

Department of Elections

Ranked-Choice Voting



Ranked-choice voting allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference and eliminates the need to conduct runoff elections.

In March 2002, San Francisco voters adopted ranked-choice voting as an amendment to the City Charter, and it has been used in every local election since 2004.

Beginning with the November 5, 2019, Consolidated Municipal Election, San Francisco will use a new voting system that allows voters to rank up to a maximum of 10 candidates in a ranked-choice contest, instead of three candidates with the previous system. To learn about the new voting system, visit the [New Voting System to Debut in the November 5, 2019, Consolidated Municipal Election](#) page.

Want to know more about ranked-choice voting? This page provides instructions for marking a contest that uses ranked-choice voting, key points to remember, frequently asked questions, and more.

Want to practice marking a ranked-choice contest with 10 rankings? Use the Interactive Ranked-Choice Voting Practice Ballot! (*coming this April*)

▼ How do I mark my ballot with ranked-choice voting contests?

For contests that use ranked-choice voting, the names of candidates are listed in rows on the left side of a grid. Numbered rankings appear in the top row.

Voters can rank all available candidates in a given contest – up to a maximum of 10 candidates – using the columns on the ballot to indicate their choices. Voters may rank as many or as few candidates as they wish. If voters do not want to rank all of the candidates, they can leave any remaining columns blank.

Only one vote can count for a candidate. Ranking a particular candidate more than once does not benefit the candidate. If a voter ranks a single candidate as the voter's first, second, third choice, and so on, it is the same as leaving the second, third choice, and so on, blank.

Although the new voting system allows for up to 10 rankings in ranked-choice voting contests, the number of rankings listed on the ballot for a given office will be adjusted based on the number of candidates running for that particular office. In other words, ranked-choice voting contests with 10 or more qualified candidates will have 10 rankings, while contests with fewer candidates will have less rankings.

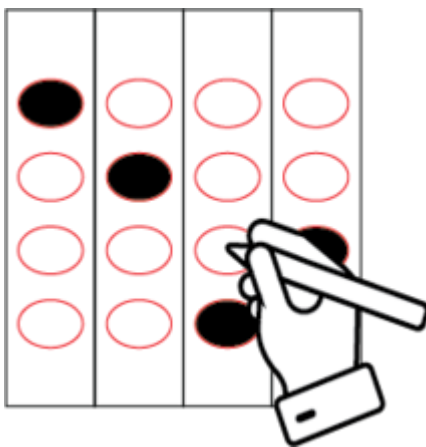
To rank candidates on the ballot, fill in the ovals from left to right:

- 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.

To vote for a qualified write-in candidate who is not listed on the ballot, write the person's name in the space at the end of the candidate list and fill in the oval for the rank.

Favorite Landscape										
Rank up to 10 candidates.	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Fourth Choice	Fifth Choice	Sixth Choice	Seventh Choice	Eighth Choice	Ninth Choice	Tenth Choice
Mark no more than 1 oval in each column.	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
Ocean	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mountain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Glacier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Desert	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Waterfall	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Valley	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
River	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canyon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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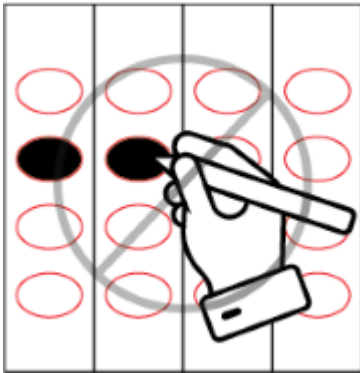
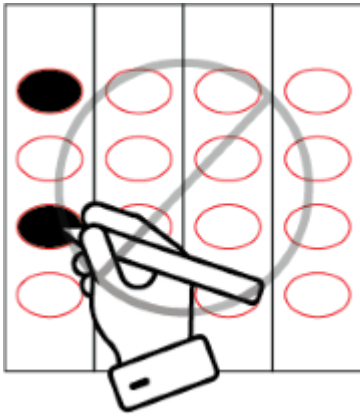
Key Points to Remember



You may – but do not have to – rank all candidates running for an office. Ranking all available candidates gives voters greater opportunity to express whom they want to represent them in local government. If your favorite candidate does not win, your vote counts for your next choice.

Do not fill in more than one oval in the same column. If you give the same ranking to multiple candidates, your vote in that rank and later ranks will not count.

