

How Are Votes Counted?

The system of voting in Ireland is called **PR STV** - Proportional Representation Single Transferable Vote. A voter has one vote but many choices on the **ballot paper**.

This is how votes are counted in Ireland for elections that use PR STV.

The **Returning Officer** is responsible for the running of the count centre, to ensure the election count is properly conducted. The Returning Officer also makes final decisions on spoiled votes.

Poll clerks work to count the votes. At first, they separate the spoiled votes from the valid votes. A **quota** is calculated by dividing the number of total valid votes by 1 more than the number of available seats and then adding 1.

For example, in a 3 seater constituency, with 200 valid votes, it is $4 (3+1)$ divided into $200 = 50 + 1$. The quota is 51.

This is the minimum amount of votes a candidate needs to get elected.

Each ballot paper is counted in the first count. If someone reaches the quota they are elected. If they have more votes than they need, that candidate's votes are **transferred**. The count continues over many counts until all the seats are filled. Candidates' votes are either transferred or if they have no chance of reaching the quota over many counts, that candidate is **eliminated** and their votes are distributed.

Ballot papers that have **spoiled votes** are not counted. A spoiled vote means when the ballot paper is not filled in correctly (like ticks or circle instead of numbers), drawings or other messages written on it.

Local, European, General and Presidential Elections all use PRSTV.

Questions:

1. What does a Returning Officer do?
2. What does PR STV stand for?
3. What is a quota?
4. What is a spoiled vote?
5. List the elections that use PR STV?