

Ranked Choice Voting FAQ

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What is ranked choice voting?

A ranked-choice voting system in which voters rank candidates by preference on their ballots. If a candidate wins a majority (over 50%) of first-preference votes, he or she is declared the winner. If no candidate wins a majority of first-preference votes, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated. First-preference votes cast for the failed candidate are phased out, lifting the second-preference choices indicated on those ballots. A new tabulation is conducted to determine whether any candidate has won a majority of the adjusted votes. The process is repeated until a candidate wins an outright majority. (source: ballotpedia.org)

Why is Salt Lake County using ranked choice voting?

The Utah State Legislature made RCV possible for municipal elections in Utah with the passing of HB 35, the Municipal Alternative Voting Methods Pilot Project in 2018. Several municipal legislative bodies (councils/mayors) in Salt Lake County have opted to hold ranked choice elections for 2021. In races where enough candidates have filed for office, a ranked choice election will be held.

How will ballots look different?

In ranked choice voting contests, the names of candidates are listed on the left side of the ballot, with ranked choices along the top. A grid of ovals is to the right of candidate names. This is where you will mark your choices.

How do I fill out my ballot?

Voters can rank all candidates in a contest using the columns on the ballot to indicate their choices. Voters may rank as many or as few candidates as they like. If a voter doesn't wish to rank some of the candidates, they can leave any remaining columns blank. However, voters are encouraged to rank their choices in case their most preferred candidates are phased out.

To rank candidates on the ballot, fill in the oval that corresponds to your choice:

- In the first column for your first choice,
- In the second column for your second choice,
- In the third column for your third choice, and so on.

What errors should a voter avoid?

If a voter skips a ranking, any choices after the skipped ranking in that contest will not be counted (pursuant to Utah law).

Ranking one candidate more than once does not benefit a candidate. If a voter ranks one candidate as their first, second and third choice, it is the same as leaving the second and third choice columns blank.

Voters should not fill in more than one oval per column. This is considered an overvote and will result in that choice and all subsequent choices not being counted (pursuant to Utah law).

How are my choices counted?

In Phase 1 of ranked choice tabulation (vote counting), all first-choice votes are counted. If a candidate receives more than 50% of the votes, they win. If no candidate earns more than 50% of first-choice votes, the counting moves to Phase 2.

After each phase, the candidate with the fewest votes is phased out. If your highest-ranked candidate is phased out, your vote goes to the next highest-ranked candidate on your ballot.

The tabulation process continues through as many phases as necessary to choose a winner. Once there are only two candidates left, the candidate with greater than 50% of the votes is the winner.

It's important to remember that your vote for your second-choice candidate is only counted if your first choice is eliminated. If both your first and second choices are eliminated, your vote is counted for your next choice, and so on.

Can I give multiple candidates the same ranking?

No. If you give multiple candidates the same ranking, this is called an "over-vote". Your vote in that rank and subsequent ranks cannot be counted.

Do I need to rank all candidates?

No. You may rank as many candidates as there are in the contest. If you do not want to rank some candidates, you may leave columns blank.

If I rank other candidates, does it affect my first choice?

No. Ranking other candidates does not affect your first choice. Only your first choice is counted in Phase 1. Your second, third, fourth, and other choices will be considered only if your first-choice candidate is phased out.

How can my first choice be eliminated?

If no candidate receives more than 50% of first-choice votes, the last-place candidate is phased out. If your first choice is phased out as a result, your next choice will be counted, and so on. The process of elimination continues until there is a winner.

If I really want my first-choice candidate to win, should I rank the candidate as my first, second, and third choice, and so on?

No. Your vote can count only once for your first choice. If you rank the same candidate first, second, and third, it is the same as leaving the second and third choices blank.

Which contests in 2021 are ranked choice?

Municipality	Contest
Bluffdale	City Council At-Large (2 Seats)
Cottonwood Heights	Mayor
Cottonwood Heights	City Council District 3
Cottonwood Heights	City Council District 4
Draper	City Council At-Large (2 Seats)
Midvale	Mayor
Millcreek	City Council District 2
Millcreek	City Council District 4
Salt Lake City	City Council District 1
Salt Lake City	City Council District 2
Salt Lake City	City Council District 3
Salt Lake City	City Council District 5
Salt Lake City	City Council District 7
Sandy	Mayor
Sandy	City Council At-Large
Sandy	City Council District 1
Sandy	City Council District 3
South Salt Lake	Mayor
Magna Metro Township	Town Council District 2

Other Points to Remember:

1. Read the instructions carefully.
2. View the reverse side of the ballot to ensure you don't miss anything.
3. Sign the affidavit envelope.
4. Print the sample ballot from the Clerk's website using the voter information look-up tool and practice marking your choices before you complete your official ballot.

Why does my ballot have uncontested races?

Utah law allows the legislative body of a municipality to cancel an election only if ALL races are uncontested. In some cities, only one council district is contested and therefore they could not cancel their citywide election.