

About the Quick Start Guides: The EAC's Quick Start Guides are intended to familiarize local election officials with various topics they will likely encounter in election administration. The guides are a starting point to identify areas of concern and give officials a broad idea of factors they should consider in approaching a given topic.

What is ballot reconciliation?

Ballot reconciliation is the method in which election officials keep track of each ballot that has been printed or issued to a voter. Tracking the number of ballots printed, used, and unused during an election cycle ensures that election officials have accounted for every ballot created. When results are certified, election officials can be confident that the results include every valid ballot cast. This guide's suggestions focus mainly on reconciling Election Day ballots; however, the general principles also apply to early in-person and by mail voting.



Before Election Day



Before Election Day, election officials should:

- Verify the number of blank ballots received from the printer.
- Document the number of pre-printed ballots (and/or blank ballot stock) sent to each polling place.
- Train poll workers on Election Day ballot reconciliation activities.
- Create a checklist organized by polling place and include the serial number for each memory card assigned to the location.

On Election Day

Before the Polls Open

- Verify the number of ballots provided matches the number the elections office documented and that they are the correct ballot styles for the location.
- Confirm the ballot boxes are empty before polls open and that they remain secured throughout Election Day.
- If using precinct scanners or DREs, review the opening tape and confirm no votes are present, and the number of ballots cast is zero.

After the Polls Close

- Document the total number of ballots cast on each voting machine and close the polls on each device.
- Compare the total number of ballots cast to the total number of voters, accounting for any provisional ballots to be reviewed.
- Count and record the number of ballots (both voted and unvoted), including those that have been cast, provisional, spoiled, or emergency.
- If your jurisdiction allows voters to surrender or return mail ballots at polling places, document each mail ballot that was received at the polling place.

Throughout Election Day, encourage poll workers to:



- Compare the number of voters checked in to the number of ballots cast.
- Document any instances of ballots that are not properly tabulated or any equipment issues.

Election Night

- Use the checklist of memory card serial numbers to ensure that all cards have been uploaded.
- After uploading all memory cards for a polling place, verify the number of ballots cast matches the number verified by poll workers (if possible, compare both numbers to the totals tapes printed from the precinct scanners or DREs).
- For jurisdictions that centrally scan Election Day ballots, verify the number of ballots scanned matches the number of ballots poll workers reported as cast.

