

# Instant Runoff Voting (also called Ranked Choice Voting)

Helpful links:

<https://www.fairvote.org>

<http://www.instantrunoff.com>



Most of our elections are based on the concept that the person with most number of votes wins. This only works well when there are just two candidates in the race. When a third option is introduced, someone can actually win with only 34% of the vote, or a “plurality”.

Advantages of IRV:

- Someone always wins with a majority
- It eliminates the “wasted vote syndrome” or the perceived pressure to vote for the lesser of two evils

IRV is no different than holding a runoff election, but it eliminates the wasted time and expense of getting everyone together again at the polls.

How it works:

It's as simple as ranking your preferences 1,2 and 3. Let's look at the example of Bill, Steve, and Judy as candidates in a race with 17 voters. A sample ballot would look like this:

|       | 1 <sup>st</sup><br>Choice | 2 <sup>nd</sup><br>Choice | 3 <sup>rd</sup><br>Choice |
|-------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bill  |                           | ✓                         |                           |
| Steve | ✓                         |                           |                           |
| Judy  |                           |                           | ✓                         |

Note: Only one check is allowed per column; Votes for 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> choices are not required.

Results of the first counting:

|       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |   |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| Bill  | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |  |  |  |  |  | 7 |
| Steve | X | X | X | X | X | X |   |  |  |  |  |  | 6 |
| Judy  | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |  |  |  |  |  | 4 |

In plurality voting, Bill would have won, *without a majority!* But...

In Instant Runoff Voting, if there is no majority on the first counting, the candidate with the least number of votes (Judy) is eliminated for the second counting, and those people who voted for Judy as their first choice would have their vote shift to their second choice for the second counting:

|       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| Bill  | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |   |  |  |  | 8 |
| Steve | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |  |  |  | 9 |
|       | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |

In the second counting, Steve wins fair and square *with a majority*.

IRV works no matter how many candidates are in the race. Even with 20 options on the ballot, the iterative countings continue until there is a clear winner with a majority.