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# COUCH PARTY

VOLUNTEER & PARTNER GUIDE



2020

# Overview

## Who We Are

Right now, 1 in 5 eligible voters are not registered. In 2016, [4 out of 10 eligible voters did not cast a ballot in the presidential election](#).

That's why the nonpartisan groups [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge](#) and [Vote for Astra](#) are organizing COVID-safe virtual events to help campus communities get registered, ensure voter safety, and celebrate our right to vote during nationwide Couch Parties this fall. The work begins on our campuses and in our personal networks—just imagine what is possible if young people make their voices heard in every election. In order to work towards this goal, we need your help.

## Hosting a Campus Couch Party

With less than 70 days until November, we have big things planned. We're calling on our campus communities to join us by committing to host COVID-safe Couch Parties this fall.

### What is a Couch Party?

A Couch Party is an opportunity for volunteers across the nation to come together (virtually or COVID-safe in-person) and help their friends and peers vote. For volunteers, the Couch Party offers a concrete, communal, and fun way to work on voter engagement. Using [Outvote](#), they'll send pre-written messages that offer students personalized guidance as they register and make plans to vote.

### Why make them campus-specific?

Couch Parties are designed to foster a sense of community and camaraderie among volunteers. Centering a Couch Party on campus amplifies those goals. Students will contact friends, not strangers, adding a sense of purpose and familiarity to the mission. These Couch Parties will feature faces students recognize—like faculty and staff, members of student government, or even campus bands and comedy groups!

### What if we don't have the capacity to set up our own Couch Party?

If you don't have the capacity to set up your own, you can direct students to participate in the Couch Parties All IN and VFA are hosting. This fall, we're planning two:



**9/22**

Voter Registration Couch Party

Coinciding with NVRD, the goal of this Couch Party is to reach and register as many voters as possible before registration deadlines.



**TBD**

Early Voting Couch Party

We'll remind voters to request absentee ballots and make plans to vote in-person, early or on election day. Date to be shared in late September.

## Ready to get planning?

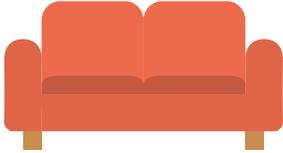
In this toolkit, we will walk you through hosting your own Couch Party event. We want to ensure that you have a strong foundation for your organizing work and that you feel supported in this process.

If you have any questions at all, please email [team@voteforastra.org](mailto:team@voteforastra.org).

# Overview

## Five Steps to (Couch) Party

Your path to planning and executing your own campus-specific Couch Party follows these 5 steps.



### 1. Learn

Learn how to promote and host an OutVote-powered virtual text banking party during our training webinars (9/3, 9/15, or 10/7).



### 2. Plan

Plan how you'll host the Couch Party (on Zoom/Google Meet/IG Live or in-person & COVID-safe), and who you'll feature as special guests.



### 3. Promote

Promote your couch party as widely as possible using custom-branded materials from VFA and track RSVPs so that you can follow up with volunteers as the event approaches.



### 4. Prepare

Prepare an agenda for your party, an explainer of OutVote, and confirm with all RSVPs. [We have resources for you to use as needed, like social media assets, Outvote explainer videos, and sample slides for your Party.](#)



### 5. Host!

Make it fun, and host as many as possible! If you don't have the capacity to do so, join ALL IN and VFA's Couch Parties on 9/22 and TBD date in mid-October.

The ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and Vote for Astra want you to host safe events for your community—that's why we strongly recommend that you follow local health guidelines, implement social distancing, wear masks, and bring sanitizer for in-person events. Check out the [National Voter Registration Day Guide to COVID-proofing your in-person Voter Registration event](#) for more information.

# Preparation

## Goals

Your event should have the following goals in mind:

- Build a network of campus members committed to getting folks registered and prepared to vote.
- Share why voting is important to you, your community, your campus, and the folks at your event.
- Set a goal for how many people you will reach during each Couch Party.
- Foster a sense of community during the Couch Parties.

## Couch Party Planning Timeline

3-4 weeks before your event	Identify potential dates and locations (if in-person) for your event. Identify potential event partners (student organizations, student government, athletics, local entertainment, other voting groups, etc.)
2-3 weeks before your event	Lock your date, time, and event location. Create a Zoom or Google Meet link. Then, <a href="#">log your event in our Couch Party tracker</a> , and <a href="#">join our Slack channel</a> so we can help you troubleshoot.
1-2 weeks before your event	Recruit, recruit, recruit! Make sure you invite partners, friends, classmates, professors, and others to your event so that people can register to attend.
1-7 days before your event	Prepare all materials, including agenda and volunteer resources. Make sure to remind your volunteers before the Couch Party!

