

YOU DO COUNT!

A game teaching American citizens how to keep their republic

Based on the Rocky Mountain Method of hand counting developed by a team led by Shawn Smith and Jeff Young for a major-party state assembly, where approximately 2000 ballots were counted in 45 minutes.

The Rocky Mountain Method is similar to other major hand count methods such as the Missouri Method and Gold Standard Elections. Its current distinctives are that it requires only office supplies, and tallies are quadruple-checked by a four-person aggregation team.

HOW TO WIN

Be the fastest accurate team in every step of counting, under the most adverse conditions. Since not everyone who plays this game will have the same conditions at the same time, a secondary form of winning is to convince everyone your conditions were the worst, therefore you are the best team. Remember that tall tales are a very American form of storytelling. (“Yes, but when we counted 17,000 ballots in 30 minutes it was in a blizzard and uphill both ways.”)

HOW TO LOSE

Count wrong and fail spectacularly at every opportunity to correct the count.

INTRODUCTION

In the United States of America, we-the-people are the government, which in 1789 established the Constitution as the law of the land.

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Article IV, Section 4 of the Constitution, says “The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government,” meaning one in which citizens elect their own representatives.

But counting elections is at least as important as voting in them. As Josef Stalin may have said, “Those who vote decide nothing. Those who count the vote decide everything.” So in order to have the representative self-government guaranteed by the Constitution, we-the-people must count the vote ourselves, not hand the job over to election officials.

This game trains United States citizens to hand-count through hands-on experience. In an actual election, there will be additional details and complications, but those can be covered by instructions and reminders at the time.

One basic game involves counting 100 pre-marked ballots correctly. Many precincts will have that few ballots on Election Night, but a normal-sized precinct could have over 1000 ballots in a high-turnout election. If so, recruit more teams to spread the wealth, and see which team is best!

If you play a basic game, you know the basics to be a hand counter in an actual election. But keep practicing and challenging your team; add loud annoying music and flashing lights, or play a “bad actor” game where half the team tries to change votes, add or subtract ballots, or commit other kinds of fraud – the goal is to stop all fraud before it contaminates the ballot pool. (The usual penalty for treason shall not be literally applied in this game.)

An obnoxiously experienced team can play with any number of ballots, design their own election (“choose 23 of 189 applicants to receive free zucchini for life”), mark all the ballots themselves, and make sure there are lots of overvotes, spoiled ballots, and write-ins to deal with. It is especially fun to seat two teams next to each other so one tally group is saying “10, 13, 18” while the other is saying “11, 12, 16” and everyone gets properly annoyed.

Make friends, have fun, but never forget your vote is your voice; make sure you count.

PLAY THE GAME

There are three basic jobs: BATCHING, TALLYING, and AGGREGATING. These are just pretentious names for putting the ballots in piles, counting them, and totaling the counts. Do not mistake aggregating for aggravating, or batching for any other words, and you can always slap the person who just has to go around yelling, “Tally Ho!”

You need a 4-person team, except that batching is really a 2-person job, so your 4-person team will be 2 2-person teams for that part.

Batching

STOP WORK for any problem/discrepancy/mistake until it is fixed. OR ELSE.

Batcher/Batcherette One

1. Collect a batch of 25 ballots.

Batcher/Batcherette Two

1. Count the batch separately to confirm the work of Batcher/Batcherette One.
2. Clip the ballot stack together with two tally sheets and a baggie.
3. Batchers may now do si do.

Tallying

STOP WORK for any problem/discrepancy/mistake until it is fixed. OR ELSE.

Caller

1. Read the votes on each ballot by number. Example: “4, 8, 9, 14, 19. Next ballot. 3, 8, 9, 12, 20. Next ballot, 2, 7, 10, 13, 20.”
2. Hand the ballot to the Watcher.

Watcher

1. Watch the ballots to check that Caller calls correctly.
2. Place each ballot face down, in crossed stacks of five ballots (so you can find a particular ballot quickly in case of questions.)
3. Seal the ballots:
 - a. Put the ballots in a baggie.
 - b. Tape over the top.
 - c. Initial on the tape.
 - d. Have everyone sign the top of **both** tally sheets.
 - e. Paperclip the two finished tally sheets to the bag.
4. Swing your partner, if so inclined.
5. (Optional for eagle-eyed Watchers) Check that Tally One and Tally Two mark votes correctly.

Tally One

1. Tally one row per ballot: with your green marker, mark the boxes in the column numbers the Caller reads.
2. Correct mistakes immediately.
 - a. Forgot to mark a box: well, mark it then!
 - b. Marked the wrong box: X out the box in red so you know not to count it.
 - c. Skipped a line: go back and fill in the blank line correctly. On the next ballot (and line), dot any new boxes, then X out in red any green marks that shouldn't be there. Yell at somebody for not giving you a good straightedge.
 - d. Completely messed up everything: throw away the bad tally sheet, start the batch again with a new tally sheet. Apologize deeply to your annoyed team, but remind them they are not perfect either.

