

This booklet tells you how to vote in Northern Ireland. You can get information about how to vote in England, Wales and Scotland from the Electoral Commission.



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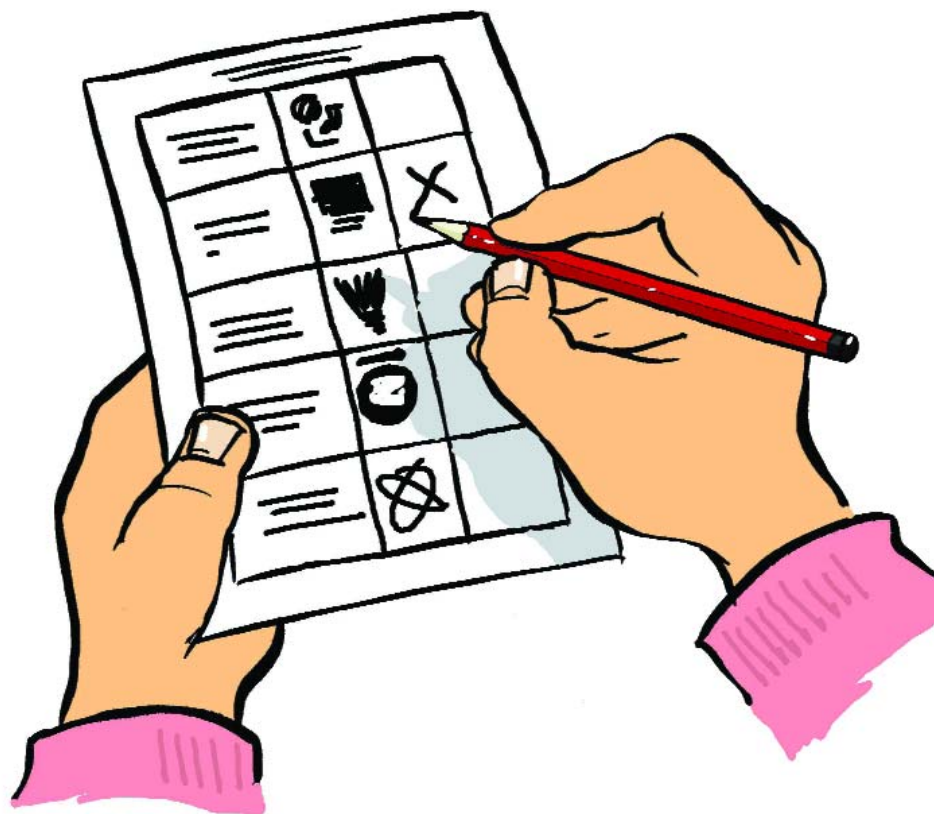
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# Voting in Northern Ireland

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and why it is important to vote**

# Voting

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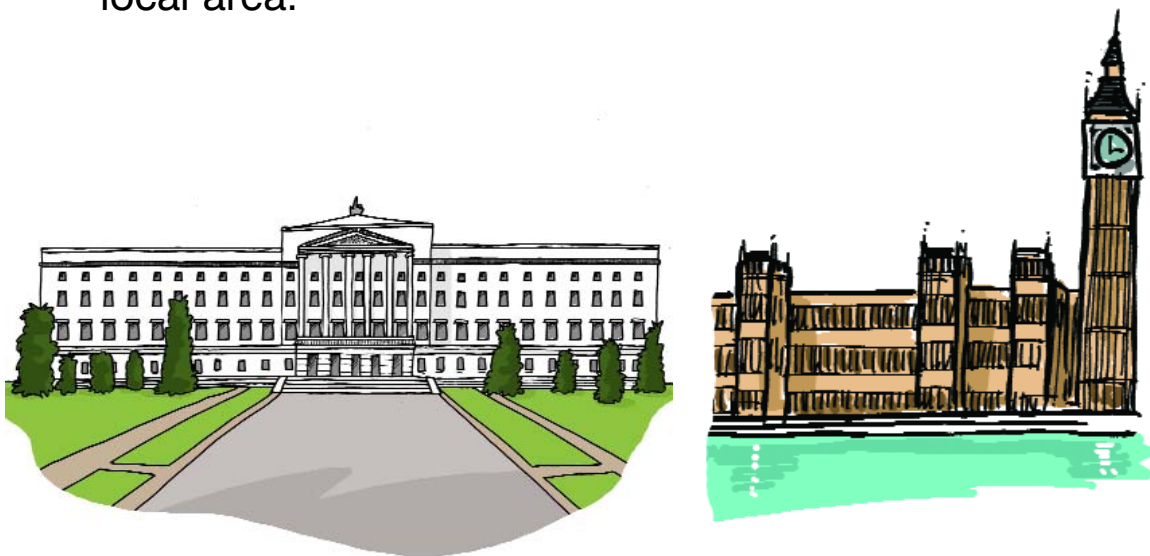
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## What is voting?

