SAMPLE COUNTY
Supervisor of Elections
Fictional office for demonstration

NEW POLL WORKER GUIDE

Your First Election: What to Expect

A step-by-step look at Florida's polling place rules, from setup to closing



Three guides you'll use

State manual (DS-DE 11)

Florida's Polling Place Procedures Manual. It must be at every polling place, and it wins if a county procedure conflicts with it.

Sample County training

Your county adds its own steps, like forms and ballot counts, as long as they don't conflict with the state manual.

Equipment manual

The Voting Systems Operations Manual covers setup, troubleshooting, and closing for your county's equipment. Every precinct has one.

When in doubt, ask your clerk or call the elections office.

Before Election Day

Your checklist

- [ ] Finish your training: at least 2 hours for inspectors or 3 for clerks
- [ ] Take the disability sensitivity course
- [ ] Know your role and your polling place address
- [ ] Election Day: plan to arrive by 6 a.m.
- [ ] Early voting: check your site's hours
- [ ] Plan for a long day: 13 hours or more

Ask Sample County

The state manual doesn't cover these.

- Your pay rate and when you'll be paid
- What to bring, and whether meals or breaks are provided
- Which voting equipment and poll book you'll use
- Who to call on Election Day

Poll Worker Office: (555) 010-0100

Your election team

Clerk

In charge of the polling place. At early voting, the site manager.

Inspectors

Check in voters, handle ballots and equipment, and assist the clerk.

Other poll workers

Equipment managers, ballot managers, and assistants.

Deputy sheriff

Keeps order, mostly outside the polling room.

The election board: the clerk and inspectors. They decide questions by majority vote, and can't all be from one party.

Not on your team: poll watchers. They observe for a party, candidate, or issue committee.

Before 7 a.m.: people and paperwork

6 a.m.

Team arrives

7 a.m.

Polls open

The public may watch setup from a set area, but must leave when the polls open.

People and paperwork

- Every poll worker signs the poll worker oath
- Compare the ballots to the sample ballot, and certify in writing that they match
- Everyone wears a badge showing their role (and language, if they help in one)
- Post required signs and notices in English and Spanish
- Early voting only: set up and clearly mark the secure ballot intake station

Before 7 a.m.: room and equipment

6 a.m.

Team arrives

7 a.m.

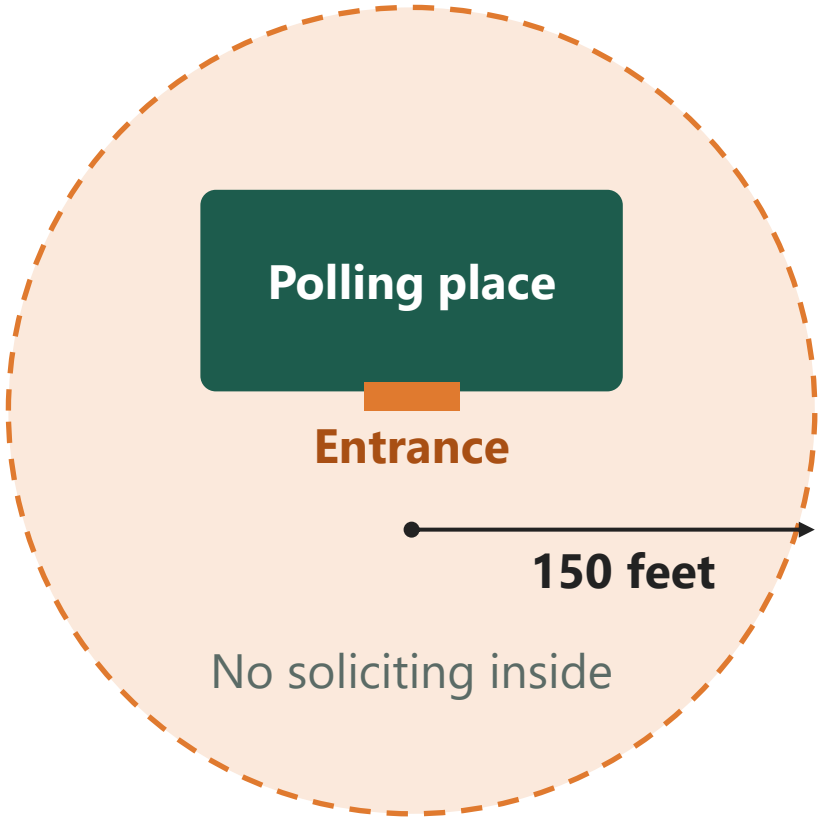
Polls open

The public may watch setup from a set area, but must leave when the polls open.

