

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is coming to DC!

Rank the District: Train the Trainer Handbook



Rank the District

Grow Democracy DC
Civic Education Fund

GROW DEMOCRACY DC CIVIC EDUCATION FUND



Our Goals

Rank the District is a project of Grow Democracy DC Civic Education Fund. We're the organization educating and supporting DC as we use ranked choice voting for the first time in June 2026.

Background

Ranked Choice Voting is the law in DC. In 2024, DC voters approved using RCV with 73% support via Initiative 83. In 2025, the DC Council provided funding to start using RCV. In 2026, we're going to use it for the first time.

Training Contents



- 3** Ranked Choice Voting 101
- 4** How the Board of Elections Counts Votes
- 5** Best Practices
- 6** How Ranked Choice Voting Strengthens Elections
- 7** Practice Explaining
- 8** The New Rules of Campaigns
- 10** How You Can Educate Your Community

Ranked Choice Voting 101

HOW DOES RANKED CHOICE VOTING WORK?

Voter-centered explanation

Don't just wing the explanation each time! Spend some time practicing this and getting it right – this is the best explanation for the vast majority of voters.

With RCV, a candidate has to get over 50% to win.

1. **Vote for your favorite** candidate 1st.
2. **Rank your backup** choices (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th) – **only rank candidates you support!**
3. **If your first choice loses** (comes in last place), **your vote moves to your next choice.**

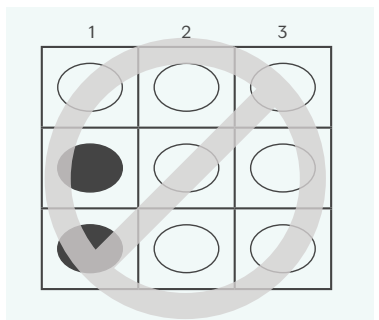
This repeats until a candidate wins with over 50%.

EXAMPLE ELECTION	CHOICE				
	1	2	3	4	5
Wizards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mystics	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Commanders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nationals	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Capitals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

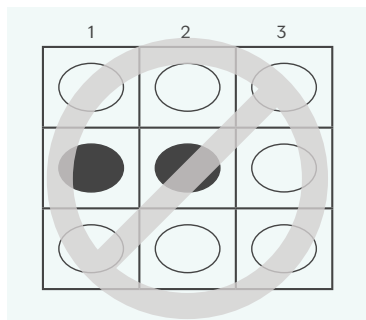
Favorite Candidate
Backup Choices

WHAT NOT TO DO

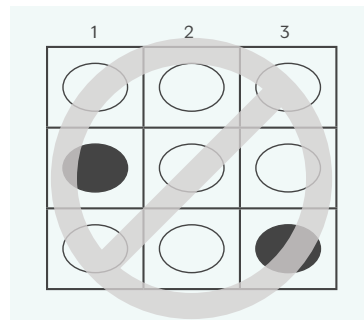
Voter-centered explanation



Only mark once per column.



Only mark once per row.

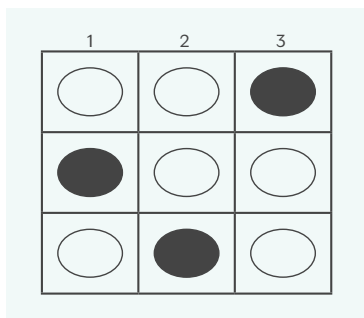


Try not to skip any rankings.

Remember, only rank a candidate if you want to support them!

WHAT TO DO

Voter-centered explanation



Correct! Each choice is in a different column and a different row.

Scan to learn "How to rank your ballot"



How the Board of Elections Counts Votes

Voter-centered explanation

ONLY USE THIS EXPLANATION of RCV as a BACKUP. This might be how your brain works, but most people do not process this explanation well unless you show it visually (video or graphics).

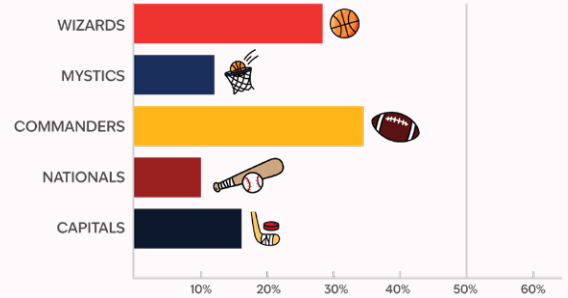
ROUND 1

FIRST CHOICES ARE COUNTED

At first, the Board of Elections only looks at first choices. In this example, no candidate has a majority of first choices, so the count will continue.