Voting is your chance to help to choose the people who run Northern Ireland, the UK, Europe and your local area.



The time when you vote is called an **election**.

All votes are equal – your vote is as important as anyone else's vote.

It does not cost anything to vote.

## Who can vote?

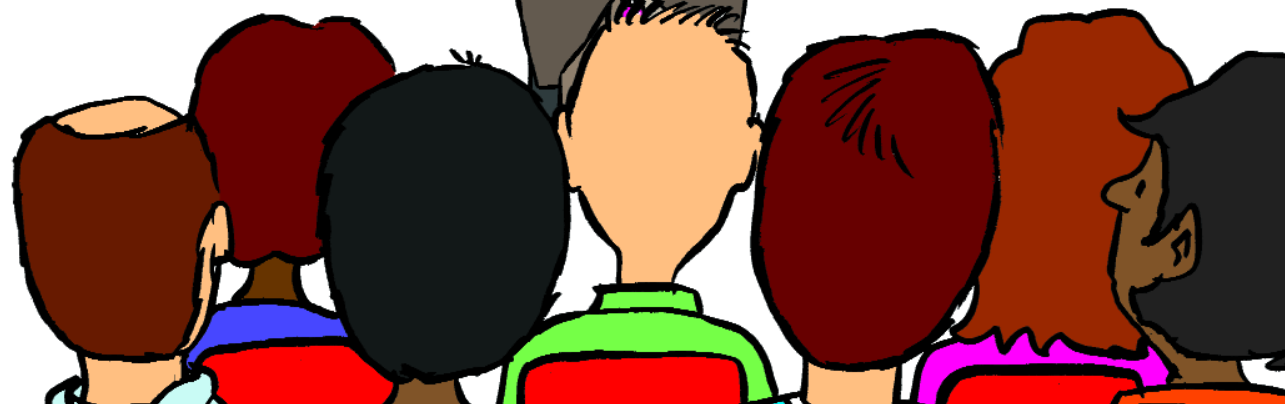
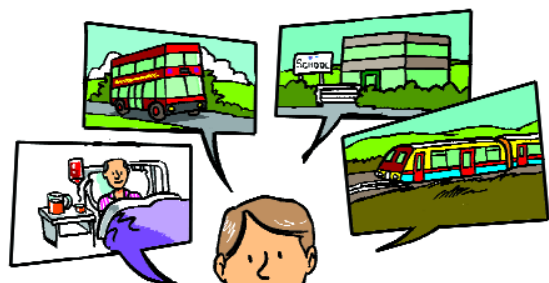
Almost **all** men and women over 18 years old can vote.



## Why should I vote?

Your vote helps to choose the people who run Northern Ireland, the UK, Europe or your local area. These people decide things which affect everyone, such as how schools, hospitals and buses are run.

So it is important that everyone has a say in who is elected.



## How do I make sure I can vote?

It is very easy to vote.

Make sure your name is on the **Electoral Register**. This is a list of everyone who can vote.

