

FANDOM FORWARD PRESENTS



SAVE OUR PROGRESS

An Election Toolkit

Video games have always allowed us to create, imagine, and explore what's possible. They are filled with inspiration and transformation—whether we're challenging the capabilities of a TI-89 calculator or our abilities to reshape narratives in an expansive open-world game.

In games, we go on journeys into the unknown and make choices along the way that shape our storyline. Sometimes, the choices we make affect our individual character: will we be an elf, a dwarf, or a human? And others impact how the game will play out: which faction do we choose to join and how do our actions impact the larger world of the game? **This reminds us a lot of voting in the real world.**

We understand that voting is not going to be a magical solution that immediately fixes everything by the time the ending cutscene plays. **However, we are inspired by what is possible when we all come together, work cooperatively, and collectively take action.**

The nostalgic “would you like to save your progress” screen and the powerful narratives of video games inspired Fandom Forward's Save Our Progress campaign – a get out the vote (GOTV) campaign to guide and inspire video game fans through the process of creatively planning and organizing voting actions within their fan communities.

This toolkit serves as an introductory point for learning about elections in the United States and actions you can take to prepare yourselves and encourage others around you to vote.

Main Quest I

Strive to understand elections and decipher the intricacies.

Every election is critical because there is so much at stake.

Elections can often feel overwhelming, and it can be challenging to be an informed voter. This first quest focuses on acquiring some basic knowledge that will help you on your journey to engage with elections.

Do you ever wonder why we have elections every two years, instead of just having them every four years, when we have to elect a new president? What is the deal with the midterms?

We elect a president every four years. Sometimes the election is between new candidates and sometimes it is between an incumbent (current sitting president) and/or a challenger.

Presidential candidates represent different parties. In the United States (U.S.), there are two primary parties but there can also be third party candidates. Voters can even write in candidates on their ballot.

The [22nd amendment](#) was ratified by Congress in 1951. It imposed term limits on the president, who can only serve for two terms (eight years). You can learn more about the history behind the 22nd amendment [here](#).



★ SIDE QUEST ★

Interested in learning about the difference between State and Federal governments? Here are a few good resources, listed from lightest to heaviest.

- [National Geographic](#) has a good, simple explanation.
- [Vote Smart](#) has an info-heavy breakdown.

Even though we only elect presidents every four years, we have midterm elections halfway through a presidential term in addition to local and special elections. It's important to pay attention to what's going on at all levels of government so you can have a well-rounded perspective. Your voice and participation matters.

For all elections, states could have ballot measures and initiatives, which is a form of direct democracy, and a way that citizens can get issues on the ballot without having to go through their elected officials. It can be very tricky to know how to vote on these initiatives. The best advice we can give is read all the info you can about them, talk with your trusted friends and family, and research as best you can.

Many voting materials will also include a booklet on what you can expect to see as we get closer to the election period. This is also a great starting point to begin your research and discussions.

The Electoral College is a critical part of the U.S. presidential election, and it is ultimately the body that decides who is elected president and vice president. This means that a candidate can lose the popular vote, but still win the election. This has happened five times (1824, 1876, 1888, 2000, and 2016). For example, during the 2016 presidential election, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote but ultimately lost to Donald Trump because he took in 304 Electoral College votes compared to her 227. You can learn more about that specific breakdown [here](#).



All members of the House of Representatives are elected every two years. Senators serve six-year terms and a third are up for reelection every two years. Both the Senate and House of Representatives have no term limits.

★ SIDE QUEST ★

Use [Ballotpedia](#) to look up which states allow ballot initiatives. Check out your state and see if they allow initiatives, learn more about them, and what variety of initiatives they allow.

Each side of a ballot measure may also have their own specific website. This can help you learn more about each perspective. Don't forget to check who has endorsed each side of what ballot you're researching.

You can look up initiatives in your area by going to your local news sources or your city, county, or state website. They provide information on the initiative, who submitted it, and comments that have been made. As an example, here is the website for [Oregon](#) and an example [ballot breakdown from Texas](#).

The US is primarily a representative democracy, with certain states allowing direct democracy through ballot initiatives. Click the respective links if you're interested in learning more about the difference between [direct democracy](#) and [representative democracy](#).



Currently, there are 538 electoral votes, and a majority of 270 is needed to win the election. The votes allocated per state are determined by the U.S. census and are equal to the number of congressional delegates the state has (two Senators + the number in the House of Representatives). All but two states have a winner-take-all approach to their electors – Maine and Nebraska allocate their votes based on districts.