Website Content for New RCV Ballot Format



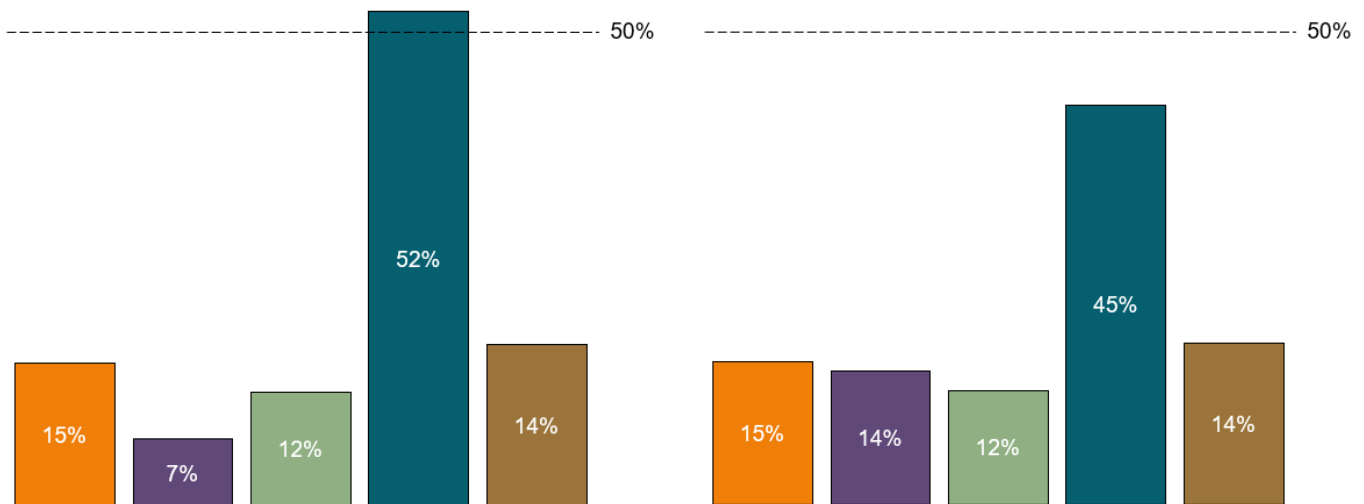
Do not rank the same candidate more than once. Ranking the same candidate more than once will not help that candidate, because your vote will be counted only once for that candidate.

▼ **How does ranked-choice voting work?**

For ranked-choice contests, all first-choice votes on the ballots get tallied. If a candidate receives a majority of first-choice votes the candidate wins. If no candidate has a majority, the last-place candidate is eliminated, and voters who selected that candidate have their votes transferred to their next choice. This cycle repeats until there is a majority winner.

★ **Round 1**

All first-choice votes are tallied.



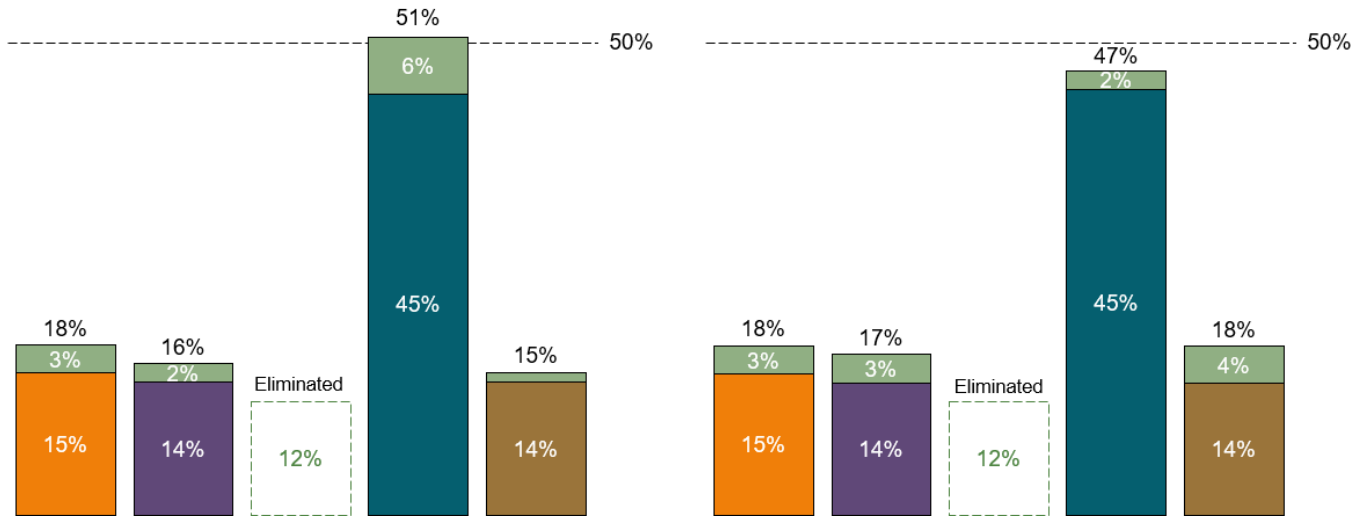
If a candidate receives 50% of the first-choice votes, that candidate wins, and there are no more rounds.