Under the old system, a candidate like The Commanders could win with just 34% of the vote, even though most people (66%) voted for someone else.

The key difference between Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) and our old system is that a candidate now has to get over 50% to win.



ROUND 2

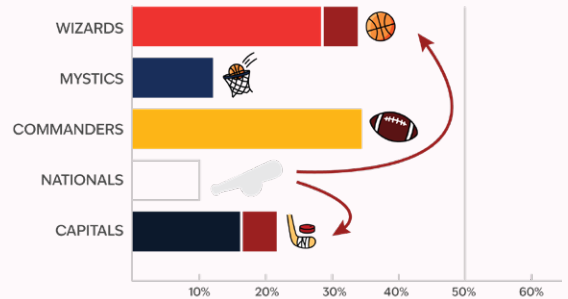
BACKUP CHOICES COME INTO PLAY

Now, the candidate with the fewest first choices is eliminated. If you ranked them first, your vote counts for your second choice.

In this example, The Nationals are in last place. If they were your 1st choice, now your vote goes to your 2nd choice.

The Board of Elections checks again. Someone have over 50%? Not yet.

This process repeats until a candidate wins with over 50%.



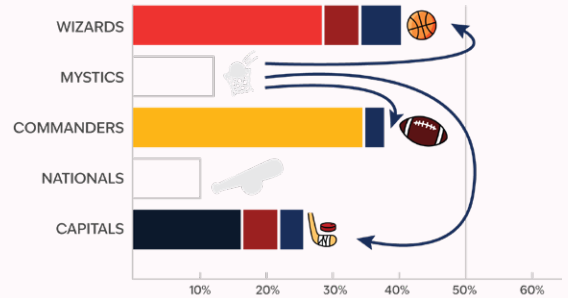
ROUND 3

MORE "ROUNDS" OF COUNTING

Again, the last-place candidate is eliminated. Those votes now go to those voters' backup choices.

There still isn't a candidate with over 50%, so the counting continues.

Reminder: Most voters just want to understand what happens with their vote.



ROUND 4

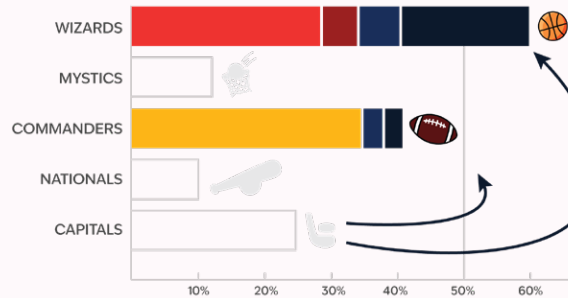
WE HAVE A WINNER

The Capitals are in last place, so we do the same process again.

**We finally have a candidate who got over 50%!
The Wizards win the election with 60%.**

Notice how SOMETIMES the winner with Ranked Choice Voting (Wizards) is different than those that got the most votes in the first round (Commanders).

It's impossible to say whether a real-world politician would or wouldn't have won under the new system since we do not know how voters would rank their choices.



Best Practices

Avoid jargon

Don't get bogged down in theoreticals or ideology

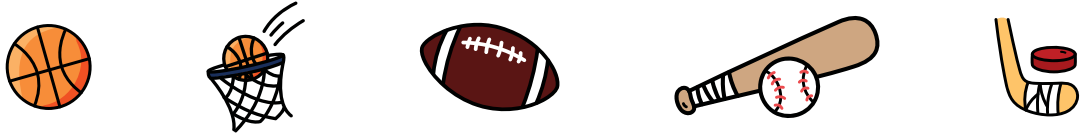
Focus on the voter and their values

We rank things everyday!

Show, Don't Tell

- Voters tend to find RCV intuitive when they see a ballot.
- Mock elections are an effective campaign and voter education tool (rank your food, rank your movies, etc).

Voter-centered explanation
Avoid explaining from the Board of Elections perspective. Start with "Vote your favorite, rank your backups."



Vote for your favorite DC sports team

(When you love the **Commanders** but would still be happy with the **Wizards**)

	1	2	3	4	5
Wizards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mystics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Commanders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nationals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Capitals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How Ranked Choice Voting Strengthens Elections

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING?

MORE CHOICES FOR VOTERS

Vote your values and for the candidate you actually want, without worrying about choosing the “lesser of two evils” or “splitting the vote.”

COALITION BUILDING

Encourages positive campaigning, highlighting shared values, and cross-endorsing.

