



Portage County Board of Elections — Voting Online Tools

Portage County Board of Elections Tools

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1779** —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Here is the whole guide in a nutshell. The Portage County Board of Elections runs voting in our county, and it works with the Ohio Secretary of State's free online tools. Type the real addresses yourself: portagecounty-oh.gov, ohiosos.gov and voteohio.gov, all ending in dot gov. Use them to check that you are registered, find your polling place, preview your ballot, get the absentee request form, and track your absentee ballot. Early in-person voting happens only at the Board of Elections office in Ravenna. On Election Day the polls are open from 6:30 in the morning to 7:30 in the evening, and Ohio asks for photo ID. Deadlines change with each election, so always confirm the dates on the official site. The real office will never ask for gift cards, your password, or a code over the phone. If any of this feels tangled, that is exactly what I help neighbors with, so please call me.

1. What the Board of Elections Does

The county office that runs voting where you live.

The Portage County Board of Elections is the local office that runs elections for everyone who lives in the county. It keeps the list of registered voters, sets up the polling places, prepares the ballots, and counts the votes. It sits in Ravenna, and its staff are county employees whose whole job is helping people vote.

When people say they need to deal with "the Board of Elections," this is who they mean. Statewide rules come from the Ohio Secretary of State, but your county board is the one that handles your own voter record, your own absentee ballot, and your own early voting visit.

I wrote this guide to show you the online tools that make all of that easier. Nothing here is a race, and you can do every task by phone or on paper if you prefer. The online tools are simply one more door into the same office.

GOOD TO KNOW

The county board and the state office work together, but they are not the same place. This guide stays with Portage County. If you want the statewide picture, I have a separate guide on voter registration and ballot tracking.

2. What You Can Do Online

A quick map of the tools before we dig in.

Quite a lot of voting business can start on a computer, tablet, or phone. You do not have to do any of it online, but it saves trips and phone calls for many people.

- Check that you are registered and that your address is correct.
- Register to vote or update your registration.
- Find your polling place.
- See what will be on your ballot.
- Get the absentee ballot request form and learn how to return it.
- Track your absentee ballot once the county has it.

Some things still happen in person or on paper. Early in-person voting takes place only at the Board of Elections office, and Ohio asks for a paper absentee request each election.

The online tools help you get ready for those steps and check on them afterward.

Each chapter that follows takes one task at a time, in plain words, so you can skip to what you need.

Think of the online tools as a front porch. You can look things over from there, get your bearings, and decide whether to step inside. Nobody is watching how fast you go, and you can come back to the porch as many times as you like.

GOOD TO KNOW

Read the next few chapters once, then keep the cheat sheet near your computer. Most people only need two or three of these tasks in any given election.

3. Before You Start

A short list of what to have in reach.

You do not need much. A little preparation makes every task smoother, and most of them take only a few minutes.

- A computer, tablet, or smartphone with a web browser.
- Your full name as it appears on your voter record.
- Your date of birth.
- Your current home address, and your old one if you have moved.
- Your Ohio driver license, state ID number, or the last four digits of your Social Security number, if a form asks.
- A pen and paper to write down confirmations.

Some forms ask for an ID number so the office can match you to the right record. That is normal and is how the real office protects your information. The real office will never ask for your bank details to help you vote.

If you do not have one of these at hand, that is fine. Stop, find it, and come back. Nothing is lost by pausing.

It also helps to sit somewhere comfortable with good light. Reading glasses, a cup of tea, and a quiet room do more for your confidence than any tip I could give you. If a family member wants to sit beside you, that is welcome, though the choices stay yours.

TIP

Gather everything on the kitchen table first. Having it all in front of you keeps you from clicking around in a hurry.

4. Finding the Real County Site

Type the address yourself.

The county government's website is portagecounty-oh.gov, and the Board of Elections has its own section there. The address ends in dot gov, which is reserved for real government. Type portagecounty-oh.gov into the address bar at the top of your browser yourself, then look for the Board of Elections link.

You can also type the full page address, portagecounty-oh.gov/board-elections, if you like. Once you land on the real page, save it as a bookmark so you never have to hunt for it again.

- 1 Open your web browser.
- 2 Click in the long address bar at the very top.
- 3 Type portagecounty-oh.gov and press Enter.
- 4 Find the Board of Elections link on the county page.
- 5 Check that the address bar still shows portagecounty-oh.gov.

Search engines sometimes show copycat sites or paid ads above the real result. A look-alike may end in dot com and sound official. Skipping the search and typing the address avoids the whole problem.

WATCH OUT

A real election office will not text or email you a link saying your registration is "cancelled" unless you click immediately. That pressure is the tell. Close it and type the address yourself.

5. Finding the State Tools

The Ohio Secretary of State's voter pages.

The Ohio Secretary of State runs statewide voting tools that work for every county, including Portage. The main office site is ohiosos.gov, and the Secretary of State also runs a voter information site called VoteOhio.gov. Both end in dot gov, and both are official.

From these state pages you can look up your registration, find your polling place, get the absentee request form, and track an absentee ballot. The county board site also links to these tools, so you can reach them from either direction.

When you are on a state page, you will usually be asked to pick your county or type your address. That is how the tool knows to send you to Portage County information.

- Type ohiosos.gov or voteohio.gov yourself.
- Look for the voter or elections section.
- Choose the task you want, such as a registration check.
- Use the same real address bar habit every time.

Because there are two state addresses and one county address, it can feel like a lot to remember. You do not have to memorize them. Write all three on a card, or save them as bookmarks, and you will always have the real ones close at hand.

GOOD TO KNOW

Menu names on state pages can change over time. If a button I describe has moved, look for the same idea under a similar name, or call the county board for a quick pointer.

6. County Versus State: Who Does What

Knowing which office to ask saves time.

It helps to know which office handles which job, because it tells you where to look and whom to call.

The state sets the rules, builds the shared online tools, and publishes statewide forms. The county board applies those rules to you. It holds your actual voter record, mails your ballot,

runs the early voting site, and counts what comes back.

- Question about your own record or ballot: call the Portage County board.
- Question about statewide rules or forms: the Secretary of State's pages explain them.
- Trouble with a state tool itself: try the county board first, since they use it daily.
- Question about who is running: the ballot materials and the board's information pages.

When in doubt, start with the county. Staff there can answer most questions or point you to the right place, and they know Portage County streets and townships.

A helpful picture is a restaurant chain and your local branch. The chain publishes the menu everywhere, but the local branch cooks your meal and answers your questions. Your Portage County board is the local branch, and that is the office that knows your name and your address.

TIP

Keep the county board's phone number, (330) 297-3511, written down next to your computer. Confirm it on the official county page before you rely on it.

7. Checking Your Registration

Make sure you are on the list before it matters.

You can only vote if you are registered at your current address. Checking takes about a minute, and doing it early gives you time to fix a problem.

The state voter lookup, reached through ohiosos.gov or VoteOhio.gov, lets you enter your details to see your record. The county board's pages also point you to it. The county board also suggests calling its office if you would rather confirm your status by phone.

- 1 Go to the Ohio Secretary of State's site by typing the address.
- 2 Find the voter lookup or registration check.
- 3 Enter your name and date of birth as asked.
- 4 Read your address and county carefully.
- 5 Write down what it shows, including your polling place if listed.

What you want to see is your correct address and Portage County. If anything looks off, do not worry. Later chapters cover fixing it.

Checking is harmless. You are only looking, and nothing about your record changes. Many people check every year or two out of habit, the same way they check the batteries in a smoke alarm. It is quick, and it gives you real peace of mind before an election.

TIP

Check your registration whenever you move, change your name, or have not voted in a long while. A few minutes early beats a surprise later.

8. If You Cannot Find Your Record

Not showing up is usually fixable.

Sometimes the lookup says it cannot find you. That feels alarming, but it is often a small, ordinary reason.

- A typo in your name or birth date.
- A nickname used instead of your full legal name.
- A recent move that was never reported.
- A change of name after marriage.
- Registration under a different county.

Try again with your full legal name and slower typing. If the record still does not appear, call the Portage County Board of Elections at the number listed on its official page. Staff can look up your record directly and tell you what to do.

The county board also explains that a voter who cannot be found but believes they are registered may be able to cast a provisional ballot while voting in person early, as long as they have not moved out of their prior county. Ask the office how that works for your situation.

Keep in mind that the tool compares what you type against what the county has on file, letter for letter. A middle initial, a hyphen, or an apartment number can matter. If you think something on your record is wrong, the board can correct it once you tell them.

WATCH OUT

Do not pay anyone to "fix" your registration. Registering and checking your record is free, and the real office never charges for it.

9. Registering or Updating Online

New to voting, or just moved.

The county board explains that you can register online, by mail with a printed form, or in person. You can use these same routes to update your name or address. Online is usually fastest if you have the details at hand.

A registration form asks who you are, where you live, and for an identification number so the office can confirm you. You also confirm you are a citizen and old enough to vote by the election. Read each line before you type.

- 1 Start from the county or Secretary of State site by typing the address yourself.
- 2 Choose the option to register or update your registration.
- 3 Fill in your name, date of birth, and home address.
- 4 Enter the ID number requested.
- 5 Review everything and submit.
- 6 Write down any confirmation shown.

If you prefer paper, the county site offers a printable application that you can mail to the Board of Elections office in Ravenna.

Take a moment at the end to read your answers back. A swapped digit in a birth date or a misspelled street is the most common reason a form needs a second look. Reading it once more costs a minute and can save a phone call later.

GOOD TO KNOW

There is a cutoff before each election after which new registrations cannot be used for that election. The exact date changes, so confirm the current deadline on the official site.

10. When You Move Within the County

Update your address before you vote.

Moving across town, say from Kent to Ravenna or from Streetsboro to Aurora, still means your voter record needs updating. Your polling place, your ballot, and even some of the issues you vote on depend on where you live.

Updating is the same as registering: you submit your new address through the online form, by mail, or in person. Do it as soon as you are settled in, rather than waiting for the next election.

- Use your new address exactly as it appears on your mail.
- Keep your old address handy in case a form asks for it.
- Update your driver license address too, since the two records are related.
- Re-check your polling place after the update.

If you move close to an election, call the Board of Elections and ask how to handle it. They deal with this all the time and can explain your options calmly.

A common slip is to move a few miles, update the post office and the driver license, and forget the voter record. At the next election the old polling place is the wrong spot. A short update beforehand prevents that.

TIP

Look at your polling place again after any move. People often keep going to the old one out of habit.

11. Finding Your Polling Place

Know where to go before the day.

On Election Day you vote at an assigned polling place, usually near your home. It is not a free choice, so it is worth looking up. The state voter lookup and the county board's information pages both help you find it.

- 1 Open the county or state voter lookup.
- 2 Enter your details.
- 3 Find the line for polling place or voting location.
- 4 Write down the name and street address.
- 5 Plan how you will get there.

Polling places can change from one election to the next. A school, church, or township building you used before may not be the one this time. A quick look a few days ahead avoids surprises.

If you cannot get to your polling place because of mobility or transport, an absentee ballot may suit you better. A later chapter explains that option.

If you use a phone, many map apps will give you directions once you type the address you wrote down. Try the route once ahead of time if the place is unfamiliar. Knowing where to park and which door to use makes the day itself feel calm.

WATCH OUT

Do not rely on an old notice, a neighbor, or a text from someone you do not know. Confirm your polling place on the official site or by calling the county board.

12. Election Day Basics

What to expect when you go in person.

On Election Day, the polls in Ohio open at 6:30 in the morning and close at 7:30 in the evening. If you are in line by closing time, you are allowed to vote. Go at a time that suits you. Mid-morning and early afternoon are often calmer than the start and end of day.

When you arrive, poll workers check you in, confirm your name, and ask for your identification. You then receive your ballot and a place to mark it privately. Workers are neighbors who volunteer or are trained for the job, and they will help if you are unsure what to do.

- Bring an accepted photo ID.
- Bring your reading glasses.
- Bring your notes about candidates and issues, if you like.
- Ask a poll worker if anything confuses you.

Take your time marking the ballot. There is no prize for speed.

If you would like a quieter experience, remember that early voting and absentee voting exist for exactly that reason. Election Day is wonderful for those who like the neighborhood feeling, but it is not the only way, and no way is better than another.

TIP

If the line looks long, you can still vote. Staying until your turn comes is your right as long as you were in line by closing.

13. Seeing What Is on Your Ballot

Look at your choices ahead of time.

Your ballot lists the offices and issues that apply to where you live, so two neighbors on different streets may see slightly different ballots. You can usually preview yours before voting through the state lookup tool or the county board's information pages.

Looking ahead takes the pressure off. In the voting booth you only have to mark choices you have already thought about, instead of reading everything for the first time.

- 1 Go to the voter lookup on the official state or county site.
- 2 Enter your details to find your ballot or sample ballot.
- 3 Read each office and issue slowly.
- 4 Make notes beside the ones you care about.

5 Bring your notes with you when you vote.

Local issues, such as school or township questions, can be worded in a technical way. Reading them calmly at home helps.

Notice that the ballot may include questions that are not about people at all, such as a local tax or levy question. Those can be worded in formal language. Read them twice, and if a phrase puzzles you, look for a plain explanation from a trustworthy source before the day.

GOOD TO KNOW

You are allowed to bring written notes into the voting booth. Just keep them to yourself and do not display them or try to influence others.

14. Photo ID to Vote

Plan ahead so there are no surprises.

Ohio asks voters to show photo identification when they vote in person. Bringing it with you is the single best way to keep your voting visit short and stress-free.

The state explains which kinds of ID are accepted on its official voter pages. Rather than guess, read that list on ohiosos.gov or VoteOhio.gov, or ask the county board. A current Ohio driver license or state ID is the common choice.

- Check that your ID is not expired.
- Check that it shows your name and a photo.
- Read the official list of accepted IDs if you do not drive.
- Keep your ID where you can find it on Election Day.

If you do not have an accepted photo ID, call the Board of Elections early. The staff can explain your options and what to bring, so you are not caught off guard at the door.

Many seniors no longer drive and may have let their license lapse. If that sounds like you, do not wait until the last minute. The state offers photo ID cards through the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, and the county board can tell you what to bring when you ask.

WATCH OUT

Only the official sites list which IDs are accepted. A message telling you to pay for a special "voter ID" is a scam.

15. Early In-Person Voting

How and where it works in Portage County.

Ohio lets you vote before Election Day. In Portage County, early in-person voting happens only at the Board of Elections office in Ravenna. It does not take place at neighborhood polling places, so you cannot walk into your usual precinct early.

The office is at 449 South Meridian Street, Room 101, in Ravenna, Ohio 44266. The board's website lists the early voting days and hours, and those hours change from one election to the next, with some days longer than others and some days closed.

- 1 Look at the Board of Elections page for the early voting schedule.
- 2 Choose a day and time that works for you.
- 3 Bring your photo ID.
- 4 Go to the office and tell staff you are there to vote early.
- 5 Mark and cast your ballot.

Early voting is a good choice if Election Day is busy or crowded for you, or if you simply like to get it done.

Early voting also gives you a safety margin. If you find a problem with your registration, you may still have time to sort it out, which is harder on a busy Election Day. Many people like the smaller crowds and the chance to ask questions of the staff.

WATCH OUT

Confirm the days and hours on the official page just before you go. Never trust a date or hour you only saw in a post or a message.

16. Getting to the Election Office

A little planning makes the trip easy.

The Portage County Board of Elections is in the county Administration Building at 449 South Meridian Street in Ravenna. Look for Room 101. The county page lists weekday office hours, and those can differ from early voting hours, so check both.

Before you leave, think through the trip. Decide who will drive, when you will go, and what you need to bring. If walking is hard for you, call ahead and ask about the easiest entrance and anything the office can do to help.

- Bring your photo ID.
- Bring your absentee paperwork if you are dropping it off.

- Allow extra time in case there is a line.
- Ask a friend or family member to come along if you like.

Wear comfortable shoes and take any medication you may need. Staff are used to helping people of every age and ability.

Government buildings often have a front desk or a directory near the door. If you cannot find Room 101 right away, ask anyone who works there. People are glad to point the way. Take a moment to read signs, and do not feel rushed.

GOOD TO KNOW

Most people are in and out quickly. Still, plan a bit of cushion so you never feel rushed.

17. Absentee Voting in Plain Words

Voting by mail, and why people choose it.

Absentee voting, sometimes called voting by mail, means you receive a paper ballot, mark it at home, and return it. Portage County's board explains that any registered voter may request one, and you do not need to give a reason.

Many seniors like it because there is no travel, no line, and no weather to worry about. You can read each choice at your kitchen table, with your glasses on and your notes beside you.

The process has three parts. First you request a ballot. Next the county mails you one. Finally you return it on time. The online tools help with the first and last parts, and you can even track it in between.

- No reason is needed to request one.
- You must be a registered voter.
- The board mails your ballot after checking your request.
- You return it by mail or in person.

One more reassurance: voting absentee is not a lesser kind of voting. A ballot returned correctly and on time is counted the same as one cast in person. Many voters like it because it feels unhurried and private.

GOOD TO KNOW

Absentee voting is the same thing as vote by mail in Ohio. You may hear either name from the office and the news.

18. Requesting an Absentee Ballot

Get the request form and fill it in carefully.

In Ohio, you ask for an absentee ballot by completing a request form each election. A request for one election does not carry over to the next. Official forms are available from the Secretary of State's pages and the county board's absentee voting page.

- 1 Go to the county board's absentee voting page, or the state's, by typing the address.
- 2 Find the absentee ballot request form.
- 3 Print it, or ask the office to mail one to you.
- 4 Fill in your name, address, date of birth, and ID number.
- 5 Sign and date it.
- 6 Send it to the Board of Elections.

Be careful to write neatly and to match the name and address on your voter record.

Mistakes or missing parts can delay your ballot.

The county's page says requests can be mailed, hand delivered, or placed in a drop box at the Board of Elections office.

If you do not have a printer, simply call the board and ask them to mail you a request form. It arrives in your mailbox, and you fill it out at your table. That is a perfectly good way to start, and it needs no computer at all.

WATCH OUT

Only use forms from official election sources. Mail from outside groups can look official yet may have errors. If you are unsure, use the county's own form.

19. Absentee Deadlines

Described generally, with a way to confirm.

Every election has deadlines for requesting an absentee ballot and for returning it. I will not list specific dates here, because they change from election to election and printed dates go stale quickly.

What stays the same is the idea. There is a last day to ask for a ballot, and there is a time by which your ballot must be returned. The county board says mailed ballots must arrive by the time the polls close on Election Day, at 7:30 in the evening, so mailing late is risky.

- Request your ballot as early as you are able.
- Mail it back soon after you mark it.

- Read the deadline printed on your ballot materials.
- Confirm all dates on the official county or state site.

The safest habit is to treat deadlines as earlier than they might be. Doing it a week ahead of time costs you nothing.

Write the deadlines on a paper calendar the moment you confirm them. A bold circle around the day you want your ballot mailed, and another around the last day to request one, will do more for you than any reminder app. Keep it where you will see it.

TIP

If a deadline is close and you are worried, hand deliver the ballot to the Board of Elections office instead of trusting the mail.

20. Mail, Hand Delivery, or Drop Box

Three ways to return your paperwork.

Once you have a request form or a marked ballot, you have more than one way to send it to the Portage County Board of Elections.

- By mail: use the envelope provided and the correct postage.
- By hand: take it into the office at 449 South Meridian Street, Room 101, in Ravenna.
- By drop box: the county board has a drop box at its office for ballots and applications.

Mail is the easiest if you have time to spare. Hand delivery gives you the comfort of knowing it arrived. The drop box is handy if you are passing by outside office hours.

Whatever you choose, use only the official envelope and follow the printed instructions on it. Do not substitute your own envelope or add extra papers.

If you mail your request or ballot, send it with plenty of time to spare. Mail can be slower than expected, and the county needs time to process what you send. Choosing hand delivery or the drop box removes that uncertainty when a deadline feels close.

GOOD TO KNOW

Postage rules can vary. Check the envelope and the board's instructions to see whether you need a stamp.

21. Tracking Your Absentee Ballot

See where it is, without calling anyone.

Ohio provides an online tool where you can follow your absentee ballot after the county has received your request. The Secretary of State has pointed voters to VoteOhio.gov for this. It can tell you that your request arrived, that a ballot was sent, and that your returned ballot was received.

- 1 Type voteohio.gov or ohiosos.gov into your browser yourself.
- 2 Look for ballot tracking or absentee tracking.
- 3 Choose Portage County if asked.
- 4 Enter your name, date of birth, and any other details requested.
- 5 Read the status shown and write it down.

Statuses tell a simple story. The first means the county has your request. The next means your ballot has gone out. The last means your marked ballot has come back.

Give it a few days after each step for the tool to catch up. It is a convenience, not a live camera.

Because this tool is run by the state and uses county information, the details shown depend on what the Portage County board has entered. If something looks wrong or incomplete, the county office is the right place to ask, and they can usually explain it in a sentence.

TIP

Check once after you mail your request and once after you return your ballot. That is plenty.

22. Marking and Returning the Ballot

Slow and careful wins.

When your ballot arrives, set aside a quiet half hour. Spread out everything the envelope contains and read the printed instructions first. Each part has a purpose.

- 1 Read the instruction sheet start to finish.
- 2 Mark your choices exactly as shown, using the pen the instructions suggest.
- 3 Do not make stray marks on the ballot.
- 4 Place the ballot in the correct return envelope.
- 5 Complete and sign the required section on the envelope.
- 6 Return it by mail, by hand, or by drop box.

The identification or signature section on the envelope matters. If it is left incomplete, the board may have to contact you. Take your time and fill in each line.

Keep any stub or slip you are given. If you are unsure of a rule, call the board before you seal anything.

If you make a mistake while marking, do not try to fix it yourself with scribbles. Read the instructions that came with your ballot, and call the Board of Elections if you are unsure what to do. They would rather help you early than leave you guessing.

WATCH OUT

Do not seal the envelope before checking that you filled in every required line. Once it is sealed, you cannot add missing details.

23. When Tracking Shows Nothing

Do not panic; check calmly.

Sometimes you look up your ballot and see no information, or an old status. Usually this is only timing or a small mismatch, and it can almost always be sorted out.

- Mail takes days, so wait before worrying.
- The tool may need a day or two to update.
- Your name or birth date may have a typo.
- Your request may not have reached the county yet.

First, retype your details slowly. Next, wait a day or two. If it is still blank and a deadline is close, call the Portage County Board of Elections. Staff can see your record and tell you exactly where things stand.

If your ballot never arrived, ask the board about your options. Depending on timing, you may be able to vote in person at the office instead.

Keep a short log in a notebook: the day you mailed your request, the day your ballot arrived, and the day you returned it. If you ever have to call the office, having those dates ready makes the conversation short and productive for both of you.

TIP

Keep your request date and any note of when you mailed things. It helps the staff help you.

24. The Ballot Drop Box

Where it is and how to use it.

The Portage County Board of Elections offers a drop box at its office at 449 South Meridian Street in Ravenna. It accepts completed ballots and absentee applications, according to the county's page.

Using a drop box is simple, but it should be done with care. Make sure your ballot is sealed in its official envelope, signed where required, and ready. Then place it in the box and listen for it to drop.

- 1 Confirm the box location and rules on the county page.
- 2 Seal and sign your ballot envelope.
- 3 Drive or walk to the Administration Building.
- 4 Find the marked drop box.
- 5 Place your envelope inside.

You may hand your own ballot over. Ask the office before handing a family member's ballot to anyone, because rules about who can return it exist.

Plan your visit so you are not rushed. Before you leave home, glance at the ballot envelope once more to confirm the signature line is complete. A thirty-second check at the kitchen table is far easier than discovering a missing line after the envelope is in the box.

WATCH OUT

Only use the official county drop box. Never give your ballot to a stranger who offers to "take it in" for you.

25. Provisional Ballots

A safety net, not a problem.

A provisional ballot is a ballot you cast when there is a question about your eligibility, such as your name not appearing in the book at your polling place. It is set aside while staff check your record, and then it is counted if you were eligible.

The Portage County board notes that a voter who cannot be found but believes they are registered may be able to cast one during in-person early voting, as long as they have not moved out of their prior county.

- You may be asked to fill out a form along with the ballot.
- Staff will verify your record afterward.

- Ask whether you can check later that it was counted.
- Ask the poll worker or office for the details.

The key is to ask for help calmly. Poll workers are trained to explain the process, and you are entitled to ask questions.

Do not be embarrassed if you end up with one. It is a normal part of the system, used every election, and it protects both you and the process. The staff handling it deal with questions like yours routinely and have no interest in making you feel awkward.

GOOD TO KNOW

You can often avoid a provisional ballot altogether by checking your registration and address several weeks ahead.

26. Phone and Paper Alternatives

Online is optional.

You never have to use a computer to take part in elections. Every task in this guide has a phone, paper, or in-person route as well, and the staff at the Portage County Board of Elections are glad to help that way.

- Call the board at (330) 297-3511, after confirming it on the official site.
- Ask them to mail you a registration form or an absentee request form.
- Visit the office at 449 South Meridian Street, Room 101, in Ravenna.
- Send documents by mail to the same address.

Calling is often the quickest way to get a clear answer to a specific question. Writing a few notes beforehand keeps the call short.

Paper has a lasting advantage: you keep a copy. Photocopy anything you mail, if you can, and store it with your records.

Remember that a letter or form sent by mail can take several days to arrive. If a deadline is near, delivering paper in person at the Ravenna office or using the drop box will be safer than trusting the postal system, which has no way to know your date matters.

TIP

The office keeps weekday hours, so call during working hours and be patient if the line is busy before an election.

27. Calling the Board with Confidence

What to have ready.

A phone call to the board can feel intimidating, but the staff handle such calls every day. A little preparation makes it painless.

- 1 Find a quiet spot with a pen and paper.
- 2 Dial the number from the official county page.
- 3 Say you live in Portage County and have a voting question.
- 4 Give your name and address when asked.
- 5 Write down the answer and the name of the person who helped.

Have your question ready in one sentence, such as, "I moved and want to confirm my registration." If you do not understand an answer, say so and ask the person to repeat it more slowly.

Remember the staff are there to help you vote, not to quiz you. There are no silly questions.

If you reach a recording, listen to the options calmly and do not hang up. Busy times before an election can mean a wait. Leave your name, number, and a short message if asked, and speak slowly so the person calling you back can write it down correctly.

WATCH OUT

If someone phones you claiming to be the election office and asks for your Social Security number or a code, hang up and call the office yourself at the number on the official site.

28. Making Voting Tools Easier to See

Bigger text and gentler screens.

If small print is hard on your eyes, you do not have to squint. Browsers and devices let you enlarge text on any page, and it will not change how the voting tools work.

- On a computer, hold Ctrl or Command and press plus to zoom in.
- On a phone or tablet, spread two fingers apart on the page.
- Raise the text size in your device's accessibility settings.
- Press Ctrl or Command and zero to return to normal.

If you have trouble voting in person because of a disability, the Board of Elections can explain what help and accessible voting options exist. Ask the staff early, so they can prepare.

You may also bring someone to help you at the polls in many cases. Ask the poll workers or the board what the rules are.

If you wear bifocals, tilt the screen or move your chair until you find a spot where the page is sharp. Turning up the screen brightness in a dim room, or turning it down in a bright one, can also reduce eye strain a great deal.

TIP

Printing a form and enlarging it on a copier can be easier on the eyes than reading it on a small screen.

29. Saving and Printing Confirmations

Keep your own proof.

When you finish an online task, such as a registration or a ballot check, the page may show a confirmation. Keeping a copy gives you peace of mind and something to show the office if a question comes up.

- Use the Print button in your browser.
- Choose Save as PDF in the print window to keep a digital copy.
- Write down any confirmation number in a notebook.
- Note the date and what you did.
- Photocopy paper forms before mailing them.

Make a simple folder, paper or digital, labeled for voting. Put your confirmations, your polling place notes, and your absentee paperwork there. At election time everything is in one place.

A printed copy is sturdier than an email. Emails get deleted, lost, or buried, while a folder on a shelf stays put.

If you share a computer with someone, name your files clearly, such as Voting Confirmation, and note the date in the file name. You will thank yourself later when you can find the right page in seconds instead of opening ten similar files one by one.

GOOD TO KNOW

Do not photograph or send your ID number to anyone by text. Keep these records at home.

30. Scams That Target Voters

They rely on fear and hurry.

Elections attract scammers because people care about them and sometimes worry they have made a mistake. Knowing the usual tricks makes them easy to ignore.

- A text saying your registration is cancelled unless you click now.
- A call asking you to read back a code you just received.
- A website that charges a fee to register you or look up your record.
- A message telling you the wrong Election Day or a different place to vote.
- Anyone offering to collect or fill out your ballot for you.

The real Board of Elections does not pressure you. Genuine notices match what you see when you check your record yourself, on a real dot gov site you typed in.

If you are unsure about something you received, do not click. Call the board directly.

If a message makes your heart race, that is the moment to slow down. Put the phone down, take a breath, and make a cup of tea. Real election business is never so urgent that it cannot wait ten minutes for you to verify it properly.

WATCH OUT

No election office asks for gift cards, wire transfers, your bank password, or a one-time code by phone. If you are asked, it is a scam.

31. Keeping Your Information Private

Share only what the form needs.

Voting forms do ask for personal details, and that is normal. Still, treat them like any other private papers. Give them only to the official office and only through official channels.

Part of your voter registration is public record in many places, so the board may handle it differently from your bank information. Ask the office what is public and what is protected, if that worries you.

- Give your ID number only on official forms.
- Never post a photo of your ballot or envelope online.
- Shred old forms you no longer need.
- Do not give your details to anyone who calls you.

The board will never need your credit card or bank account to register or vote.

When you finish with a printed form, think about where it goes. Papers with your birth date and ID number do not belong in the recycling bin, where anyone could read them. A small shredder, or a careful tearing into pieces, handles it well.

TIP

If a request for private details feels odd, pause. You can always verify first by calling the county board.

32. Helping a Parent or Spouse

Support their choices without making them.

Many families help an older relative with voting tools. That is kind, and it works best when the voter stays in charge.

Sit together at their computer or yours. Type the official address, let them read the screens, and answer their questions. The choices on the ballot belong to them alone, and so do their signature and their vote.

- Let them do the typing when you can.
- Never fill in their ballot for them.
- Write down the steps so they can repeat them.
- Help them find their polling place and plan a ride.

If they have trouble with the process because of health or mobility, the Board of Elections can explain what help is allowed. Call and ask before you do anything on their behalf.

Be patient with questions you have answered before. The same step may need explaining twice, and that is fine. A calm voice and a written list of steps taped by the computer turn a stressful chore into a small routine that they can manage alone.

GOOD TO KNOW

Helping with forms is fine. Marking or signing for someone is not. When in doubt, ask the board.

33. Using a Library or Public Computer

Possible, with care.

If you lack a computer at home, the Portage County District Library and many community centers offer computers you can use. Checking your registration or finding your polling place on one is fine.

- Type the official address yourself.
- Do not let the computer save your information.
- Sign out and close the browser window when finished.
- Take printouts with you and do not leave them at the printer.

Library staff are used to questions and are happy to help you get started. You do not have to know how everything works.

Avoid entering sensitive numbers on a shared machine if you can help it. A registration check usually needs less than a form does.

Ask the librarian whether there is a time limit on the computers. Knowing that up front lets you plan your session, so you are not cut off in the middle of a form. Bring your notes with you, so you can work quickly and calmly. If you need to print a form, ask at the desk how printing works, since some libraries have a small per-page charge. Print only the pages you truly need.

TIP

If a public computer offers to remember your login or details, choose No or Not Now.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

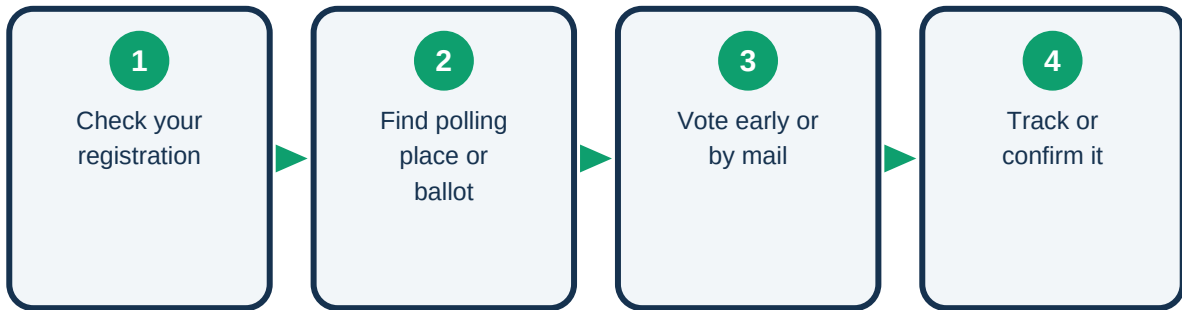
Keep this by the computer. I want to... Find the real site: type portagecounty-oh.gov and open the Board of Elections page. Check my registration: use the voter lookup at ohiosos.gov or voteohio.gov. Find my polling place: use the same lookup, or call the board. Vote early: go to the Board of Elections office in Ravenna. Vote by mail: get the absentee request form, send it in, then track it. Check deadlines: read the official site before each election. Talk to a person: call the board at (330) 297-3511. Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

From Question to Your Vote

The path most voters follow.



Each step has a phone or paper option too.

Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Three Ways to Vote

All run through the county board.

Early in person

Ravenna office
Bring photo ID
Check hours
first

By mail

Request form
Return in time
Track online

Election Day

Assigned polls
Open 6:30-7:30
Bring photo ID

Confirm every date on the official site.

Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com

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