The winning candidates aren't officially sworn into office until [Inauguration Day](#) at the U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C.

Even though the Electoral College decides who the new president and vice president-elects are, the popular vote is still an important part of the process. It not only indicates where the people stand, but votes go toward your state tally where the electoral count is pulled from. YOU are a very important part of this process.

You can learn more about how voters in U.S. territories are represented [here](#).

★ SIDE QUEST ★

Interested in watching a rundown of the Electoral College and the problems with it? [CGP Grey](#) made a good video about it.



The [National Archives](#) has a good breakdown of the electors each state has, and some extra information.

The [Brennan Center for Justice](#) has a great article on the Electoral College.

Main Quest II

How do we talk to other people about elections and keep the conversation friendly?

Now that we've gained some basic knowledge around elections and how they work, it's time to continue on our journey.

As you journey through this world, you may come across people you want to talk to about voting (and perhaps other things! Like the best places to forage for potion ingredients!). You will likely discover that elections (and politics) are tricky things to talk about because our political choices are deeply personal, and we often define certain aspects of ourselves by our beliefs and choices.

How we choose to interact with others will affect our journey, so we must take some time to prepare for these interactions.

This quest focuses on developing your Personal Story and adding it to your toolkit so that you are ready to have conversations with the people you meet during your journey.

★ SIDE QUEST ★

Talking to people can be hard, so take some time out from your journey to prepare for the conversations ahead. Create a conversation outline by using the information in the Main Quest, and deepen your knowledge by checking out Fandom Forward's [Neville's Guide to Tough Conversations](#). This guide will help you in crafting your conversation; there is a ton of great info to guide you through talking about tricky subjects. You will also learn about The Adoption Curve, Circles of Influence, and Communication Strategies.

To develop your story, start by answering the following questions, as they can help you identify and establish common ground with others:

What issues are important to you? Since you're taking part in this quest, your answer might be voting. Be open to exploring this a little deeper. What makes voting so important to you?

What values inspired you (and might inspire others) to take action in relation to the issues important to you? What values inspire you to vote and participate in civic engagement?

Take inspiration from your favorite books, TV shows, movies, video games, etc. What are some values that resonate with you and resonate across the fandom? How do these values tie into the reasons why voting is important to you?

Every good story follows a framework. For your personal story, use the framework of Moment, Choice, Outcome, and Ask.



*In creating your personal story, use as many **sensory, colorful details** as you can in every phase - but especially **moment and choice**. It's important to express **why** that moved you the way it did. Use **emotions**, but be **authentically you** - it's not about creating the saddest story, it's about telling your story of why you're doing this work.*

Start by identifying the why, or the moment, that moved you into action. Moments are the situations you face that shape who you are and what you care about (values). They are the context of why you are here now. What moment(s) in your life impacted you the most? Think back to the first election you participated in- what inspired you to show up to the polls? If this is your first election, what is inspiring you to show up this year?

Then comes your response to this moment: your choice. Maybe your response to your moment(s) was voting or choosing to talk to others about voting. What motivated you to make the choice that you did? How did it feel to make that choice?

What was the outcome of your choice? What experiences resulted from the actions you took? Outcomes are the ripple effects you activate as a result of the moments that move you. Consider what the outcomes are from a zoomed out, national or world-wide level, as well as a very zoomed-in and personal level.

Finally, determine the ask of your personal story. The purpose of an ask is to invite others to act on a shared value in a specific, concrete, and urgent way. It's multiplying your influence to turn the world around you into a better place. What do you want your fellow fandom friends to do? How can they help you affect change?

If you're making the choice to put yourself out there and have these tough conversations, be sure to take care of yourself in the process.

Something to remember is that these conversations shouldn't be about changing someone's mind or being "right." During a respectful, good faith dialogue, be open to hearing what the other person has to say as well. Afterall, conversations go two ways.

Elections can be super stressful times, and it is important for us to take care of ourselves. Take a look at Fandom Forward's [Marvelous Mental Health](#) toolkit for tips and support as we move through what can be very difficult times.



Main Quest III

Finding your polling place and what to expect on Election Day.

We have reached the final leg of our journey! Election Day is upon us! First things first, find your polling place and look into your state's voting requirements and options.

Vote.org has several handy tools for this. Their [main page](#) has links to each state's registration and voting requirements. You can use [this tool](#) to find your voting place. Depending on the state, they may also list vote-by-mail drop-off locations.

