

4 Simple Steps to Voting While Abroad

Presented by the American Gap Association - www.americangap.org

Voting is like picking up a piece of trash when no one is looking -- it can seem like it doesn't have an impact if no one sees it, but it feels good to know you're making a difference (and you just saved a Snicker's wrapper from a lonely existence on the hallway floor!). What's more, many people fight tooth and nail to come to the US because of these systems and the rights they represent, so it's vital that every adult chooses to have an impact, and vote their conscience on **November 8th**.

But what happens if you're out of the country? **Don't fret because you can still vote, and it's easier than you might think!** Voting from outside the country involves voting by absentee ballot. This varies from State to State, but it always means getting AN EARLY START! [Check your state's absentee ballot request and absentee ballot return deadlines here.](#)

Voting While Abroad

Voting from outside the USA is not difficult, but it does take some pre-planning. Here's the process for voting from abroad:

Step 1 - Register to Vote

The first step is to know whether or not you are registered to vote. You can [check your voter registration status online](#), easily. If you ARE registered to vote, great! The next thing to do is request your absentee ballot. If you ARE NOT registered to vote then you need to get registered.

31 States and the District of Colombia allow you to register online. The others require you to register in person (this may be a problem if you are already outside the USA and won't return before the election). Each State has a [voter registration deadline](#) that varies. [If you need to register to vote, you can do so online, or in person, or by mail.](#) Check out this in depth [explanation of how to register to vote](#) that covers all of the variables.



Step 2 - Requesting Your Absentee Ballot

Here are two reputable services that will help you get your ballot in time to vote:

[Federal Voter's Assistance Program](#)—This tried and true federal organization specializes in helping Service members and Americans living overseas to vote—they have step by step directions, printable forms and all the details you need.

[Youth Vote](#)—This non-partisan site dedicated to helping people vote has a handy [Student's Studying Abroad](#) page with all the information you need to vote and a printable [Study Abroad and Vote Toolkit](#).

Step 3 - Vote!

Depending on how you've requested your absentee ballot, it will come by post or email. You'll then need to fill it out, and mail it in by the deadline. If your vote does not arrive by the deadline for your State, it may not be counted! Be sure to [double check the absentee voting deadlines for your state](#) and mark them on your calendar!

Step 4 - Return Your Absentee Ballot

Maybe it seems obvious, but this is the most important step. Even if you're registered, even if you get your ballot, even if you fill it out... if you don't mail it back to the right place at the right time, you haven't voted!

And there you have it -- Register, Request, Vote, and Return. If you don't vote, in our books, you don't have the right to complain!