Room and equipment

- Set up booths so voters can't see each other's ballots
- Set up and test the accessible voting equipment, even if no one is expected to use it
- Check the lighting. Keep paths, doors, and ramps clear.
- Mark the 150-foot no-solicitation zone, and set a spot for poll watchers
- Cover or turn off security cameras in the polling room
- Pick one poll worker to check the booths all day

The 150-foot no-solicitation zone



No one may solicit voters inside the polling place or within 150 feet of its entrance.

- The clerk or Supervisor marks the zone, in all directions if possible.
- The same zone applies around a secure ballot intake station.
- Exit polls are the only exception, and only after voters leave.

What counts as soliciting

Not allowed within 150 feet

- Asking for votes, opinions, money, or petition signatures
- Offering to help someone vote
- Showing or handing out campaign material, even signs on cars
- Taking polls, selling things, or giving out food or water
- Anything meant to influence a voter

Allowed

- Exit polls, but only after voters leave the polling place
- Voters wearing campaign items while they go in to vote
- Elections office staff giving nonpartisan help, including food or water

Who can be in the polling room?

Allowed

- Poll workers
- Poll watchers approved by the Supervisor
- The Supervisor or Deputy Supervisor
- Election observers named by the Florida Department of State
- Voters, and people caring for them or in their care
- Helpers for approved kids' mock elections

Not allowed, except to vote

- Candidates
- Members of the media
- Law enforcement and emergency workers, unless the clerk or a majority of the board allows it

No photos in the polling room. Voters may photograph only their own ballot.

Stay neutral and focused



No politics on duty

Don't wear campaign items or talk about candidates, parties, or issues. Keep campaign materials out of sight.



Badge on, phone away

Wear your ID badge so voters can find you. Avoid personal phones and other distractions.



Check each booth

After each voter leaves, check the booth. Throw away left-behind sample ballots or campaign items.

Voters are different

Voters may:

- Wear campaign items while voting
- Bring notes or a marked sample ballot for their own use
- Photograph their own ballot

Voters may not:

- Campaign inside or within 150 feet
- Take a vote-by-mail ballot into the booth

Poll watchers

Each party, candidate, and issue committee may have one approved watcher per polling room at a time. Watchers wear a badge with their name.

Watchers may

- Watch the election, including check-in
- Watch the secure ballot intake station at early voting
- Give written voter challenges to the clerk
- Use phones quietly: silent, no calls, no photos
- Ask the clerk about procedures

Watchers may not

- Block or disrupt the election
- Come closer to the check-in table or booths than needed
- Talk to or help voters
- Wear campaign items
- Take photos or make recordings

Checking in a voter: 5 steps

1

Photo ID

Check a current photo ID with signature. Does the photo match?

2

Find the name

Search the register. E-poll book? Scan a Florida license or ID card first.

3

Check address

Ask if their address has changed. Handle updates first.

4

Signature

The voter signs. Compare it to the ID signature.

5

Right ballot

Give the ballot for their address (and party, in a primary).

If a step can't be completed, follow the steps on the next slides. When eligibility can't be confirmed, the voter may vote a provisional ballot.

Photo IDs accepted at the polls in 2026

- Florida driver license
- Florida ID card (from DHSMV)
- U.S. passport or passport card
- Debit or credit card (ends 2027)
- Military ID
- Student ID (ends 2027)
- Retirement center ID (ends 2027)
- Neighborhood association ID (ends 2027)
- Public assistance ID (ends 2027)
- Veteran health ID card (VA)
- Concealed weapon or firearm license
- Government employee ID

Changing January 1, 2027: a new state law (ch. 2026-26, Laws of Fla.) removes the five IDs marked "ends 2027." Always use the ID list from your current county training.

