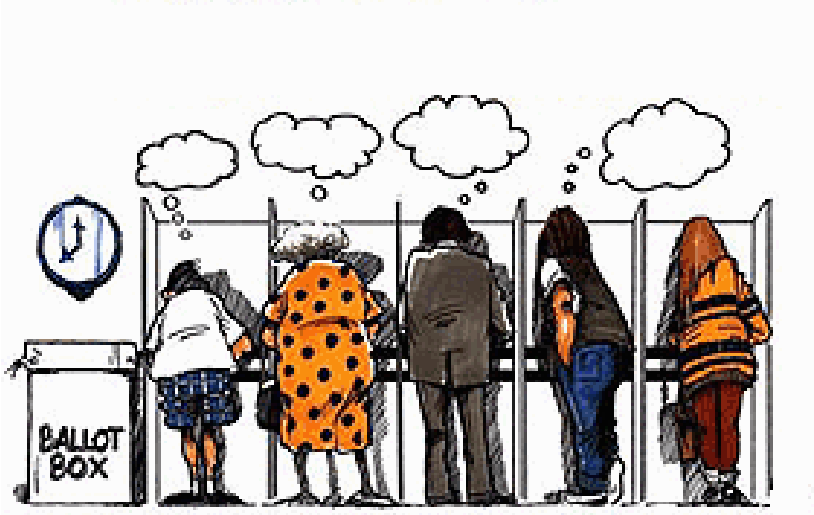
Second Strike

Resource Kits for Student Representative Councils

SRC

Elections



"The beautiful, the messy, the powerful system of democracy - step one!"

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Acknowledgements:

First and foremost, thanks go to the students of Student Representative Councils, Student Unions, Student Parliaments, Junior Student Councils, Student Forums and all the other names student representative groups go by. If it were not for your brilliant creativity and your willingness to share your ideas and stories, this kit would be considerably thinner.

Secondly, thanks are due to all students AND Teacher Advisers involved with SRCs around Australia. Yours is possibly the hardest job in the school and we deeply appreciate that commitment.

Thirdly our thanks go to schools who are willing to try new things. These are schools that make being on SRC a fun thing because they do not construct meaningless barriers. These are the test grounds for SRC ideas, which more timid schools then take on as their own. Special thanks go to Aldercourt Primary School's Student Leadership Council for contributing their Election Campaign Guidelines to this kit.

Last but by no means least, our thanks go to Prudence Meggitt, who has spent hours of time editing these kits, and has taught us how to use a comma properly.

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Form an electoral team to help you conduct elections. This will also be the ideal group to train and pass on a lot of skills, see **Training.** This step is not essential, but highly recommended. A team of people spreads the work out and helps prevent claims of bias.

When forming your election team:

Use mostly, if not only, students.

This team should be experienced with the SRC, though not necessarily current members of the SRC.

The senior students about to exit the school are ideal, as they have no stake in the outcome of the elections.

Form a team of at least 5 people for each election.

Use people with sufficient time to dedicate to this process.

Include students that are senior to the year level whose election they will be conducting. They cannot be drawn from the same year level.

Invite people that have a reputation or an appearance of straight down the line honesty.

Have your election team approved by the existing SRC.

Inform all teachers that if they have any issues about the election, to consult the electoral team!!! This is hugely important, as well-meaning teachers frequently take it upon themselves to moderate the elections in all sorts of ways, but this may contradict your election regulations. For the best intentions, teacher interference more often messes things up and undermines the students' authority and sense of ownership. Keep the responsibility and control within the electoral team and you will better avoid any manipulation of the process or complaints of bias.

Checklist

Use as a checklist for the stages of your election.
Use the space beneath each stage to include your own specific steps in each stage.

Calling ☐

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Advertising ☐

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Nominations ☐

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Campaigning ☐

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The Vote ☐

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The Announcement ☐

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Calling an Election

Sometimes there are specific rules about **when**, **who** and **how** to call an election.

Calling an election simply means announcing that an election *will* be taking place. Sounds easy, but several elements must be considered first.

Firstly, allow sufficient time between *calling* the election and *the vote* to enable people to consider nominating.

Other information that must be announced at the time of the calling:

- The duration of the term (how long the position goes for – usually a year)
- Who the electorate is (who's doing the voting and who the elected people will be responsible for representing – seems obvious but often gets missed)
- The date that nominations close – make it clear that nominations cannot be accepted after this date.
- Any specific rules you have devised on how the election is to be run, for example, candidates require 12 signatures to support their nomination before they can stand, or that "the positions must be shared between males and females evenly".
- When the election will be held
- Who should students see to ask questions about the SRC?
- Where the election will be held. Think about the dynamics of the room before deciding this – will it be conducive to how you run your election? Other teachers will need to be consulted on this one to be compatible with their timetables.
- The role statement of the position they will be running for. This is an optional point, but it is highly advisable to make this role statement available on or around the time of calling the election.
- The method of counting the vote – no one would object if this element wasn't present when calling the election, but it is *supposed* to be there.

WHEN…

Your SRC constitution may have specific guidelines on when you may call your election. (eg: 35 weeks after the previous SRC has taken office, or, 3 weeks before the end of term three, or using some other calendar landmark.) This may also prescribe the length of time allowable between calling the election and the actual vote. This can be a good idea to provide the necessary motivation and haste for calling elections and therefore not allowing people to get sloppy or forgetful about it.

The best measurements here are usually minimum and maximum times, i.e. "A minimum of 2 weeks and a maximum of 4 weeks between calling an election and the official vote is allowable". If you get too specific in the constitution, you may end up having to hold elections in the school holidays! As will be re-iterated in this kit several times, you need to uphold and respect your SRC constitution if you have one. If you are not willing to do so, don't bother holding elections either; just appoint the people you like.

Best Election Times
The best election times are generally:

End of Term Three / 1st week of Term Four for Years **11** & **12**
(As they have exams in Term Four)

3rd or 4th week for Year **10**
(Again avoiding exam time, but not overloading your workload by clashing with other elections)

Anywhere in December for Years **8** & **9**

3rd or 4th week of Term One for Year **7.** (No later than this. It is possible to hold it in week two, but week one is inadvisable as students have not gotten to know each other at that stage and there is much else to do to settle them in to the school still.)

WHO…
Who calls the election? Typically this role has fallen to the SRC Teacher Adviser or one of the principal classes. It has been the experience of many schools that having students in charge of the entire electoral process is seen as more genuine and trustworthy. There is also a worrying perception that teachers will rig elections – this is largely because quite so many of them have.

Students about to graduate from the school may be the best to be in charge of the elections because they are least likely to have vested interests in the outcome of the election and are therefore unbiased. Unfortunately elections often occur around exam time so this is not always entirely practical. Many of the tasks can be deputised to other students, such as publicity or distribution of forms and the jobs should be shared around as much as possible.

It is essential that students more senior to that year do the major tasks of a year level's election. These tasks are the calling; the collection of ballots and administering the vote; the count and the announcement.