

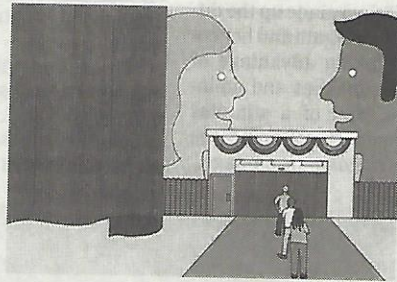
NYT 6/21/2020

Voting is the most fundamental form of civic engagement in a democracy. But the United States has among the lowest voter turnout of developed nations.

One reason is that the simple act of voting often turns out to be not so simple. Most American elections are held on weekdays, forcing people to plan around work and family schedules — especially if their polling place has long lines. Making matters worse, elections for most elected offices don't coincide with national elections, as the political scientist Sarah Anzia has noted. The good news is that you can take some proactive steps to increase the odds that you will vote and that your vote will matter.

**Learn your state's voting laws.** What do you need to do to register? Can you vote early or by mail? Do you need to be registered with a political party to vote in a primary election? What identification will you need at a polling place?

The Fair Elections Center offers an annually updated guide to each state's voting laws. A quick Google search should turn up the website for your state's secretary of state, who often serves as the chief election official. These websites include information on election dates, absentee voting and other issues.



GEORGE WYLESOL

**Make a voting plan.** Social-science experiments have found that people who were asked to come up with a specific plan to vote, including when and where they would vote, were significantly more likely to cast a ballot. So come up with a plan. Even better, announce your plan to others, in person or on social media, to help you stay accountable.

**Use peer pressure.** Telling others about your voting plan can also remind them to vote. And if you're willing to be a bit bold, ask your friends what their voting plan is — when and where they will vote. Then follow up and ask if they kept to it.

For more tips, look for "How to Participate in Politics" at [nytimes.com/guides](https://www.nytimes.com/guides).