Photo ID and signature rules

Real cards only

No photocopies, and no pictures on a phone.

No signature on the photo ID?

The voter also shows a second ID that has their signature.

Signature looks different?

The voter fills out a signature affidavit. If they won't, they vote a provisional ballot.

No acceptable ID, or the photo doesn't match?

The voter may vote a provisional ballot.

Search tips when a name isn't found

Name type	Example	Try searching
Hyphenated	Jane Sample-Example	Sample, Example, SampleExample, or Sample% (wildcard)
More than one surname	Ana Muestra de Ejemplo	de Ejemplo, deEjemplo, Ejemplo, or Muestra
Special characters	Pat Sampleño or Exámple	Sampleno or Example
Same names	John Example Sr., Jr., or III	Last name and date of birth
Similar names	Samantha or Samanta Example	First name, last name, and date of birth

Some electronic poll books can also search by voter ID number, house number and last name, or name and date of birth.

Still can't find the voter?

1

Ask: "Has your name or address changed?" If yes, handle that change first.

2

If not, call the elections office, or check the master voter list if you have one.

3

Still can't confirm, or can't reach the office? Offer a provisional ballot.

Name or address changed? The next two slides cover what to do.

When a voter has moved

Moved within the county

- Voter fills out an address change affirmation or registration form
- Election Day: new address in a different polling place? Send them there.
- Early voting: keep going with check-in

Moved from another Florida county

- E-poll book: same as an in-county move
- Paper register: provisional ballot. Its certificate doubles as the address update.
- Uniformed services members and families: update, then vote a regular ballot

Wrong precinct on Election Day? If the voter insists on voting there anyway, offer a provisional ballot.

Address checks and name changes



Check every address

Ask each voter if their address has changed. Not sure? Ask them to state or show their current address.



Name changed

Old name on the register: the voter fills out an affirmation or registration form, then continue.
Not on the register: call the office to confirm they're eligible.



Address-protected voter

Follow the county's special steps so the voter can share their address privately.

Provisional ballots: ID and registration

A provisional ballot lets someone vote when eligibility can't be confirmed at the polls. The county canvassing board decides later if it counts. Offer one when:



ID and identity

- No acceptable photo ID and signature ID
- The photo doesn't look like the voter
- Signatures don't match, and the voter won't sign an affidavit
- Their driver license, state ID, or SSN isn't verified yet



Registration and precinct

- Not on the register, and you can't confirm they're registered
- Records say they aren't registered, but they say they are
- In the wrong precinct, but they insist on voting there
- Moved from another county, and can't or won't update at the polls

Provisional ballots: mail, early voting, and other cases

Also offer a provisional ballot when:

Mail and early voting records

- Asked for a mail ballot, and you can't confirm if it came back
- The office has their mail ballot, but they say they didn't send it
- Records show they voted early, but they say they didn't

Challenges and other cases

- The voter was challenged (except address-only challenges)
- The register flags them as possibly not eligible
- They vote after closing time under a court order
- You can't reach the elections office to check

Provisional ballots: step by step

1. The voter fills out and signs the Provisional Ballot Voter's Certificate and Affirmation in front of you.
2. You sign it too, and write the election date, the precinct or ballot style, and the reason for the provisional ballot.
3. Give the voter the ballot.
4. The voter puts the voted ballot in the secrecy envelope, puts that in the provisional envelope, and seals it.
5. Give the voter the written Notice of Rights before the envelope goes in the box.
6. Attach the certificate if it isn't part of the envelope. Put the sealed envelope in the box used only for provisional ballots.

Provisional ballots: voter rights and reminders

The voter's rights (given in writing)

- Give more proof of eligibility to the Supervisor by 5 p.m. on the 2nd day after the election
- Find out whether their ballot counted, and if not, why
- Fix ("cure") a missing or mismatched signature

Remember

- Never scan a provisional ballot at the polls
- Keep them sealed, and return them to the office after closing
- Court-ordered extra hours? Keep those provisionals separate

Primary elections

Florida has closed primaries

In party races, only voters registered with that party can vote for its candidates. That includes a presidential preference primary.

