

Absentee Voting & How to Apply for an Absentee Ballot

I can't get to the polls on Election Day. Can I still vote?

Yes. You may vote by absentee ballot if you:

- will be absent from your city or town on Election Day, *and/or*
- have a physical disability that prevents you from voting at the polling place, *and/or*
- cannot vote at the polls due to religious beliefs.



How can I apply for an absentee ballot?

Apply in writing to your City or Town Clerk or local Election Office, and include your:

- name
- address as registered
- ward and precinct (if you know them)
- address where you wish the absentee ballot sent
- in a State Primary, the Party ballot you want, *and*
- your signature

Absentee ballot applications are available at your local Election Office or you can download one from the Boston Election Department's website: www.cityofboston.gov/elections. You may also request for an absentee ballot by a letter or note. Whichever method you choose, the application/note must be made in writing and signed.



How do I vote by absentee ballot?

You can either have an absentee ballot mailed to you, or you can arrange with your local Election Office to vote in their office. The deadline for applying for an absentee ballot is noon of the day before the Election. If the Monday before an Election falls on a holiday, the deadline to apply for an absentee ballot will be 5 pm on the preceding business day. The same deadline applies for those voters wishing to vote in person in the Election Office. *Please note that this holiday-deadline scenario is highly unusual, and would probably only occur during Special Elections.*



How do I return my absentee ballot to my local Election Office?

The ballot will come with instructions and a set of return envelopes. After marking your ballot, insert it into the inner envelope provided and seal that inner envelope. Read and sign the affirmation on the inner envelope. Place the signed and sealed inner envelope in the mailing envelope provided with your ballot.

The ballot can either be mailed back to your local Election Office, or you or a family member may deliver it by hand to the local Election Office. If mailing your ballot, please make sure to include the proper postage (approximately 65-cents postage); there is **no** need to send payment to the Election Office. You **cannot** deliver an absentee ballot directly to the polling place on Election Day.

To be counted, a completed ballot must be received by the time the polls close on Election Day. If you are voting from outside the United States, your completed absentee ballot for a final State or City Election can be received up to 10 days after the Election, but it must be postmarked on or before the Election Day.



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Absentee Ballots

Must I be a registered voter in order to vote by absentee ballot?

Yes, unless you are a "**specialty qualified voter.**" A specialty qualified voter is a person:

- who is otherwise eligible to register as a voter and
- whose present domicile is outside the United States, and whose last domicile in the United States was Massachusetts or whose present domicile is Massachusetts and who is:
 - (a) absent from the city or town of residence and in the active service of the armed forces or in the merchant marine of the United States or a spouse or dependent of such person;
 - (b) absent from the Commonwealth; or
 - (c) confined in a correctional facility or a jail, **except if by reason of felony conviction.**



Can anyone else apply for an absentee ballot for me?

Yes. A family member may apply for you.



When should I submit my application for an absentee ballot?

If you wish to vote by absentee ballot for more than one election in a year, you may make one application and request that ballots for all elections during that calendar year be sent to you.

If you vote by mail, make certain the application arrives at your local Election Office early, so that they can process your request and mail the ballot to you in time. Remember, the ballot must be mailed to you – no faxes, e-mail attachments, pickups, etc.

You may mail or hand-deliver the ballot back to the Election Office, but it must arrive before the close of the polls on Election Day (8:00 p.m. for State Elections).

If you cast your ballot at the Election Office before Election Day, plan to visit the office two or three weeks before the Election. You can make your application and cast your vote in one visit. It is a good idea to call the Election Office ahead of time to make certain that the absentee ballots are available. Absentee ballots should be available two or three weeks before an Election.



Can I vote by absentee ballot in person?

Yes. You can apply and vote at the same time two to three weeks before an Election. Call your Election Office ahead of time to make certain that the absentee ballots are available. Please remember that you **must** meet one of the requirements listed above for absentee voting.



Must my ballot be witnessed?

No.



What if I'm not able to mark my absentee ballot?

You may ask any person to help you. The helper must print his or her name and your name on the brown envelope, write the reason you needed help, and then sign his or her name as the assisting person.



Are polling places accessible to elderly and disabled voters?

Yes. Federal law requires polling places to be accessible to all voters.



I'm permanently disabled. May I vote at home?

Yes. You must apply to your local Election Office to do so. File a letter from your doctor with the Election Office. The doctor must state that you are permanently unable to cast your ballot at the polling place due to a physical disability.

The Election Office will automatically mail you an application for an absentee ballot for all elections in a calendar year. You must sign the application and send it back to the Election Office. Call the Election Office for more information about how to register to vote at home or to request that a mail-in registration form be sent to you.



My parent is in a nursing home. Is she/he able to vote by absentee ballot?

Yes, as long as that individual is not under a court ordered guardianship which specifically prohibits voting. Any patient in a nursing home must be a registered voter in order to vote by absentee ballot and must fill out an absentee ballot application.

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding absentee voting, please contact the **Boston Election Department** at **617-635-3767** or Election@cityofboston.gov.