MAJORITY SUPPORT

Winners must earn a majority of the vote.

GREATER LEGITIMACY

Because winners earn majority support, election results carry greater legitimacy and public confidence.

PROVEN & TRUSTED

RCV is already used in jurisdictions across the U.S. (such as San Francisco, New York City, and Takoma Park) with successful implementation over multiple election cycles.

NO MORE “WASTED” VOTES

If a voter’s first choice loses, their vote can still count for a backup choice, meaning more voters have a say in the outcome.



VOTER-FRIENDLY BY DESIGN

RCV mirrors how people already rank preferences in everyday life, making it easier to understand once voters see a sample ballot.



PRACTICE BALLOT

- Here’s a practice ranked choice ballot to help voters get a chance to vote with the new system and see the results get counted.
- This interactive practice tool is useful, both as a standalone explainer or as a supplement to educational presentations.
- This website can also be used to create your own practice ballots.

Scan to start your practice ballot!



Practice Explaining

It's important to not "wing" your explanations, but actually take the time now to practice and get it right.

For most people, you'll only have 10 seconds to explain. Get the key points down.

Start by practicing an even shorter version - just the bold phrases below.

This is the shortest, most complete explanation - it will be understood by the most people.

HOW DOES RCV WORK?

Voter-centered explanation
 Don't just wing the explanation each time! Spend some time practicing this and getting it right – this is the best explanation for the vast majority of voters.

With RCV, a candidate has to get over 50% to win.

- 1. Vote for your favorite** candidate 1st.
- 2. Rank your backup** choices (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th) – *only rank candidates you support!*
- 3. If your first choice loses** (comes in last place), your vote moves to your next choice.

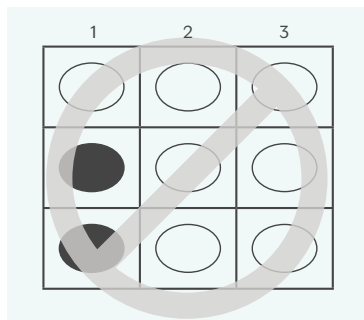
This repeats until a candidate wins with over 50%.

EXAMPLE ELECTION	CHOICE				
	1	2	3	4	5
Wizards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mystics	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Commanders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nationals	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Capitals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

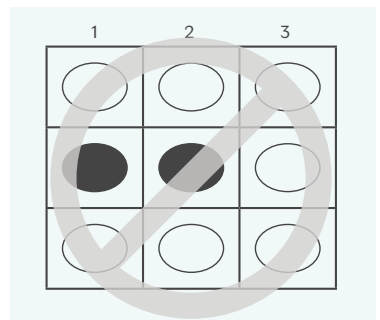
Favorite Candidate
Backup Choices

WHAT NOT TO DO

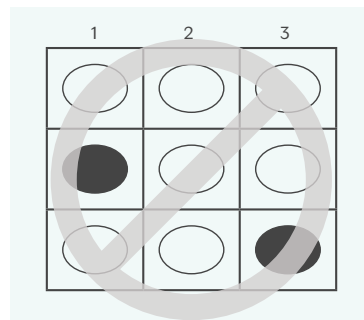
Voter-centered explanation



Only mark once per column.



Only mark once per row.



Try not to skip any rankings.

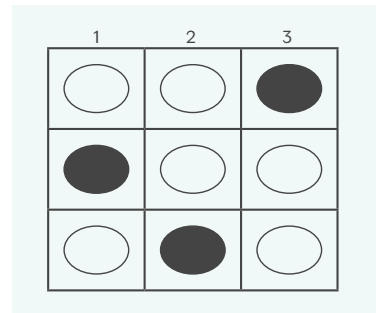
Remember, only rank a candidate if you want to support them!



WHAT TO DO

Voter-centered explanation

Correct! Each choice is in a different column and a different row.