If you need to look into accessibility options, [usa.gov](#) has information on who you can contact in your state about voter accommodations and what must be provided at polling places to provide assistance.

Congratulations on reaching the final quest!



★ SIDE QUEST ★

A very short and quick side quest! Hooray! Make sure you are registered to vote! You can check your voter registration status at [Vote.org](#).

Polling place changes happen, so even if you've lived/ voted at the same place for years, it's still a good idea to double-check the location before you head out to vote.

★ SIDE QUEST ★

As we get closer to election day, check out Fandom Forward's [Fall into Democracy](#) workbook. It is a great tool for organizing your thoughts before the big day!



What to expect: As you approach the polling place, you will likely see lots of campaign signs and maybe even candidates or their staff. Campaigning or electioneering is prohibited after a certain point though, usually within 100 feet of the entrance.

You may have to wait in line at the polling place, so be sure to dress appropriately for the weather and wear comfortable shoes if you will be standing. Just in case, it may be a good idea to bring a snack and water if you have a long wait.

The vast majority of the time, voting goes smoothly. Once in a while though, a voter might run into an issue like harassment, being turned away, or being denied a provisional ballot. We hope none of these things happen to you, but if they do, you can call the non-partisan Election Protection Hotline:

- English: 1-866-OUR-VOTE / 1-866-687-8683
- Spanish: 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA / 1-888-839-8682
- Arabic: 1-844-YALLA-US / 1-844-925-5287
- For Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog, or Vietnamese: 1-888-274-8683



Once inside the polling place, a poll worker will ask you to sign in. You may also be asked for ID.

ID requirements vary by state. In some states, you may be allowed to vote without showing any identification. Other states require a photo ID, like a driver's license, while others require proof of residence, such as a utility bill or paycheck stub. It's a good idea to look up your [state's requirements](#) ahead of time to ensure a smooth voting experience.



Here are a few more helpful resources to prepare you for election day:

- [USA.gov](#) has lots of info and answers to many frequently asked voting questions.
- The ACLU has [resources](#) focused on voting rights.
- The Autistic Self Advocacy Network provides a [self-advocate's guide to voting](#).
- [Trek the Vote](#) has compiled some great [all around resources](#) for voting and Election Day.

When it's your turn to vote, you may be marking your ballot by hand, using a ballot marking device, or using a direct recording electronic (DRE) machine. If it's your first time voting and you aren't sure what to do, don't be afraid to ask a poll worker.

★ SIDE QUEST ★

Hoping to stay in and consider your choices in the comfort and calm of your own dwelling? In many states, voting by mail is an option. The rules vary by state. [Learn more here.](#)

If you're interested in getting a head start and voting early, check out [this map](#) to see if your state allows it.

★ SIDE QUEST ★

And we are here! Take a moment to prepare for the big day. Here is your Election Day Checklist:

- ID
- Charged phone
- Comfortable shoes
- Clothing that is nonpartisan, where it doesn't show bias towards any particular political party (see [Table 2: Electioneering Apparel Restrictions](#))
- Snack/Water
- Research/Notes: It's helpful to research what is on your ballot ahead of time, including candidates and any ballot measures or initiatives. If you bring a list of who and what you want to vote for, it's a good idea to have that information written or typed on a piece of paper (phones are not allowed in the voting booth in some states).

In some states, law enforcement officials are permitted to secure the premises. Don't be alarmed if you see a uniformed police officer at the polling place; this may be part of the procedure in these locations.

★ SIDE QUEST ★

Read [this Reuters' article](#) to learn more about the equipment Americans use to cast their votes.

Remember: we aren't alone. There are times that we play games as a solo player, and we make our way through without much thought for others. But there are times when we play in co-op or multiplayer mode, and our choices do impact those with whom we share space. There is power in that.

We have strength in numbers, and our actions as individuals can contribute to a larger movement. By sharing morals, values, and interests, we can mobilize fellow fans and fandom spaces to organize meaningful actions and move things in the direction we want to go.

Fan activism, the organizing methodology on which Fandom Forward was founded, involves connecting pop culture and the real world to inspire fans to take action for social change.

The power fan communities have is huge, especially when they work cooperatively towards a common goal. Please use this toolkit to organize and inspire action amongst your fellow fans, fellow gamers, friends, and community. We can't wait to see what the ever-growing and diverse video gaming community does to **Save Our Progress!**