You can phone your local area electoral office to check if you are on this list. You can find the phone number at [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)



If you are not on the Electoral Register, you will have to fill in an electoral registration form. You can get this form from your local area electoral office.

On the form you must give your name, address, nationality, date of birth and your National Insurance number.

You must also sign the form.

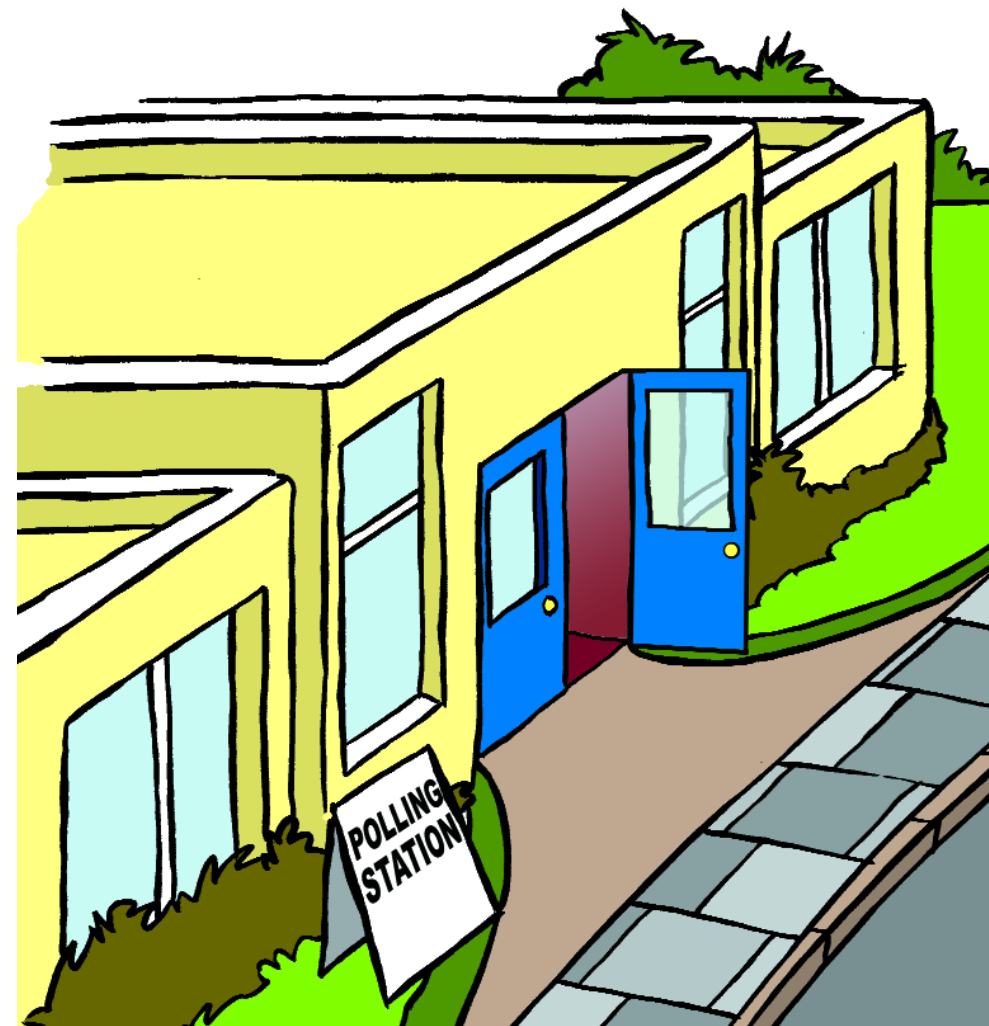
The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland will send you a card just before an election. This is called a **polling card**. The card tells you where and when to vote.



## How do I vote?

On election day, you go to the **polling station**. The polling station is usually a school or local hall near where you live.

**Polling** is another word for **voting**.



Tell the people at the polling station your **name** and **address**. If you like, you can show them your **polling card**.



You must take something with you to prove who you are. It must have a photograph of you. You can take:

- your passport, or
- your Translink Senior SmartPass, or
- your driving licence, or
- an electoral identity card from the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland.