3. Total. At the end of the batch, write the total number of marks at the bottom of each column.
4. Check. Read column totals while Tally Two confirms. Correct mistakes immediately.
 - a. Counted wrong: count right this time!
 - b. Marked the wrong box, changing the totals for two columns: Check to be sure which tallier was mistaken, then change that tallier's marks and totals to be correct.
 - c. Different totals, unsure who is right: have Caller re-read whichever ballots are in question.

Tally Two

Same as Tally One.

Aggregating

STOP WORK for any problem/discrepancy/mistake until it is fixed. OR ELSE.

Agg Caller

1. Read the vote totals from one of the tally sheets. Example: "2, 10, 12, 1, 0."

Agg Watcher

1. Check the Agg Caller by (silently!) reading totals on the other tally sheet. Become very vocal if the caller gets something wrong.
2. Seal the tallies with the ballots:
 - a. Tape both tally sheets to their ballot baggie.
 - b. Put all the ballot baggies and tally sheets in a big baggie.
 - c. Have everyone sign the top of **both** aggregation sheets.
 - d. Put one of the aggregation sheets inside the big baggie, face out so it can be seen through the baggie. (This proves you checked your answers and they match.)
 - e. Tape over the top of the big baggie.
 - f. Initial on the tape.
3. Tape the other aggregation sheet to the outside of the baggie. Swing your partner if so inclined.
4. (Optional for eagle-eyed Agg Watchers) Check that Agg One and Agg Two write correctly.

Agg One

1. Write the tally totals, one row per batch.
2. Correct mistakes immediately.
 - a. Wrote wrong number: Scribble out the wrong number so it is unreadable and carefully write the correct number.
 - b. Skipped a line – for a large number of tally sheets you might need to get a new aggregation sheet and start over. But if you just have a few lines to fill in you can probably mark or even mentally re-label which line is which. Yell at somebody for not giving you a good straightedge.
3. Aggregate. At the end of all the batches, add the numbers in each column and write the total at the bottom of the column.
4. Check. Read the aggregated totals while Agg Two confirms. Correct mistakes immediately.
 - a. Somebody added a column wrong: scribble out the wrong total and add right this time.
 - b. Totals are completely different: figure out who didn't listen to the instructions, then re-do the aggregation.

Agg Two

Same as Agg One.

Extra Roles

Supreme Leader (Optional for teams that already know what they're doing)

1. Direct the team to their stations, show them their paper, pens, and any other equipment.
2. Start the timer when the team is ready.
3. Stop the timer when the Batcher/Watcher/Agg Watcher raises a hand, or if blood is spilled.
4. Act as referee and Supreme Judge for any questions that come up.
5. Confirm the team's accuracy (either by using a known set of pre-marked ballots, having personally pre-counted the ballots, or assuming that if two teams come up with identical numbers, they are highly likely to be correct.)
6. (Optional) Challenge the team with auditory and visual distractions, such as loud music with a strong beat a bit too fast to count in time with, flashing lights, or bystanders making loud and obnoxious comments. ("Are you sure you're allowed to be here?" "Yo momma gets lost counting to two." "I think you did something wrong there. See, you did it again.")

Runner (Optional)

Carry batches between tables as needed. This is a good job for a young child, or an adult who acts like one.

NOTES

1. You don't have to keep the ballots in order, but if you don't and your team has to start the batch all over again when there is a question with ballot 23, well....
2. Reading the numbers instead of the names on the ballot makes pronunciation easier, but also gets your attention away from fraud you shouldn't consider committing, like a bank teller thinking of bills as just pieces of paper.
3. The tallier is always right about the speed; the caller is always wrong.
4. If the tallier makes a mistake, it must have been the caller's fault.
5. The reason for initialing on the tape is the same as why you initial tape on an envelope after you reseal it because you forgot to enclose something the first time. It is a cheap tamper-indicating device showing that nobody broke the tape and changed anything.
6. Watchers are allowed to watch like a vulture but it is not usually appreciated.
7. Talliers, this is not an art contest; no need to color in the box all the way to the edges, because that takes forever and your team will not like you. Dots go faster, lines go faster and may be easier to count.
8. Agg Callers, read very carefully or you will get questions like, "You mean column 16 is 17?"
9. The aggregation sheet on the outside of the big baggie is your official page of final results. It is like the final answer on a math problem, and everything in the baggie is like showing your work on a math problem.
10. The reason for sealing all the ballots in their batches with their tally sheets and the aggregation sheets is that it creates a **completely auditable record**. Anybody can read the totals of the election on the outside aggregation sheet, and can see that everything is recorded and sealed by the people who counted it. Anybody can then, if needed, break the seals to recount everything inside to prove you counted it right.
11. Aggregators may use calculators, slide rules, or abacuses to add up totals (but it is much better style to do the arithmetic in your head.) Note that calculators here are different from electronic tabulators, because all they are doing is adding numbers already in plain view; anyone can check the addition at any time.
12. Allow a couple hours to batch, tally, and aggregate 100 ballots with a team of four, because it often takes a team 25 minutes to count the first 25 ballots. But the next batch is usually much faster.
13. Quick game: For a group that only has a half-hour attention span, try to at least get them through 2 batches of 10 each, but don't consider them trustworthy counters until they do something about that attention span.
14. Big game: For large numbers of ballots, doubling the tally teams halves the time. You still only need one aggregation team, but be nice to that team; they'll be trying to add numbers while everyone else is standing around saying, "Aren't you done yet?" and obnoxiously correcting their math.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR 100-BALLOT GAME

