

Evidence-Based Practices for Voter Mobilization

Do

✓ **Focus on voting.**^{1,p7;10,p7}

The goal of voter mobilization is to transform nonvoters into voters, not change minds about an issue or candidate. Mentioning issues or candidates may diminish your influence on voter turnout.

✓ **Use gentle social pressure.**^{7;10,pp144-151}

We are social creatures and want to fit in. Let potential voters know that someone is paying attention to whether or not they participate in the election. Tell them that others like themselves have committed to voting. Remind them of their past voting history (it's public record). Promise to follow-up with them after the election (and do so).

✓ **Help make a plan for voting.**¹¹

Getting potential voters to think through the steps they need to take to go vote makes them more likely to act on their intent to vote. (See illustration next page.)

Logistics of voting: When and where to vote, overcoming difficulties, special plans

Readiness to vote: Voter ID requirements, voter information websites, nonpartisan voters guides

✓ **Connect with the voter.**

Be enthusiastic. Emphasize that you are local (e.g., local organization, neighbor). Acknowledge a commonality between you and your target. Ask questions. Share a voting story of your own. Match messengers in some way to the community of potential voters.^{2,4,11,14}

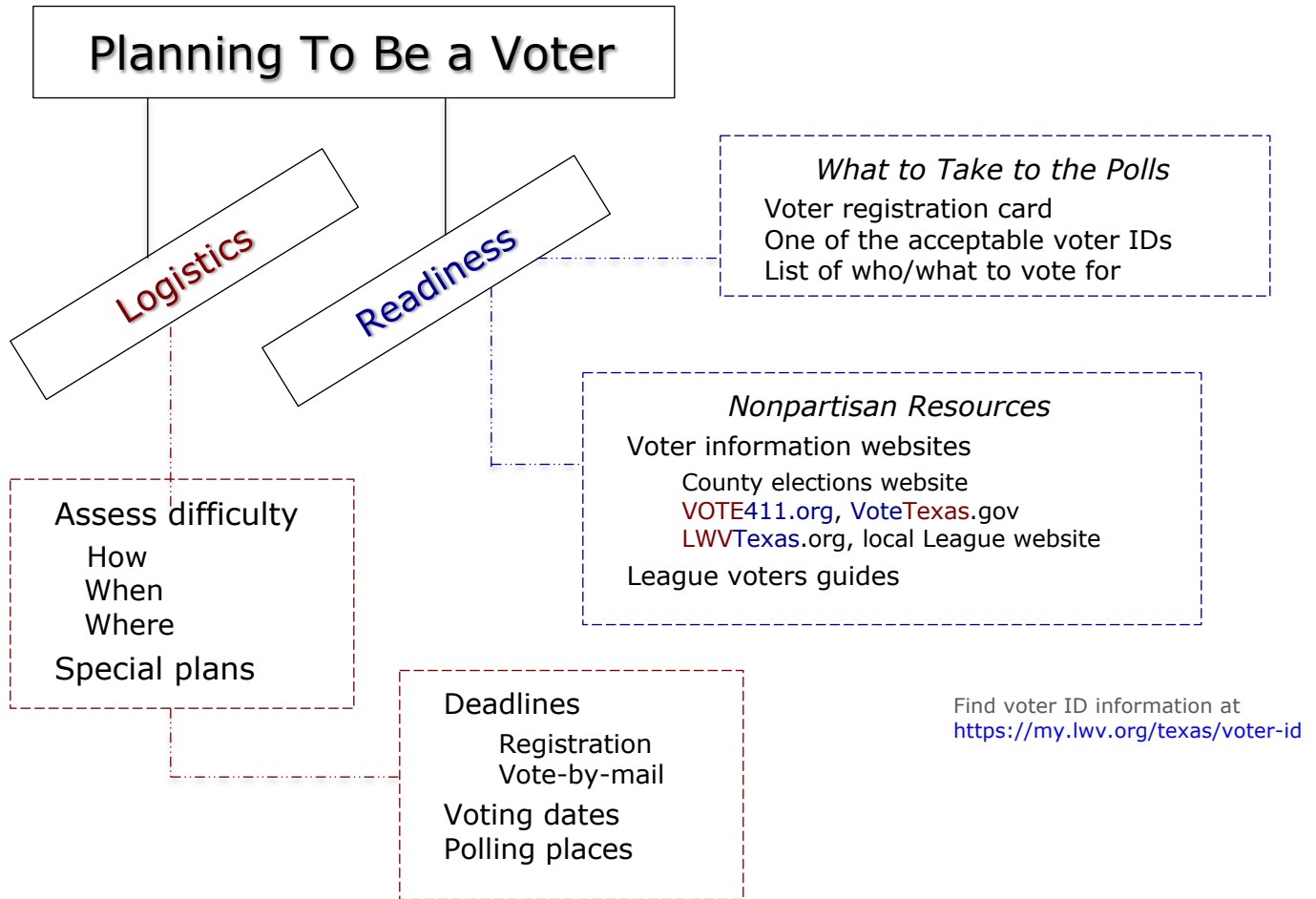
- a. *Timing.* Use different periods of the election season to greatest effect. Focus messaging on voter registration and vote-by-mail applications within 2 weeks before the deadlines. Early voting and Election Day mobilization campaigns are most effective within their prior 2 weeks.^{10,p33;12}
- b. *Volume of contacts.* Aim to make a contact with each targeted voter (through multiple attempts if needed). One successful contact with lots of voters is more effective than multiple contacts to fewer voters. Multiple contacts are most effective with low-propensity voters but require substantial resources.⁶
- c. *Targeting the electorate.* Target those who need a little encouragement to vote: the newly registered and those who vote sporadically, especially young people, women, and ethnic/racial minorities.^{3;8,pp6&13;10,pp47,82,94}

Don't

✗ Advocate for issues or candidates.^{1,8}

✗ Discuss that people aren't voting.¹³

✗ Rely on impersonal emails, display ads, or robo-calls.^{5;10,pp47,82,94,126-127}



Mobilizing voters is not ...

- Merely a matter of reminding them that Election Day is near.
- Just a matter of putting election-related information in front of them.
- Telling people why they should vote for a particular candidate or cause.

To mobilize voters ...

- ✓ Make them feel wanted at the polls.
Mobilizing voters is rather like inviting them to a social occasion. Personal invitations convey the most warmth and work best. Next best are phone calls in which the caller conversed with the respondent, as opposed to reading a canned script.
- ✓ Build on voters' preexisting level of motivation to vote is also important.
Calling back a voter who has previously expressed an intention to vote appears to be an effective mobilization tactic.
- ✓ Let them know that their vote is a matter of public record.

The decision to vote is strongly shaped by one's social environment. One may be able to nudge turnout upward slightly by making voting more convenient, supplying voters with information, and reminding them about an imminent election, but these effects are small in comparison to what happens when voters are placed in a social milieu that urges their participation.

From *Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout* (pp. 156-157), by D. P. Green & A. S. Gerber, 2015. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

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