The people at the polling station will check your photograph before giving you a list of the people you can vote for. This list is called a **ballot paper**.

Go into a **polling booth** and choose who you want to vote for.

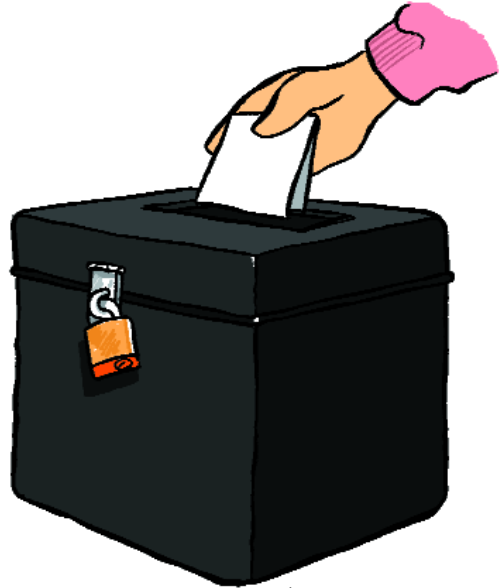
In elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly, the European Parliament and for your local council you vote using numbers.

In elections for the UK Parliament you vote using an **X**.

If you ask them, the people at the polling station will explain how to vote in the different sorts of election.



Fold the ballot paper and put it in the **ballot box**.



If you do not know what to do, you can ask the people at the **polling station** to help you.



## Postal vote

If you cannot get to the polling station you can ask your local area electoral office for a **postal vote**.

Your **ballot paper** will be sent to you at home. You can fill in the ballot paper and post it back.



If you want to ask for a postal vote, phone your local area electoral office.

## Proxy vote

Sometimes you can let someone else vote for you. This is called a **proxy vote**.



You can only have a proxy vote if you cannot go to the polling station and you have not asked for a postal vote.

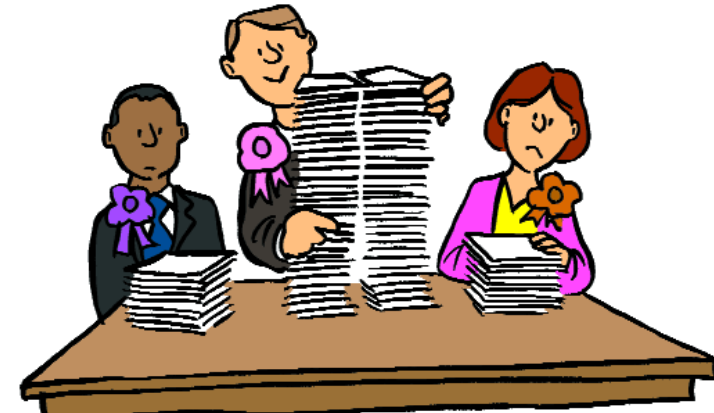
The person you choose to vote for you must vote for the person you want.



If you want to ask for a proxy vote, phone your local area electoral office. They will send you a form to fill in.

## What happens next?

When voting is over, the votes are counted.



The people and parties who get the most seats help to decide how to run Northern Ireland, the UK, Europe or your local area.



You can tell the people who are elected what you think about things or what you would like them to do. You can do this by talking to them.



Or you can e-mail or write to them.



Or you may be able to go to public meetings to speak to them.



If you think they have done a good job, you may want to vote for them again.

If you do **not** think they have done a good job, you may want to vote for someone else next time!



## Finding out more

This booklet tells you a bit about how to vote.

If you want more information, you can ask your local area electoral office.

Or you can phone  
**0800 0323 700.**



Or you can find out more information on the website  
**[www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)**



You can get more copies of this booklet from the Electoral Commission:

Telephone: **0845 8500 501**

E-mail:

**[infonorthernireland@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:infonorthernireland@electoralcommission.org.uk)**

Web: **[www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)**

Make sure you tell them the product code EC4NI.