

Step by step voting

Your vote is your voice

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Overview Many people are unsure about what happens once they step into a polling station. This activity helps them to understand the voting process.

Materials Picture cards provided.

Timing About 10 minutes.

Instructions Lay the picture cards at random on the floor. Ask participants to place them in the correct order.

For an extra twist divide participants into teams and give each team a set of picture cards. The first team to get the pictures in the correct order wins a prize.

Information about the images can be found on the worksheets.

You can find more activities like this on the Do Politics Centre www.dopolitics.org.uk

Other ways of voting

This activity shows the most common way of voting - in person at a polling station. However you can also vote in the following two ways:

By post: If you are unable to make it to the polling station then you may apply to vote by post.

By proxy: This means that you appoint someone else to vote for you at the polling station. You must have a specific reason (usually medical) to vote in this way.

Contact your local council or visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk to apply for a postal or proxy vote.

1. Register to vote

The **electoral register** is a list of everyone who is registered to vote. You must be on the register to be able to vote. Do this by filling out a registration form.

A registration form is sent to every home each autumn, during the annual canvass. You can also register at other times of the year by downloading a registration form from www.aboutmyvote.co.uk or contacting your local council.



2. Receive your poll card

If you are on the electoral register you will be sent a card just before an election. This is called a **poll card** and tells you what the arrangements are for voting. For instance it will detail what you need to do if you have applied to vote by post, or where your polling station is if you are voting in person.

3. Head to the polling station

On election day go to the **polling station**.

The polling station is often a school or local hall near to where you live. Polling stations are open from 7am – 10pm.

The staff inside the polling station will ask you your name and address and check that you are on the electoral register.

You can show them your poll card but you don't need this to vote.

All polling stations should have disabled access. If you need assistance with voting ask staff at the polling station to help you.



4. Collect your ballot paper(s)

The staff at the polling station will give you a list of the people or parties you can vote for. This is called a **ballot paper**. Depending on the type of election, you may have more than one ballot paper.

There may also be more than one election on the same day so it is important to follow instructions from the polling staff.



5. Go into a polling booth

Take your ballot paper(s) into a **polling booth** so that no one can see how you vote.



6. Mark your ballot paper

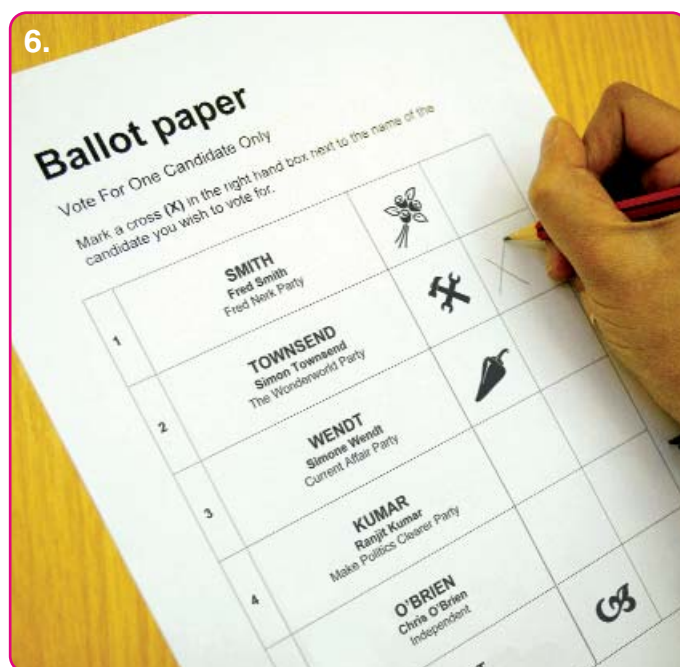
You will need to mark your ballot paper differently depending on which election you are voting in. If there is more than one election being held on the same day then the number of ballot papers you receive will vary.

Different elections use different voting systems:

- For elections to your local council (including parish councils) or the UK Parliament you place a cross (X) next to the candidate of your choice. In an election to the UK Parliament you vote for ONE candidate only. In local council elections you may be asked to vote for a number of candidates. This system is called 'first past the post'.
- For elections to the European Parliament place a cross (X) next to the political party of your choice. These elections use a 'closed list' system.

If you live in London:

- For elections to the London Assembly you have two votes: one for a constituency member and one for a London-wide representative. For both votes mark a cross (X) next to the person or party you want to be elected. This is called the 'additional member system'.
- To elect the Mayor of London you can make a first and second choice vote, e.g. put a '1' beside the candidate you like best and a '2' beside your second choice.



Sample of ballot paper used in elections to the UK Parliament

Don't write anything else on the paper or your vote may not be counted.

If you need help filling in your ballot paper or are unsure what to do, ask the polling station staff for help. If you make a mistake on your ballot paper you can ask for another.