If no candidate wins during **Round 1**, the rounds continue until there is a winner.

★ **Round 2**

The process of eliminating candidates begins. The candidate with the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated. Voters who selected the eliminated candidate as their first choice will have their vote transferred to their next choice.

The votes are tallied again.



If a candidate receives 50% of the votes, that candidate wins, and there are no more rounds.

If no candidate wins during **Round 2**, the rounds continue until a winner is determined. In each round, the last-place candidate is eliminated, and voters who chose the eliminated candidate will have their vote transferred to their next choice that voters marked on their ballots.

▼ **How are my choices counted?**

How votes are counted in Round 1

All first-choice votes are tallied.

- If a candidate wins (receives 50%+1 of the votes) in Round 1, your first choice is counted, and there are no more rounds.
- If no candidate wins in Round 1, the rounds continue until there is a winner.

How votes are counted in Round 2

The candidate with the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated.

- If your first choice is eliminated, then your vote will be transferred to your next choice.
- If your first choice is still in the running (not eliminated), then your vote remains with your first choice.

The votes are tallied again.

- If a candidate wins in Round 2, there are no more rounds.
- If no candidate wins in Round 2, the rounds continue until there is a winner.

With this process of elimination, your vote is transferred to your second choice only if your first choice is eliminated. If both your first and second choices are eliminated, your vote is transferred to your next choice, and so on.

▼ **Frequently Asked Questions about ranked-choice voting**

1. [Do I need to rank all candidates?](#)
2. [In prior elections, I could rank up to three candidates. Why can I rank up to 10 candidates now?](#)
3. [Will all ranked-choice contests have 10 rankings?](#)

4. **If I rank other candidates, does it affect my first choice?**
5. **Under what circumstances can my first choice be eliminated?**
6. **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?**
7. **Can I give multiple candidates the same ranking?**
8. **Who is elected using ranked-choice voting?**
9. **What if I have more questions?**

1. **Do I need to rank all candidates?**

No. You may – but do not have to – rank all candidates, up to a maximum of 10 candidates. If you want to rank fewer candidates, leave any remaining columns blank.

2. **In prior elections, I could rank up to three candidates. Why can I rank up to 10 candidates now?**

Since 2004, when San Francisco implemented ranked-choice voting, the City's voting systems could allow voters to rank up to three candidates. The new voting system allows voters to rank all candidates running for an office, up to a maximum of 10 candidates.

3. **Will all ranked-choice contests have 10 rankings?**

No. The number of rankings will be equal to the number of candidates running for the office.

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

No. Ranking other candidates does not affect your vote for your first choice. Only your first choice is counted in Round 1. Your second, third, fourth, and other choices will be considered only if no candidate receives more than 50% of the first-choice votes and your first choice cannot win.

5. **Under what circumstances can my first choice be eliminated?**

After the votes are counted, if no candidate receives more than 50% of the votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. If your first choice is eliminated, your next choice will be counted, and so on. The elimination process continues until there is a winner.

6. **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. If you rank the same candidate first, second, and third, it is the same as leaving the second and third choices blank.

7. **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 later ranks cannot be counted.

8. **Who is elected using ranked-choice voting?**

San Francisco voters use ranked-choice voting to elect representatives for most local offices:

- o Mayor
- o Assessor-Recorder
- o City Attorney
- o District Attorney
- o Public Defender
- o Sheriff
- o Treasurer
- o Members of the Board of Supervisors

9. **What if I have more questions?**

If you have further questions about ranked-choice voting, call the Department of Elections at (415) 554-4375 or email SFVote@sfgov.org.