

# The Single Transferable Vote (STV) explained

## The principle

The Single Transferable Vote is a system of proportional representation for electing people or governing bodies.

The key principle is that more votes are included in deciding the outcome of the election than the first past the post, or "X" vote system.

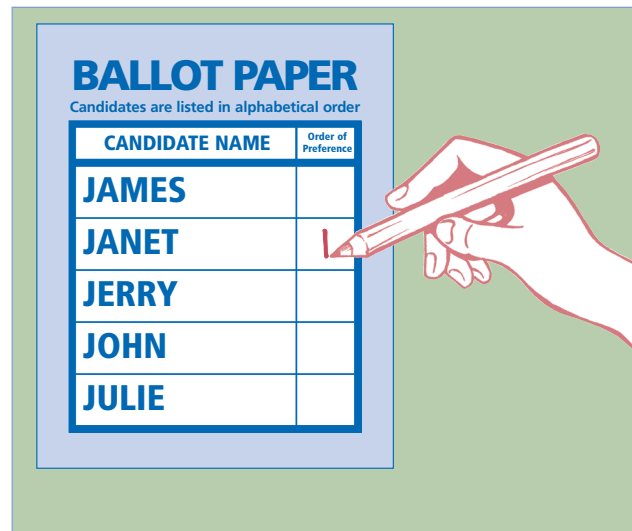
Therefore, more voters can potentially make a contribution to the election and so it is fairer.

## The Aim

Like the X vote system, the aim of an STV election is to elect the correct number of candidates for the vacancies available.

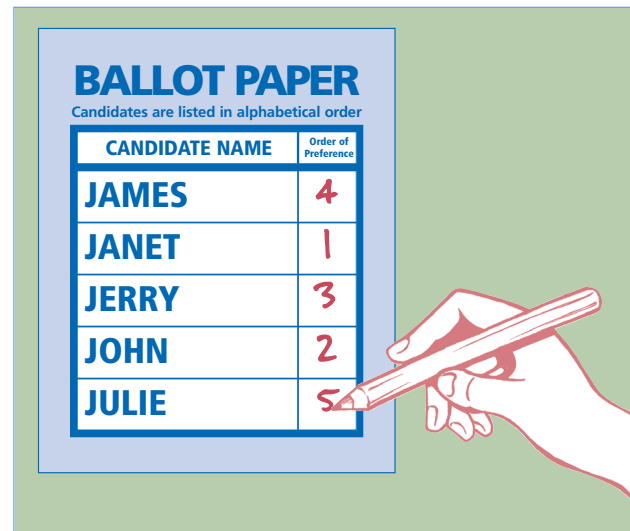
To do this something called a quota is calculated. This is the amount of votes a candidate needs to be assured of election.

## What the voter does

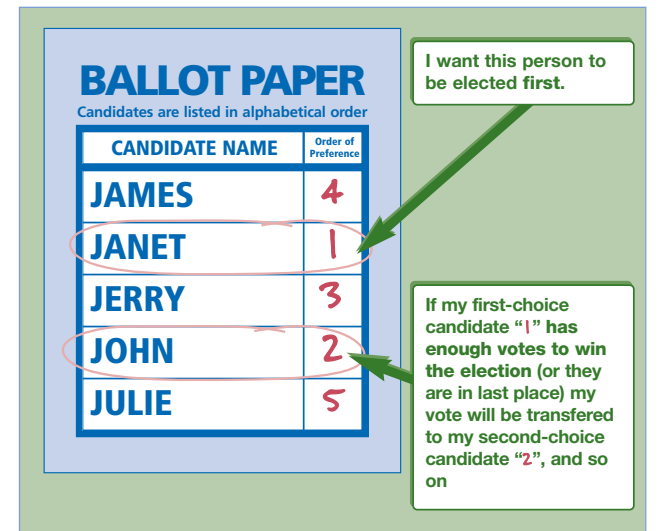


Voters are asked to rank as many candidates as they like in order of preference. The number "1" goes next to the name of your first choice candidate, "2" next to your next favourite, then "3" and so on.

**X's should not be used – they will make your paper invalid.**



If, for example, there are five to elect, you do not need to stop at your fifth preference – they can continue for as many candidates there are in the election. If there are 12 candidates for 5 places, you can go right up to 12.



So, what you are saying is: "I really want my first choice candidate (my **first** preference) to get elected. In the event of my first choice candidate having more votes than they need according to **'the quota'** for election (see explanation for the quota below), I want my vote transferred to my next favourite, my second choice candidate. Similarly, if not enough others also support my first choice candidate and they are in last place, I want my vote transferred to my second choice candidate." And so on.