Tip: when you hand over the ballot, ask the voter to confirm it matches their address and, in a primary, their party.

No party affiliation?

Those voters can't choose a party's ballot on primary day.

Open to everyone

Nonpartisan races and ballot questions are open to all voters.

Universal primary

If all candidates in a race are from one party and no one will face them in the general election, all voters can vote in that race.

Party changes

A voter can change party at the polls, but it counts at the next election, not this one.

A mail ballot voter wants to vote in person

Did the voter bring their vote-by-mail ballot?

Yes

Cancel it, then check in

- The voter (or you) notches, cuts, or tears through the timing marks
- Still in its envelope? Cut through both. Mark the envelope "canceled."
- Want it as notes? They may photograph it first.

No

Call the office: was it received?

Not received → **regular ballot**

Received, but the voter says they didn't send it → **provisional**

Can't tell → **provisional**

A mail ballot counts as cast once the elections office receives it.

Early voting: the secure ballot intake station

What it is

Every early voting site has one, for voters dropping off a voted mail ballot.

Who watches it

It's labeled and sealed, and a designated election board member keeps custody of it at all times.

Before drop-off

Check that the voter sealed the ballot in the certificate envelope and signed the certificate.

End of each day

Seal the ballots in a transfer container with audit forms, and return it to the office.

Spoiled and rejected ballots

A mistake on the ballot

Spoil it: the voter (or you) notches, cuts, or tears through the timing marks. Give a new ballot. Up to 3 in all.

Tabulator rejects it

It rejects overvoted or blank ballots. Without looking, tell the voter why. They choose: a new ballot, or cast it as is.

Decides not to vote

Treat the blank ballot as spoiled. Undo the check-in if you can, or write down what happened.

Keep them secure. Spoiled and canceled ballots go back to the office under chain-of-custody steps, and they're counted at closing.

Ballots taken or left behind

Voter tries to leave with it

Explain they can spoil it instead, and that taking a ballot out is against the law. If they leave with it, note it on the Ballot Accounting Form and report it.

Ballot left behind

Don't scan it. Put it in the envelope or container marked "unscanned ballot" for the canvassing board.

Voter Fraud Hotline: 1-877-868-3737. If the voter who took a ballot can be identified, complete an elections fraud complaint (Form DS-DE 34).

Helping voters

Any voter may get help

- From anyone they choose, except their employer, the employer's agent, or a union rep
- The voter fills out a Declaration to Secure Assistance. The helper fills out a Declaration to Provide Assistance.
- Needs help with the equipment in the booth? Two poll workers help, from different parties if possible, then step away.
- No helper may suggest how to vote.

Language help

- Voters may bring an interpreter (same limits as at left)
- Spanish ballots, voting screens, and materials are available
- Help may come from a bilingual poll worker, an interpreter, phone or video translation, or audio equipment, as your county provides
- Bilingual poll workers wear a badge showing the language

Serving voters with disabilities

Every voter

- Speak to the voter, not their companion
- Use people-first words: "a person who uses a wheelchair"
- Ask before touching any device

Mobility

- Keep ramps and paths clear
- Talk at eye level
- Step around high counters
- Ask before touching a wheelchair, cane, or walker

Sight

- Say your name and role
- Give exact directions: "Take five steps and turn left"
- Don't pet or distract service animals

Keep the accessible voting equipment set up and working all day.

Hearing, speech, and cognition

Hearing

- Don't shout
- Rephrase instead of repeating
- Face the voter, even with an interpreter

Speech

- Be patient, and don't interrupt
- Restate what you understood
- Offer pen and paper

Cognition

- Stay calm
- Use short, clear sentences
- Repeat steps as needed
- Don't rush the voter

Some disabilities aren't visible. Listen carefully to learn how best to help each voter.

