizations I like
❑ Environment	❑ Honest and transparent
❑ Economy	❑ Leadership experience
❑ Family and children	❑ Newcomer to government
❑ Healthcare	❑ Previous experience in government
❑ Racial justice	❑ Strong understanding of the issues/policy
❑ Other: _____	❑ Other: _____
❑ Other: _____	❑ Other: _____
❑ Other: _____	❑ Other: _____

C.	Candidate 1:		Candidate 2:	
The Issues	+/-		+/-	
Important Qualities				
Notes: (Use this space to take note of at least three things you learned about each candidate during your research.)				

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Rewind.

Use your new knowledge to come up with a **five-step process** for figuring out what and who you'll vote for.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Reflect.

Based on the decisions you made about candidates and ballot measures, what can you tell about your priorities as a voter? Which issues are most important to you? Was anything surprising?