## How the results are calculated at the end:

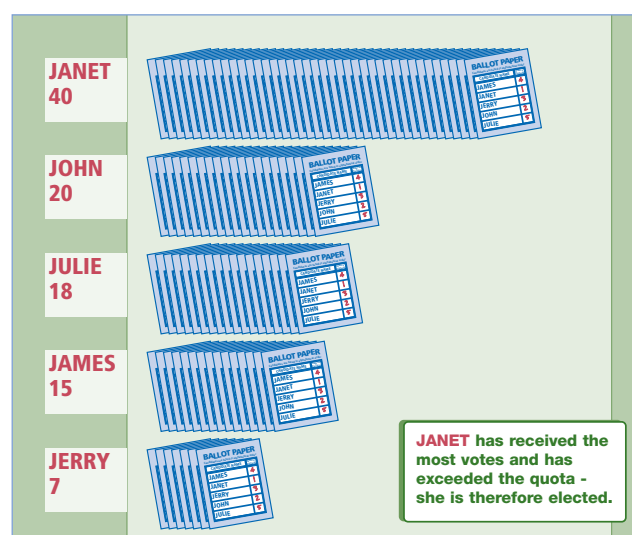
### The Quota

The quota is calculated by dividing the total number of valid votes by one more than the number to be elected: if there are 100 valid votes in an election where 3 are to be elected the quota is  $100/4 = 25$ . This is the total each candidate needs if they are to secure election.

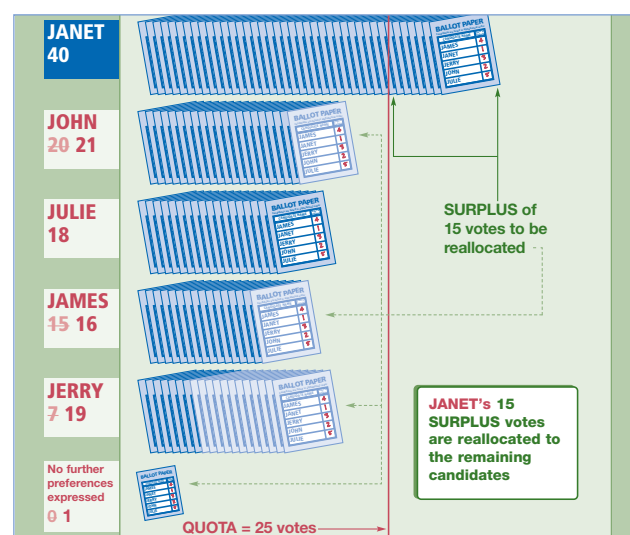
This figure ensures that winning candidates need an amount of votes that ensures they have a strong mandate as more of the electorate's votes are needed.

So, once the required numbers of candidates have been elected, a majority of all the votes cast have been used to elect those candidates.

## How the papers are counted

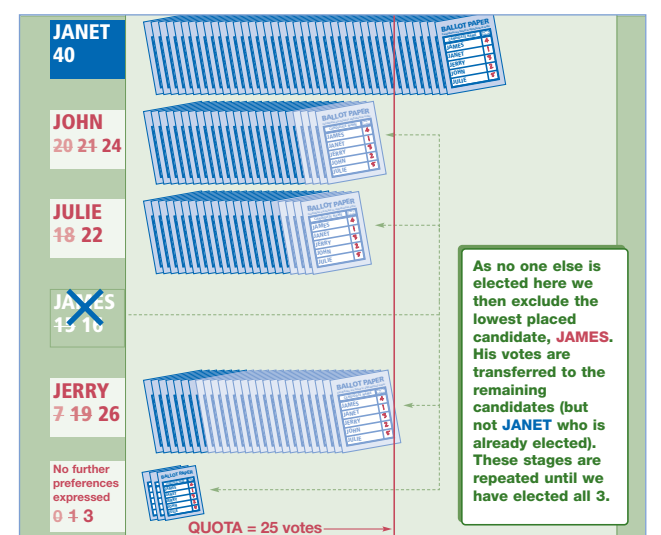


At the first stage all papers are sorted and counted according to first preferences.



After the first stage the decision at every stage thereafter is whether to **exclude** a candidate who cannot be elected due to insufficient votes or take away the **surplus** of a candidate who has been elected.

This decision is based on the gap between the candidate with the lowest number of votes and the next highest candidate. If that gap exceeds the total of any surpluses to be redistributed, then 'an exclusion' is made.



Exclusions only take place when there are no surpluses or when the surplus totals would make no material difference to the order of the candidates if they were transferred.

Surpluses and exclusions continue until the correct number of candidates are elected.