Upset voters and order at the polls

When a voter is upset

- Stay calm and professional. Keep your voice down.
- Watch your body language, and listen.
- Be polite and respectful.
- Offer help, and look for a solution.
- Very angry or threatening? Get the clerk or the deputy.
- Write down the problem and how it was solved.

Order at the polls

- The board may take any reasonable step to keep order.
- Law enforcement can remove disruptive people from the polling room or the 150-foot zone.
- Officers enter only to vote, or with permission from the clerk or a majority of the board.
- Emergency? Call 911 first, then the elections office.

Closing the polls

1. **Announce the close**

   At 7 p.m. (or the site's early voting closing time), the clerk announces the close. Anyone in line still votes.

2. **Mark the end of the line**

   For example, the deputy stands behind the last person.

3. **Let everyone in line vote**

   Don't shut down equipment until voting is done.

4. **Lock the equipment**

   Secure the tabulator, following the equipment manual.

5. **Account, post, and return**

   Balance the ballots, post results, and return everything.

Who can watch

The public, including poll watchers, may watch from a set area. No more than 3 people may stand near the officials during the count.

If a court extends hours

Anyone who gets in line after the regular closing time votes a provisional ballot. Keep those separate.

Making the numbers balance

Check 1: every ballot is accounted for

Voted + Unused + Provisional + Unscanned + Stubs + Spoiled

= **Ballots the Supervisor issued**

Check 2: voters match ballots

Voters who signed in = Ballots on the tabulator + Provisional ballots

Numbers don't match? Recount, and check the emergency and extra bins. Still off? The clerk reports the difference and the likely reason in writing.

After the count: post, seal, and return

1. Post the results at the polling place.
2. Fill out and sign the certificate of results, and deliver it sealed to the Supervisor.
3. Seal the ballot boxes, ballots, stubs, and papers, and return them to the office.
4. Return the precinct registers and poll lists separately, not in the ballot boxes.
5. Early voting: return the intake station's mail ballots every day, in their own sealed container.

Multi-page ballots or ballot-on-demand printing? Follow Sample County's extra accounting steps.

Keeping the polling place secure

All day, every day

- Watch entrances and exits. Only authorized people in restricted areas.
- Protect ballots, signed forms, and equipment from delivery to return.
- Make sure equipment and cables can't be tampered with.
- Do quick checks (counts, inventory) during the day.
- Follow chain-of-custody steps when moving ballots.
- Write down incidents and troubleshooting.
- Be careful moving equipment near a public window or door to get a better signal.

Emergencies at the polls

Medical or other emergency

Call 911 first. Then call the elections office.

Power outage

Follow the Voting Systems Operations Manual for ballots cast during the outage.

Threats, fire, or storms

Know your county's emergency and evacuation plan before Election Day.

The county's written plan covers threats like fire, flood, or a weapon, and includes how to evacuate.

Quick reference

6 a.m.
Team arrives on Election Day

7 a.m.
Polls open

7 p.m.
Polls close; anyone in line votes

150 ft
No-solicitation zone

3
Most ballots per voter

2
Poll workers who help in the booth

3
Most people near the count after closing

5 p.m.
Day 2 after the election: provisional proof deadline

Voter Fraud Hotline: 1-877-868-3737 **Poll Worker Office:** (555) 010-0100

References

Polling Place Procedures Manual (DS-DE 11, July 2024)	dos.fl.gov/media/708161/final-ds-de-11-manual.pdf
Where the state posts the manual	dos.fl.gov/elections/forms-publications/forms/forms-incorporated-in-rule/
Rule 1S-2.034, F.A.C. (adopts the manual)	flrules.org/gateway/ruleNo.asp?id=1S-2.034
Ch. 2026-26, Laws of Fla. (ID change, Jan. 1, 2027)	laws.flrules.org/2026/26
Florida Statutes, sections (Online Sunshine)	100.011, 101.043, 101.048, 101.051, 101.131, 101.69, 102.012, 102.014, 102.031
Elections fraud complaint (Form DS-DE 34)	dos.fl.gov/elections/contacts/elections-fraud-complaint/
Sample County SOE: poll workers	samplecounty.example/pollworkers

Links checked September 27, 2026. Sample County is fictional.