The New Rules of Campaigns (And Endorsements)

IN A RANKED CHOICE VOTING ELECTION

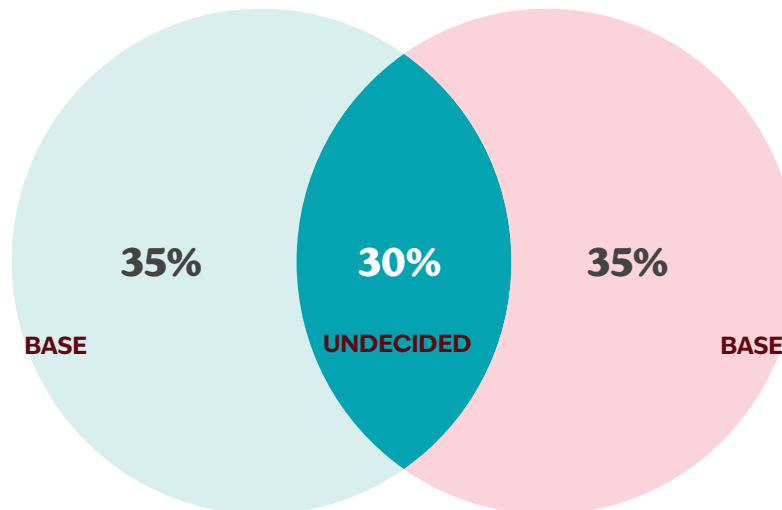
A successful candidate should earn:

- A large number of 1st choices
- Sufficient 2nd or 3rd choices from voters who prefer other candidates

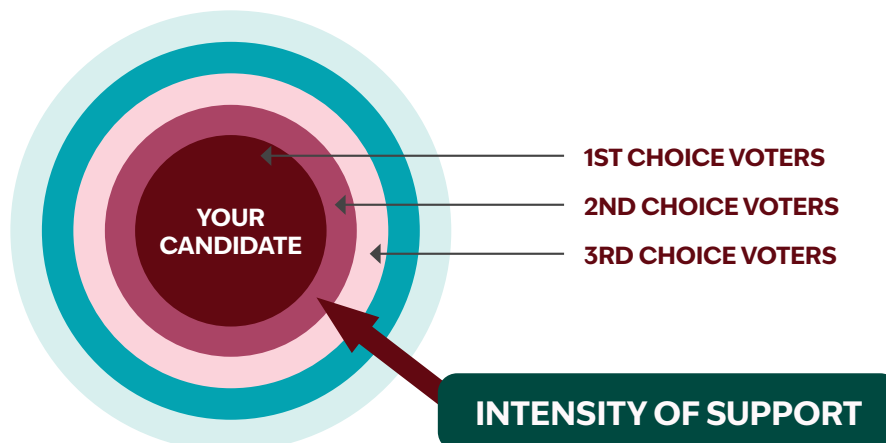
A successful candidate should ask:

- How can candidates maximize 1st choices?
- How can a candidate be the 2nd, 3rd, etc., choice of people who rank other candidates as a 1st choice?

The Old Way



The New Way



Candidates can ask for 2nd and 3rd choices. Campaigns can cross-endorse!



Many endorsing organizations will change their endorsement process. **IT'S NO LONGER A ZERO-SUM GAME.**

Mercury Endorsements: Mayor's Race 2024

Our top three picks for Portland mayor—ranked for your convenience.

ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ ENDORSES FOR MAYOR:

	RANK 1st	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	RANK 2nd	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	RANK 3rd	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	RANK 4th	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	RANK 5th	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

For Portland City Council, the Chamber urges you to vote:

DISTRICT 1

Rank 1: [Loretta Smith](#)

Rank 2: [Terrence Hayes](#)

Rank 3: [Noah Ernst](#)

(only rank three candidates)

2022 Gubernatorial Endorsement

Governor / Lieutenant Governor	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
LES GARA / JESSICA COOK	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
BILL WALKER / HEIDI DRYGAS	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

After an in-depth process, The Alaska Center Board of Directors has unanimously voted to endorse the Les Gara and Jessica Cook Gubernatorial ticket, and encourages voters to rank the Bill Walker and Heidi Drygas ticket second.

How You Can Educate Your Community



HOST A MEETING

Host an educational presentation with your group, community organization, or civic association – invite us in for our interactive 7-minute demo + Q&A.

SHARE OUR MATERIALS

Distribute flyers, social posts, and practice ballots to your networks to help educate your community.



VOLUNTEER

Consider volunteering or serving as a Ward Captain – help us recruit, train and deploy field teams for door-knocking and tabling. A Ward Captain is the point person for your neighborhood.

Email kenyatta@growdemocracydc.org for more information.



CONNECT

Connect us to your community partners – introduce us to local faith-based groups, schools, senior centers, or youth programs that would benefit from RCV education.

POST ABOUT RCV

Get the word out on social media! Let your network know about the changes coming to our elections. Share and use our graphics.

Feel free to tag [@rankthedistrict](https://www.instagram.com/rankthedistrict)

Questions

CONTACT US

educate@growdemocracydc.org

LEARN MORE

rankthedistrict.org