

# So you want to vote absentee in Wisconsin.

## Here's what you need to do.

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1. **Know the steps** in the process and the applicable deadlines for each, being aware that they may change between elections. Meet them with time to spare, to allow time to repeat or correct steps in case something goes wrong. In Wisconsin, you can obtain your ballot by visiting your municipal clerk's office or an early voting location. This will eliminate the risk that you won't receive your ballot or get it submitted in time.
2. **Request a ballot well in advance of the election.** Some voting rights advocates are currently recommending every voter request an absentee ballot even if they intend to vote at the polls, in case something—for example, a pandemic—makes in-person voting impossible. The advantage is that the voter clears the first hurdle—getting an approved Voter ID photo on file—well in advance of the election. However, if you then decide to vote in person at your neighborhood polling place, you will need to protect any materials sent to you from being used by anyone else and remember that voting might take longer at the polling place, because the poll worker must check to see whether your absentee ballot was returned before allowing you to vote in person.
3. **Wait for your witness before you mark your ballot.** You will need to have a witness watch while you mark your ballot and place it in the envelope. So don't mark your ballot until you have someone else in the room with you who is willing to be your witness.
4. **No mistakes on that ballot!** You won't be present when your ballot is cast, so make sure you fill it out perfectly—no overvotes, no smudges, no bleed-through, no tears or wrinkles, no stains or stray marks. Protect your ballot from anything that could make a high-speed scanning machine reject it. Be sure to wait until the ink is dry before you fold the ballot.
5. **No mistakes on the envelope!** Read and follow the instructions for filling out the absentee ballot envelope. Make sure every bit of required information is provided, legible, and accurate. Not just what you wrote; verify that the clerk and your witness also filled in their parts correctly and legibly. Completing the envelope at the municipal clerk's office or early-voting location, where you can have an official review and witness it reduces the risk of later rejection.
6. **Protect and track your ballot.** Do not open your envelope once you have sealed it. Do not give your completed ballot envelope to anyone else, other than an election official at an early voting location. If you mail your ballot, follow its path back to the election office with whatever tracking system your jurisdiction provides. Be prepared to take steps to remedy the problem if the clerk has not received your ballot by close of business on the Friday before Election Day.
7. **Confirm your ballot is accepted (not just received.)** Ask your municipal clerk how and when you can confirm your ballot has been accepted for counting (not just received; *accepted*.) Be prepared to take steps to remedy the problem if the clerk has not accepted your ballot before Election Day.
8. **Observe while officials cast the absentee ballots.** If you want to be most thorough and confident, visit your polling place (or central absentee-ballot processing center) on Election Day to observe election workers casting the absentee ballots. You might even hear your own name and address announced as a worker opens your envelope and puts your ballot into the stack to be cast.