Note to facilitator: We have provided a sample ballot paper for elections to the UK Parliament. Download other sample ballot papers from www.dopolitics.org.uk and interchange photos depending on which election(s) you would like to talk about.

Visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk for more information.

7. Cast your vote(s)

Place your ballot paper(s) in the **ballot box**. If there is more than one election there may be more than one ballot box. If you are not clear about what to do ask the staff at the polling station to help you.



8. Polls close

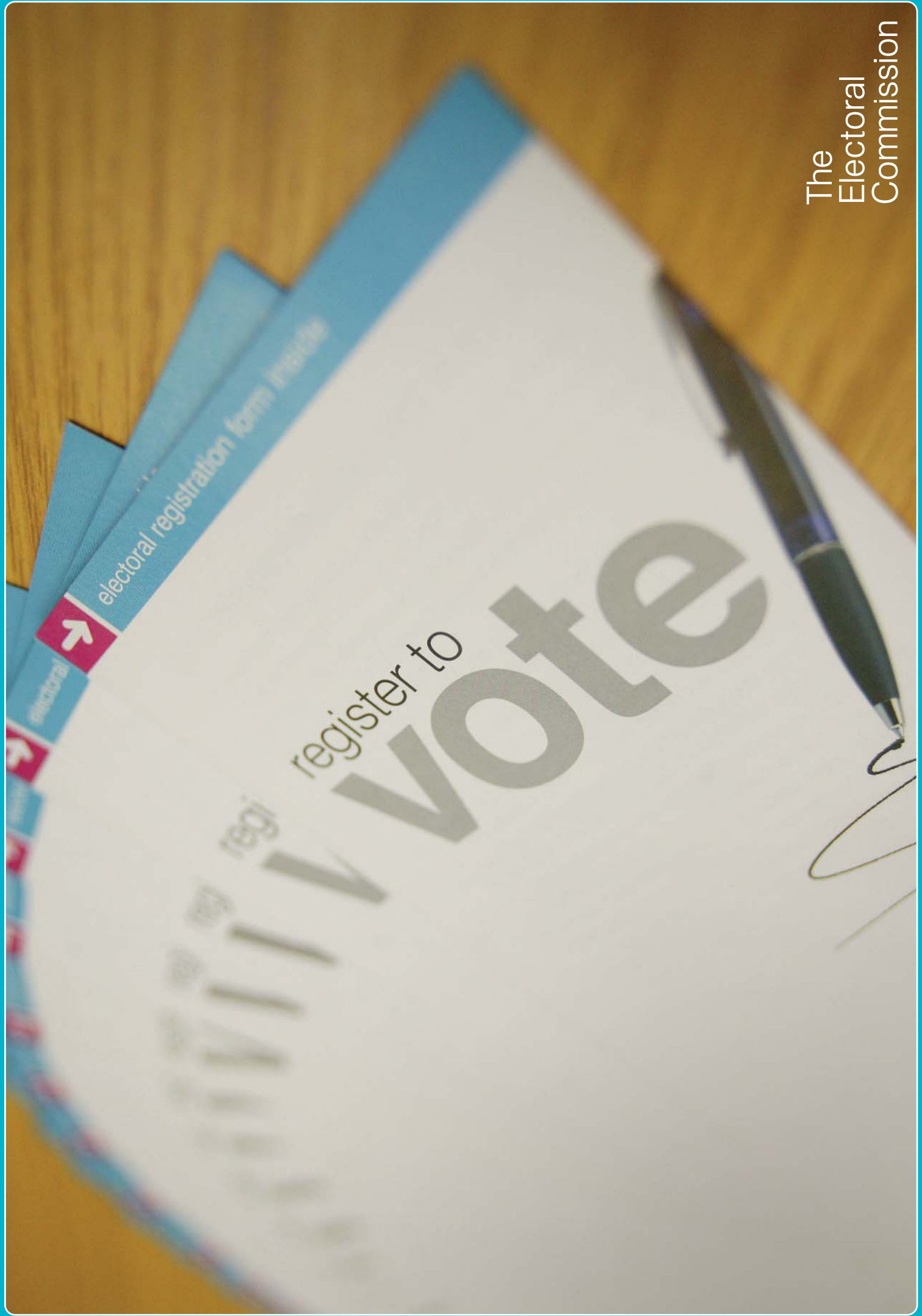
Polling stations close at 10pm.



9. The count

After the polls close the votes are counted and the results of the elections are declared.





Business Reply
Licence Number
RLSY-XEJE-CUYT

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OFFICIAL POLL CARD
REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACTS

NUMBER ON REGISTER

NAME & ADDRESS
...
... Road

CONSTITUENCY

POLLING DAY
Thursday

01020 8313 4364 - 9am to 5pm
Monday to Friday
Richard Cross, Secretary, 2011 2011

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Ballot paper

Vote For One Candidate Only
Mark a cross (X) in the right hand box next to the name of the candidate you wish to vote for.

