

How to Convince People to Vote in 2024

Start with the right mindset

No one likes to be forced to do something, so be careful that you're not approaching conversations with would-be voters with a "I'm going to make this person vote this fall" mindset. If you force them, they aren't exercising their own choice. When was the last time you were happy to be forced to do something?

On the other hand, think about a time when a friend or colleague was working on a project and reached out their hand and invited you to join them. I'm guessing that if you were invited to participate, and the choice was yours, you were far more inclined to learn more and to consider participating.

The mindset that will set you up for the most success is, "**How can I invite people to vote?**" Thinking of it as an invitation requires that we make a connection to the person we're inviting. It's one human reaching out to and really connecting.

The opening question

When you want to find out if someone is going to vote, it might seem like asking "Are you going to vote?" is the most obvious question, but it isn't the best question to ask.

Experiments showed that asking "**How important is it to you to be a voter in the upcoming election?**" is the most effective. Why? It's the difference between using a noun or a verb. We want the people we're talking to to identify as a voter (noun) as opposed to having them respond to something they do or don't do (verb).

Are you ready to answer the same question?

If you're asking someone else to share how they feel about voting with you, **be prepared to talk about how YOU feel with them.** Here's a bit of inspiration that you can use as you think about how you might answer the question:

"There are lots of people in this country who are way more impacted by politics than I am: kids born into poverty, people with disabilities or chronic illnesses, people fleeing domestic violence, and so on. I want better things for those people. And how can I say that I support them if I won't pull over for 10 minutes on my way to work and vote in their interest? How can I look them in the eye if I won't give them that much?"

Make a connection

Once you know you're talking to someone who isn't planning on voting, or isn't sure about voting, it is essential to find some common ground before you launch into a discussion about voting. Start by asking, "**If you could change 2 or 3 things about the country (or our community), what would they be?**" Another question to consider is, "What keeps you up at night?" What you're doing with questions like these is to find out what are the top issues for the person you're talking to.

You don't have to answer every issue they have, but pick the one you feel most confident speaking to. You can empathize with them, and you can talk about how you feel about the issue. Be sure to really listen to the person and reflect back what they're saying.

Once you connect on an issue, you can talk about how the candidate you want them to vote for is planning to tackle that issue. Remember, you don't always have to talk about presidential candidates. It might be more effective (depending on the issue) to go more local, like with a state legislator or mayor or municipal judge.

If they dislike the candidates...

One of the top cited reasons why people don't vote is a dislike of the candidates. For people who feel this way, shifting the conversation to issues can be helpful. **Taking the focus away from who is going to hold the job and onto the problems that position is tasked with solving** can help you connect with the potential voter.

Another tactic is, say if their issue is with the candidates running for president, shifting the discussion to who is running for Congress, or a state-level position, and talk about what excites you about their candidacy.

If they don't know the candidates...

Another top reason why people don't vote is that they don't feel informed enough to make a decision. This was particularly true for people who were registered to vote, but rarely cast a ballot. Unlike those of us who are steeped in politics — we read about it, discuss it on social media, talk to friends and family about it — there are many people who just don't live in an environment where politics is ever discussed.

For people like this, it's effective to help them understand how the problems they see in their community are connected to politics. Again, start with a discussion about the problems they're most focused on, and talk about how your candidate is planning on tackling that problem. Be ready to then tell them a couple of bullet points about why your particular candidate is so well suited to address that problem.

Some folks are so overwhelmed by all the news at their fingertips, they choose to ignore it all. This is another reason why having a conversation, person to person, can be so effective. It gets relevant information to the voter without the overwhelm.

How to deal with cynicism

There are multiple reasons why someone might be cynical about voting, but one we hear a lot is that "one vote doesn't matter."

But, you can make the case that the more local the race is, the more their one vote counts. While the presidential election will see over 100 million votes cast, their local race for sheriff or councilmember might only be a few hundred votes.

Another important aspect of voting is that we do it as part of a community. **Recent studies** show that voting behavior is affected more by social reasons than individuals making rational decisions. Help them feel like they are part of a community — essentially, they might vote because they learn that all their neighbors are voting, or another group they identify with (like veterans, or nurses, etc.) are big voters.

Finally, you could consider tapping into “use it or lose it.” State election boards regularly purge voters from their rolls, and being an inactive voter is a great way to get flagged for removal. Most people don’t like hearing that they’ll lose the right to vote (temporarily) and may be more inclined to vote when the time comes.

How to deal with “I don’t care about politics”

If the person you’re talking to has ever shown empathy for something in their life, connect to that to make the case for why they should vote. Some people don’t care about politics because they don’t think that politics affects them personally. One solution is to help people realize that politicians are in the position they are to solve the issues that are relevant to them. (All the more reason why you’ll want to know what issues are on their mind.)

On the other hand, you may be able to get them to consider voting by tapping into their empathy. Ask them to vote because their vote can prevent other people from being harmed. Read **this essay** which does an excellent job of laying out how to have this conversation, and talks about 7 groups that are facing serious consequences if the Trump administration continues.

And once they say “yes” ...

Congratulations — you’ve gotten someone to consider voting in the fall! But intending to vote is only half the battle. **Research** has shown that when people take a moment to figure out exactly what their voting plan will be, the likelihood that they’ll follow through goes up by nearly 10%!

So, the most important thing you can do now is ask them these questions:

How will you vote? (Will they vote early, by mail, or in person on Election Day?)

When will you vote? (Walk them through requesting their ballot or exactly when on Election Day they’ll go to the polls. Will they be coming from home/work? Do they need a ride?)

Do you know where to go? (Do they know where their polling location is, or where they can drop off their mail-in ballot?)