

Script for Training Including Undervotes and Overvotes

The ballots should be in a transparent ballot box. That way they never leave public view between the time they are cast and counted. Anyone can see what's in the box, and no, that doesn't violate voter privacy because these are truly anonymous ballots, not labeled with the voter's information the way mail-in ballots are.

The first thing we do is count the ballots into batches. Each group of four needs to form two batching teams of two.

One of you will count out 25 ballots, then give them to the other to recount.

When you agree, clip the ballots to two tally sheets and a baggie. That's one batch. It will stay together through the whole process.

[After all ballots are batched]

Now the four of you take a batch and sit down two on each side of the table. Two of you on one side are the talliers: you each get a tally sheet, green and red marker, and a pen.

The other two are the caller and the watcher. The caller gets the ballots.

The caller reads one ballot at a time, just the marked numbers, like "1, 4, 7, 10, 12, 13, 20" and the watcher checks that the caller is saying it right. The caller hands the ballot to the watcher, who lays it face-down, stacking the ballots in groups of five turned 90 degrees to each other. Stacking the ballots by fives helps track which ballot is which, in case of questions.

Each tallier marks the numbers across the row. So, if the first ballot doesn't have 1 or 2 marked, the caller will start with 3. The talliers will go to the first row, for ballot number 1, and skip box 1 and 2 in the first row, and make a mark in number 3. Then if the caller says 8, the talliers skip to box 8 in the first row and mark that box. Does that make sense? We'll go over the U and O columns in a minute.

[When the team understands how to mark the numbered columns]

You have several races, or questions, or contests, on this ballot. At the end of each of them is a U column and an O column. Those are for the unusual situations, where someone marked too many or not enough votes for the race.

If there are too many votes in a race, such as if the voter voted for 4 candidates for 3 positions, or if they marked both yes and no on the same question, that's an overvote. The caller reads all the votes as usual, and then points out that it is an overvote. The talliers mark all the votes as usual, but then go back and put a red line through all the boxes in that race – just that race. That tells you not to count those votes, but they still need to be marked to show what the voter did. Then you mark in the O column for that race.

If there aren't enough votes in a race, that's an undervote, and that's okay, but you need to record it so nobody else can add a vote where the voter left an opening. The caller should point out that this race is an undervote, and say how many more votes there could have been. For

instance, “the voter could have voted for three but only voted for one, so there are two undervotes.” The talliers put that many marks in the U column for that race. The U column is the only place where you could have more than one mark in a box.

[When the team all understands what to do]

Go ahead and tally the batch.

[When someone makes a mistake, or if nobody makes a mistake, explain at the end of the batch]

If you make a mark you shouldn’t have, cross it out in red so you know that is a mark you won’t count.

If you accidentally skip a line, when you realize it, go back to the right line and have the caller start reading that ballot again. When you get back to the line you accidentally started, mark anything that should be marked and then cross out in red any marks that shouldn’t be there.

[When all the ballots have been read]

Now the talliers count the number of marks in each column and write the number in the “Total” box at the bottom.

[When both talliers are done counting marks]

Check your numbers; one of you read your totals out loud and the other check. If anything doesn’t match, go back and figure out what the right number is.

[When the talliers’ totals agree]

Now you reconcile the votes for each race. I’ll walk you through doing it for one race and then you can do the rest. Where it says “B”, write the total number of ballots in this batch. Where it says “V”, if it’s not pre-printed, write the maximum number of votes the voter could mark in this race. Now multiply B times V and write that where it says BxV.

Now multiply the total in the O column times V and write that where it says OxV. Then you add up the totals for each of the numbered columns in this race. Then you write the total from the U column where it says U. Now you add all those up and write the answer where it says “Sum”.

Your numbers on the double lines at the bottom should match with each other and with what the other tallier got; if they don’t, let’s figure out why.

Now do the same for the other races and check them with each other; once you are used to this it will take hardly any time.

[When all the votes reconcile for each of the races]

Put the ballots in a baggie, tape over the top and initial on the tape. That’s your cheap tamper-indicating device, just like what you do when you re-seal an envelope with tape. Clip the tally sheets to the baggie and set that batch aside for aggregation.

[When all the batches are tallied]

Now the four of you are an aggregation team. You're going to do almost the same thing as you did tallying, except now you're totaling the totals. Again the two of you on one side each get a sheet, but this time an aggregation sheet, and you use just pens.

The other two are the caller and the watcher. Each of you take one of the tally sheets from the first batch here, and the caller is going to read the totals out loud while the watcher follows along on the other sheet. See how these sheets actually get quadruple-checked this way?

The two of you with the aggregation sheet, you're going to be writing numbers this time, and you'll be writing in every box. Write small enough so if you make a mistake you have room to cross it out and write the correct number in the same box.

Caller, you need to be very careful how you say the numbers so nobody gets confused between the column number and the number that goes in that column. Usually it works best just to read the numbers in the boxes and not say the column numbers unless someone gets lost. Does that make sense?

[When the team all understands what to do]

Go ahead and read all the batch totals.

[When all the batches are read]

Now you will add up all the numbers in each column of the aggregation sheets, and again you write the totals at the bottom. You can use a calculator if you want. Even though the calculator is an electronic machine, what you are doing is still transparent because anyone else can see the numbers and add them up on another calculator, or in their head, or even on an abacus. If you did some secret operation with the number in your calculator, the answer wouldn't match what someone else got, so anyone could immediately spot the problem.

When you are done, you check your numbers with each other the same way you did with the tally sheets.

[When the aggregation totals agree]

Now you can compare your totals with the ballot and see which are the highest totals in each race and tell us who won!