- Printouts:
 - 100 pre-marked ballots (20 pages of 5 ballots per page)

- 8 tally sheets (2 per batch.) **To get the number of batches, divide the number of ballots by 25, then add 1 for any fraction of 25. Example: 100 ballots make 4 batches; 101 ballots make 5 batches.**
 - 2 aggregation sheets
- Baggies:
 - 4 small clear sandwich baggies (it's okay to fold the ballots, just don't mutilate, spindle, or destroy them.)
 - 1 large clear gallon baggie
- Office supplies:
 - Clips (sized to hold about 30 pieces of paper).
 - At least one green and red marker for each tallier. (Or other contrasting colors, such as magenta and teal. Crayons could work too.)
 - Lots of pens.
 - Tape.
 - Straightedges to keep talliers' eyes from crossing.
- Table(s) and chairs (semi-optional; you can do it without tables and chairs, and this will help in raising the stress level that makes for a real bootcamp experience.)
- Optional:
 - Transparent plastic box to hold ballots (good for explaining why literal transparency matters.)
 - Flags to raise to signal a runner that a batch is ready for the next station. (This is overkill for small groups.)
 - Signs identifying each position. (Also could be overkill.)
 - Finger moisteners/rubber finger tips.
 - Calculators for Agg One and Agg Two, unless they like to show off their math skills.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- **Ballot:** A paper listing identification numbers beside each of the choices a voter may make (for instance, 1 for "Yes" and 2 for "No"), for at least one race. A ballot may have multiple choices and multiple races ("pick 14 out of 82 choices for the Committee to Create Committees.")
- **Overvote:** Too many votes in one race; don't count any of the votes for that race, although other races on the same ballot may be counted, and the ballot still counts as one of the 25 ballots in the batch. Example: choosing both "yes" and "no", or voting for 8 candidates in a race where voters are to pick 7 of 15. Anyone who overvotes might not be real great at counting; maybe they should just watch rather than be on your team.
- **Race:** The multiple candidates competing for a position (Smith, Jones, and Arawak for Lord High Executioner), or choices for a question (Yes, No, In Your Dreams for "Shall taxes be raised?").
- **Spoiled ballot:** A ballot that should not be counted, for instance because it is ripped into shreds, scribbled on, soiled with something nobody wants to touch, or it is from a voter who made a mistake and exchanged the ballot for a fresh ballot. Spoiled ballots are kept away from the counting process, and maybe from decent society.
- **Undervote:** Fewer votes than allowed, or even no votes at all for a race. This is okay (nobody is actually required to hold their nose and vote for a candidate) but since it would be easy for someone to quickly mark it with a vote for their favorite candidate, an undervoted ballot is especially vulnerable to cheating. Pay close attention to anyone with a pen near that ballot.
- **Vote:** A marked choice in a race on a ballot. **The mark can be anything (an X, slash, oval, circle, "THIS ONE" written in crayon), as long as the intent of the voter is clear.** People are really good at figuring out the obvious but non-standard intent of a voter. Machines are really bad at it.
- **Write-in:** A vote for a candidate not listed on the ballot. Not all races allow write-ins, but where allowed, it must be counted, even if it is for somebody's cat.

EXTRA CREDIT FOR ADVANCED TEAMS:

- Make your own tally sheets; how will you handle a ballot with 75 choices?
- Three write-in votes for "Tchaikovsky", "Chykofski", and "Tschiekawsky". Should they be counted as three votes for one person, or one vote each for three people?
- Make overvotes on some of the ballots – some with overvotes in just one race, others with overvotes in all races, and see if the team catches all the overvotes. (None of the votes in the overvoted race on that ballot should be counted, but

other races which aren't overvoted should be counted, and either way the ballot still counts as a ballot which must be kept.)

- Try to sneak in a spoiled ballot without the team catching it.
- Try to add extra ballots, take out good ballots, change votes, or vote in an undervoted race.