

Lift Up Your Everyday

Occupational therapy advice to vote confidently



If you struggle to get around

1. Get in touch with your local council

Councils are legally required to make voting possible for everyone and should make reasonable adjustments for you if you need them. You can request these by contacting your local council. You can ask them how physically accessible your polling station is – some councils have this information on their website too.

On the day, the volunteers at your polling station can also provide support. If you're disabled, you're also allowed to bring a companion with you for support. It will need to be someone who is registered to vote themselves.

2. Plan your journey

Plan your journey in advance so you know how to get to the polling station on the day. Try a practice run, or a few if you need to do the journey bit-by-bit, and bring someone along for support.

3. Ask for a lift

If you can't travel long distances, don't drive, struggle with public transport, or can't afford a taxi, ask friends, family or neighbours if they can help. There may be local carpooling groups, ride-sharing services or community drivers. Some local charities provide transport to polling stations too.

If you have difficulty understanding the process

4. Ask someone to talk you through the steps

If you have an occupational therapist, you can ask them to take you through the steps of finding out about your local candidates, what their pledges are, how and where to register to vote, and how to vote on polling day.

If you don't have an occupational therapist, ask a friend or family member if they could help instead. Try role-playing what will happen on the day, so you know what to expect.





5. Use sources that make the information easy to digest

If you have learning disabilities and/or cognitive challenges such as dementia, you may have difficulty understanding the voting process and need additional support.

Organisations and charities such as Learning Disability England, My Vote My Voice, Learning Disability Wales (ldw.org.uk/resources), Inclusion Scotland (inclusionScotland.org) and Disability Action Northern Ireland (disabilityaction.org) have a range of easy-read information to help people understand the election, register to vote and cast their vote. They break the steps down and can answer any questions you have in a way that's easy to understand.

You could also get information from other sources, such as podcasts, or speaking to different friends and family (although be aware that friends and family are likely to have their own opinions). The Electoral Commission has a series of easy-to-understand YouTube videos in English and Welsh offering a quick guide to voting.

If you're a carer or have Power of Attorney, make sure the person you are providing support for has mental capacity and understands who and what they're voting for.

6. Find out if language support is available

If English isn't your first language, your council should be able to provide voting information and forms in different languages. You should also be able to request an interpreter to accompany you in the polling station through your council.

If you find it difficult to take in lots of information at once

7. Access a small amount each day

If you have a short attention span, are easily distracted, or struggle to manage energy levels, you might find it difficult to take in large amounts of information at once. Try breaking it down into bitesize chunks and look at or listen to a small amount each day. Make sure you're looking at reliable, neutral sources, which could be written, or on the TV or radio.

8. Avoid TV, radio and social media if you need to

For some people, receiving too much information through a variety of sources, including leaflets, TV, radio, and social media, can make you feel overloaded. When you feel like this, it can be difficult to decide how to vote.

If this happens, don't be afraid to switch off the TV or radio, and disconnect from social media. The best place to get information about what each party is calling for is by looking at their manifestos, which you can find by Googling the party's name (for example Labour, Conservative) plus 'manifesto'.

9. Speak to friends and family

When you feel overwhelmed, it could help to discuss your thoughts and feelings with a trusted friend, family member or carer, who might be able to help you untangle your thoughts and feelings and identify what further support you need to be able to vote.

If you get overwhelmed by crowds

10. Try deep breathing

If you struggle with social anxiety, you may find going to a busy polling station challenging. Deep breathing exercises, or other calming techniques, can help focus your mind and regulate you to help relax your body and start to feel calmer again. If you find it too much to go to the polling station, you can vote by post or proxy (see advice 1 and 2 above).

We're here to support you with expert advice from occupational therapists.

11. Vote early or late in the day

Polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on election day. You might find it easier to go just after polls open or just before they close, when polling stations tend to be quieter, and you can be in and out quicker.

If you have sight or hearing loss

12. Ask for braille, large-print, audio or BSL versions

Councils should provide information about voting in braille, large-print, audio or BSL versions. Political parties should be able to provide different versions of their manifestos too. These will also often be available online if you have screen-readers on your computer.



13. Ask for reasonable adjustments

You can ask your council for reasonable adjustments to enable you to vote in person – you don't have to request this in advance. These can include, but are not limited to, tactile voting devices, large print ballot papers for reference and magnifiers. Charities such as RNIB (for sight loss) and RNID (for hearing loss) have more information about what you can ask for, and how and when to ask.

If you struggle to hold a pencil

14. Use a pencil grip

If you're not able to hold a pencil, you can bring one that you can use or a pencil grip to help you write. Polling stations should also provide some kind of support for this too. If you can't hold a pencil with supports, for example if you have a tremor, you can bring a companion with you to do it for you. They'll just need to sign a form and provide their name and electoral register number.

If you're worried about your safety

15. Report issues to the police

If you feel you are being harassed, intimidated, or discriminated against at a polling station, report it to the police. Intimidation or bribery to vote a certain way – also known as 'undue influence' – is considered as fraud and is a crime. It includes both physical and verbal threats and violence.

No-one is allowed to tell you who to vote for, and you don't need to tell anyone who you are voting for (unless voting by proxy).

Scan here
to find
out more

rcot.co.uk/voting



UK Parliamentary elections (general elections) and elections in England and Northern Ireland

You'll need to show your photo ID to vote at a polling station. Have a look at the list of acceptable forms of ID, which includes your passport, Blue Badges and a number of disabled and concessionary travel passes.

Expired ID is OK, as long as the photo still looks like you.

Scottish Parliament, Senedd and local elections in Scotland and Wales

You do not need photo ID to vote and you do not need to take your polling card. Anyone aged 16 years old and over can vote, as long as they've registered with their local council.



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