1	SMITH Fred Smith Fred Nerk Party		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	TOWNSEND Simon Townsend The Wonderworld Party		<input type="checkbox"/>
3	WENDT Simone Wendt Current Affair Party		<input type="checkbox"/>
4	KUMAR Ranjit Kumar Make Politics Clearer Party		<input type="checkbox"/>
5	O'BRIEN Chris O'Brien Independent		<input type="checkbox"/>
6	LAST Jenny Last The Best Party		<input type="checkbox"/>

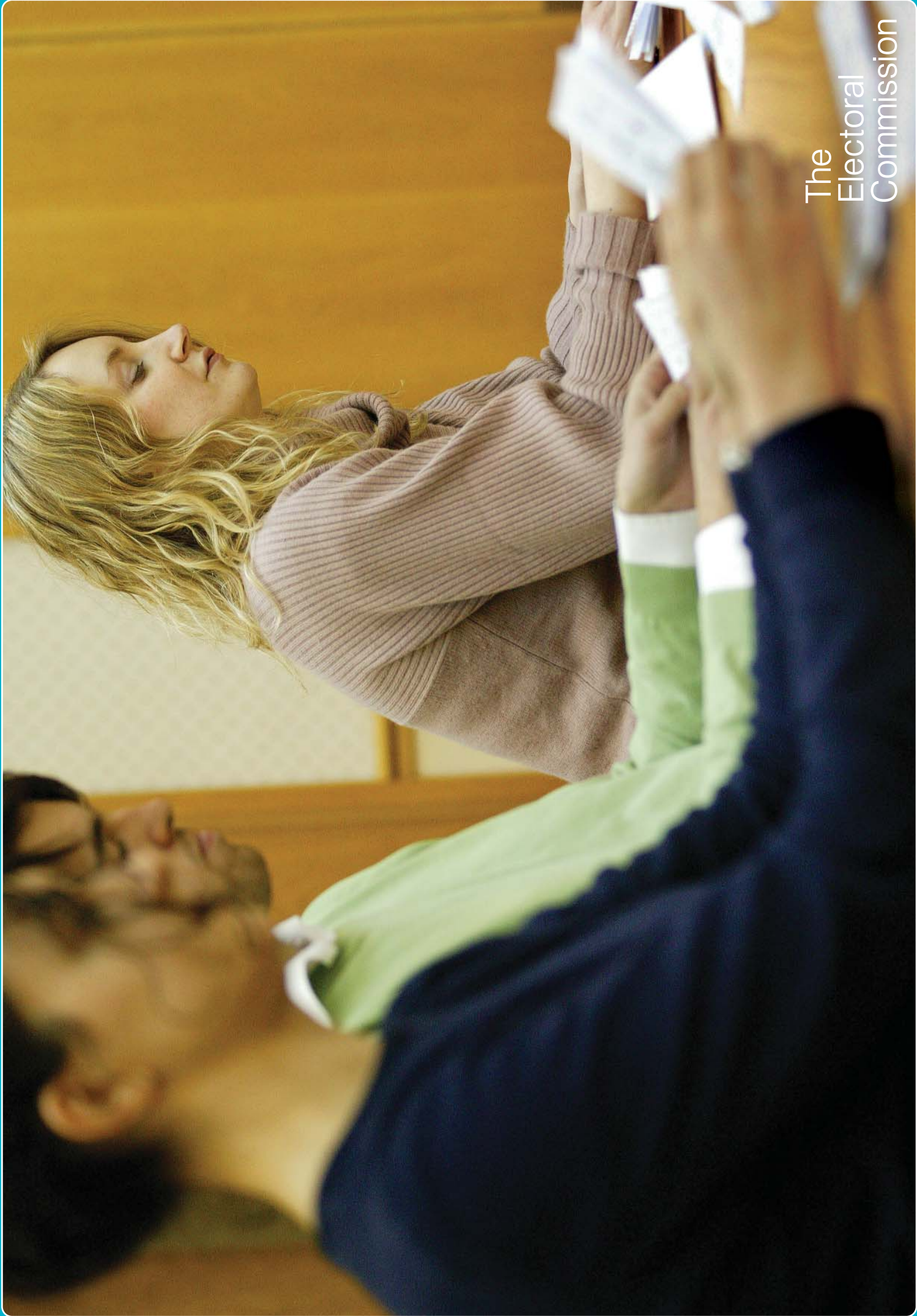


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Step by step voting is a free resource from the Electoral Commission. Download or order this and other innovative resources from our website www.dopolitics.org.uk

For information about registering to vote or elections happening in your area visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk