

A guide for the Voters



Control unit and Balloting Unit
of
Electronic Voting Machine



भारत निर्वाचन आयोग
Election Commission of India

1. Why should you vote?

India is the largest democracy in the world. The right to vote and more importantly the exercise of franchise by the eligible citizens is at the heart of every democracy. We, the people, through this exercise of our right to vote have the ultimate power to shape the destiny of country by electing our representatives who run the Government and take decisions for the growth, development and benefit of all the citizens.

2. Who can vote?

All citizens of India who are 18 years of age as on 1st January of the year for which the electoral roll is prepared are entitled to be registered as a voter in the constituency where he or she ordinarily resides. Only persons who are of unsound mind and have been declared so by a competent court or disqualified due to 'Corrupt Practices' or offences relating to elections are not entitled to be registered in the electoral rolls.

3. What is an electoral roll?

3.1 An electoral roll is a list of all eligible citizens who are entitled to cast their vote in an election. The electoral rolls are prepared Assembly Constituency wise. An electoral roll for any Assembly Constituency is subdivided into parts corresponding with the polling booths. The Election Commission of India has decided to generally have a maximum of 1200 electors per booth. The polling booths are so set up that no voter should ordinarily travel more than 2 kms. to reach the polling booth. Normally, one part will correspond with one polling booth.

3.2 *To exercise your franchise, the first and foremost requirement is that your name should be in the electoral roll. Without your name registered in the relevant part for the area where you ordinarily reside in the Assembly Constituency, you will not be allowed to exercise your franchise. Therefore, it is your **duty** to find out whether your name has been registered or not.*

4. How to register?

4.1 The Election Commission prepares the electoral rolls through a process of intensive revision where house-to-house enumeration is done and electors residing in each house are registered by official enumerators who go physically from door-to-door to collect the information about electors. This process is done normally once in five years. Between two Intensive revisions, summary revisions are done every year during a specified period when persons who are left out of the electoral rolls are given an opportunity to register themselves by applying in Form-6. It is also expected from you to get your name deleted from the place where you earlier resided, and get it included at new place in case you have shifted. For this, on your part, it is sufficient that you file claim application in Form 6 before the Electoral Registration Officer of the new place and in that application give the full address of your earlier place of residence. Short absence from place of residence does not debar one to continue his/her name in electoral roll. Similarly, deletions are carried out of electors who have died or who have shifted residence from one area to another outside the prescribed part of the electoral roll. *You should note that you can be registered only at one place. Registration in more than one place is an offence.*

4.2 During Intensive Revision of electoral rolls which normally takes place once in five years, a draft roll is prepared after house to house enumeration and published at every polling booth location for inviting claims and objections. Any eligible person can file claim in **Form No. 6** for inclusion of his name in the roll or raise an objection to somebody's name or for deletion of his or any other person's name in **Form No. 7**. Similarly if any particulars in the electoral roll are to be modified such as name, house number, middle name, last name, age, sex, epic number etc. a claim in **Form No. 8** can be filed. In case any elector has changed his house from the polling area of one booth to other booth in the same Assembly Constituency he can file application in **Form No. 8A** for change/transposition from one electoral part to other part.

4.3 During Summary revision of electoral rolls which takes place every year, the existing electoral rolls are published at each polling booth locations to invite claims and objections for inclusion, deletion, modification and

transposition. After due enquiry all the claims and objections are decided and a supplementary electoral roll is prepared and published.

4.4 Even after the final publication of electoral rolls the process of continuous updation of electoral rolls goes on and the citizens are free to file any application for the addition, deletion, modification and transposition with the Electoral Registration Officer.

4.5 As per the law, your name can be registered upto the last date of filing nominations by candidates that has been notified by the Election Commission for any general election or bye-election to an Assembly or Parliament. To enable the Electoral Registration Officer to take action on your application, you must apply at least ten days before the last date of making nominations as he has to mandatorily invite objections by giving a seven clear days notice before including your name in the roll. If you apply later than ten clear days before the last date for nominations your name may not be included for the purposes of that particular election.

5. How to check your name in the electoral rolls and to find the polling station where you have to go to vote?

As an elector you should immediately check whether your name has been included in the electoral roll of the constituency where you reside or not. You can find out this information from the Electoral Registration Officer of your area. Electoral rolls in all major cities have now been displayed on official websites also.

6. Do you have an Electors' Photo Identity Card (EPIC)?

The Election Commission of India has made voter identification mandatory at the time of poll. The electors have to identify themselves with either Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) issued by the Commission or any other documentary proof as prescribed by the Commission.

7. Will possession of an EPIC alone entitle you to vote?

7.1 You should note that mere possession of an EPIC issued to you does not guarantee you your vote, because it is mandatory that your name should appear in the electoral roll.

Once you have found out that your name is there in the electoral roll and you also possess an identification document prescribed by the Election Commission (EPIC or others), you are entitled to vote.

7.2 Before you come to the polling booth, there are some other important aspects that you need to know as an elector and a conscientious citizen of the country.

8. What is the Disclosure by Candidates?

8.1 Recently the Election Commission of India has made it mandatory consequent upon a Judgment of Hon'ble Supreme Court that all candidates must file an affidavit along with their nomination form with details such as:-

- i. his/her criminal antecedents,
- ii. his/her assets and liabilities and those of his/her spouse and dependents, and
- iii. his/her educational background.

This has been done with a view that every citizen has a right to know about the candidates contesting an election and make an informed choice.

8.2 The Election Commission has directed all Returning Officers to display the copies of nomination papers and accompanying affidavits received during any day on his notice board immediately on receipt and make copies of these for distribution to the press and any members of public who want this information, free of cost. ***Any citizen of the country can obtain copies of the nomination form and the affidavit filed by any candidate from the Returning Officer and it shall not be refused. As a voter you have every right to seek this information and get it.***

8.3 The details of the dues owed by the candidates to the Government are published by giving an advertisement in the leading newspapers by the Returning Officer for the benefit of electors.

8.4 Above measures help the electors make an informed choice about the candidate they are going to vote for.

9. What are the basic do's and don't's as polling day approaches?

9.1 As a voter you should also know the aspects that are considered as corrupt practices or electoral offences:

- (i) Offering or accepting money or any other gratification either to vote for or not to vote for a particular candidate.
- (ii) Inducement by way of liquor, feast, gifts, etc. to vote for or not to vote for a particular candidate.
- (iii) Inducement to vote or not to vote for a particular candidate on the grounds of religion, caste, community, sectarian beliefs or place of birth.
- (iv) Threat to an elector of ex-communication if he votes for or against a particular candidate.
- (v) Offer of free conveyance to any elector to go to or from any polling station.

10. What is the process of voting? How do you go about it?

10.1 The poll date and hours are fixed by the Election Commission India and they are well publicized before all elections.

10.2 When you reach the polling station, entry will be regulated by queues. There will be separate queues for men and women voters and the physically handicapped persons. The persons who enforce the queues will allow 3-4 voters into the polling station at a time. Physically handicapped voters and women voters with babies in arm will be given precedence over the other voters in the queue.

10.3 **Stage 1:** When you enter the polling station, you will go to the First Polling Officer who is in-charge of the marked copy of the electoral roll and responsible for identification of electors. You should keep your identity document ready to show to the First Polling Officer. You can also show to him the unofficial identity slip giving your particulars. However, you should note that unofficial identity slip only helps in locating your name in the electoral roll but is not a guarantee of your identification. The First Polling Officer will then call out your name and serial number so that the polling agents become aware of your presence and your identity is not challenged.

10.4 **Stage 2:** Thereafter, if your identity is not challenged, you will proceed to the Second Polling Officer who will mark your left forefinger with the indelible ink. Thereafter, he will proceed to record your serial number in the electoral roll in the Register of Voters. Once this is recorded, you are to sign in the appropriate column in the Register of Voters. If a voter cannot sign, his/her thumb impression will be obtained. The Second Polling Officer will then give you a signed voter's slip which will record your serial number in the register of voters and your serial number in the electoral roll.

10.5 **Stage 3:** You will then proceed to the Third Polling Officer who will take the voter's slip issued to you by the Second Polling Officer. The Third Polling Officer will press the "Ballot" button on the Control Unit of voting machine and direct you to the voting compartment where you will record your vote on the balloting unit of the voting machine. Please note that each voter will proceed to the voting compartment in exactly the same sequence in which his/her serial number is recorded in the voters' register.

10.6 **Stage 4: Voting Procedure.**

- Inside the voting compartment, you are to press the blue candidate button on the Balloting Unit against the name and symbol of the candidate of your choice.
- Press the button only once.
- On the candidate button being pressed, the red lamp will glow against the name and symbol of that candidate.
- There will also be a beep sound heard to indicate that your vote has been recorded and the Busy lamp goes off in the Control Unit.
- This process is repeated for other voters till end of the poll.

10.7 *You must remember that secrecy of voting is important. Every elector is expected to maintain the secrecy of voting and in case of failure to maintain secrecy the elector may not be permitted to vote. Any person who violates the secrecy, will be booked for an offence under Section 128 of Representation of People Act, 1951. You should, therefore, not disclose to any person who you have voted for. Similarly, if any election official attempts to obtain information on who you have voted for, it will amount to an offence committed by that official. Photography of a voter casting vote is prohibited. It may also be noted that no polling official or agent can come inside the voting compartment under*

the pretext of helping you to vote. You can, however, be permitted to take a companion of not less than 18 years with you for recording your vote, if for any physical infirmity you require such assistance.

11. Can you decline to cast your vote at the last stage?

11.1 The law enables a voter to decline casting his vote at the last stage. If you decide not to cast your vote after having signed on the Register of Voters and after having received the voters' slip from the Second Polling Officer, you must inform the Presiding Officer immediately. He will then take back the voters' slip from you and proceed to record in the remarks column of the Register of Voters that you have declined to exercise your franchise and you will be required to put your signature under such entry. After this is done, you can leave the polling station without proceeding to the Voting Compartment.

12. What happens when your vote is challenged?

In case your identity as a voter is challenged by a polling agent of any candidate, on the ground that you are not the person whose name is listed on the rolls, the Presiding Officer will ask the challenger to give evidence in proof, of his challenge. Similarly, he will ask you for proof of your identity. You can use your EPIC or any other supporting document like Passport, Ration card etc. for this purpose. If the challenge is not established, you will be allowed to vote. However, if challenge is established, you will be debarred from voting and handed over to the police with a written complaint by the Presiding Officer.

13. What happens if someone else has cast the vote in your name?

13.1 If the First Polling Officer tells you on arrival inside the polling station that your vote has already been cast, bring this to the attention of the Presiding Officer immediately. The law allows you to cast a *Tendered Vote*. A Tendered Ballot Paper, as per Rule 49P of the Conduct of Elections Rules, will be given to you and you will be required to sign your name on the list of tendered votes. A tendered ballot paper is the same as the ballot paper displayed on the balloting unit, except that it shall be endorsed on the back, with the words, "Tendered Ballot Paper" either stamped by the Returning or written by the Presiding Officer at the time of issuing it.

13.2. After marking your choice of candidate with the help of Arrow Cross Mark rubber stamp you should hand over the tendered ballot paper to the Presiding Officer, who will keep it in a separate cover. Please note that in such case, you will not cast your vote on the EVM.

14. What are the grievance redressal mechanisms available to you?

14.1 If you have any grievance in regard to electoral roll, Electors Photo Identity Card or any other election related matter you may approach following Officers:-

Chief Electoral Officer----- At the State Level

District Election Officer-----At the District Level

Returning Officer-----At the Constituency Level

Assistant Returning Officer-----At Taluka/Tahsil Level

Electoral Registration Officer----- At the Constituency Level

Presiding Officer-----At Polling Station

Zonal Officer -----For a group of Poling stations

(Detailed addresses etc. to be provided by the CEO)

14.2 During every election, the Commission appoints *Observers* who are senior civil service officers from outside the state. If you have any grievances or problems, you should approach them.