## Logistics

Great organizers not only brainstorm creative and exciting ideas, but also invest a lot of time planning the different logistical aspects of their events. We will walk you through a few steps to help manage your event so you can achieve the above goals.

### Virtual or COVID-safe in-person?

Determine whether you'll host a virtual or COVID-safe in-person event. This is entirely up to you, and we encourage you to follow all local health guidelines and check out [this guide for safe, in-person events](#). If virtual, create a video call link for the Couch Party.

### Will you partner with anyone?

Make a list of potential campus groups to partner with. Think about student organizations, student government, athletics, theater groups, and on- and off-campus entertainers. Some virtual Couch Parties feature local DJs, and short speeches from community members.

### When will you host your event?

Will you hold your Couch Parties on the same days as ALL IN and VFA (9/22 + October TBD), or choose your own? Be sure to check calendars so your proposed date doesn't interfere with holidays, important local events on campus, or midterm exams. Keep in mind you can host as many Couch Parties as you want!

### Who can help you as you plan?

Organizers work best when they bring folks in. Think about people who can help you organize your event. For example, someone else may have a network of friends they have worked with that can help with recruitment.

# Preparation

## Recruitment

Recruitment is one of your most important roles as a host. No event—no matter how well planned—can truly be successful without people there to participate.

**The first step is positioning.** Think through how you'll advertise the Couch Party. Will you use email listservs, social media posts, messages to specific groups on campus (clubs/sports teams/affinity groups)? If you can attract volunteers from every corner of campus, you can reach every corner of campus during the Couch Parties.

→ **Resources from ALL IN + VFA:** [Here's a media kit you can use to advertise the Couch Party](#) with assets for social media and email. Customize them yourself or reach out to [team@voteforastra.org](mailto:team@voteforastra.org) for help.

**The second step is registration,** or RSVPing. When asking for someone to join your Couch Party, your event info should include the specific location (in-person or virtual location), time, and date of your event.

→ **Resource from ALL IN + VFA:** [Here's a sample form you can adapt that will log attendee responses.](#)

**The third step is a reminder.** Every event will have a number of people that are unable to make it (...life happens), but you can actively reduce that number by doing the following:

- After the initial RSVP, send out two confirmation emails with details: one a week before the event, and one a day before.
- Have your volunteers post on social media leading up to the event. Do an extra push the day before and the day of the event.

# Execution

## The Day of the Event

Be prepared before your first guest arrives!

- Set up/log-in early and be ready to greet folks as they arrive
- Track who is attending—it'll help you follow up after your event
- Double check your agenda to make sure you are comfortable with it

## Think Through Your Agenda

Whether it's your first time hosting, or you're a pro, here are a few tips and tricks to help you be successful.

1. Keep track of time.
2. Stick to the agenda—people's time and attention is limited, it's important to move efficiently through the event. You can use our sample slides, too.
3. Leave questions until the end—if you can't answer a question, direct people to reach out to [team@voteforastra.org](mailto:team@voteforastra.org)
4. HAVE FUN!

# Execution

## Sample Agenda

This is a suggestion—feel free to update or modify as needed.

### Your Couch Party (2 hours total)

#### Arrive and Mingle (10 minutes)

Even if your event is virtual, make this time feel fun and thoughtful!

#### Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)

Introduce yourself and thank everyone for coming!

#### Share Your Story (5 minutes)

Take a couple minutes to share your own story and why you feel called to do voter registration in your community. Sharing stories is a great way to build relationships with guests in a new context. It's a good time to talk about the urgency of the moment in voter participation and turnout.

#### Special Guests (5 minutes per guest)

Feature any campus "celebrities" here! They can talk about why voting is important to them, or the importance of maintaining community on campus. Their goal is to energize the volunteers.

#### Set a Goal (5 minutes)

Now's the time to establish why everyone is here. Talk about your goals for the Couch Party - the number of students you want to reach, and why you're doing voter outreach this way.

#### Train Your Participants on [Outvote](#) (15 minutes)

As an event organizer, you'll want to make sure that your participants feel prepared and ready to contact as many voters as possible. Check out our virtual and in-person event agendas and training suggestions in this guide.

#### Contact (1 hour)

Here's why you are hosting your event: the bulk of your time should be devoted to direct action using Outvote! Play music in the background, invite more guests to come speak, and give shoutouts to volunteers who are doing great work!

#### Next Steps and Close (5 minutes)

Remind everyone that you're doing a second Couch Party on a selected date. Take a moment to see if folks have questions or thoughts going forward. And most importantly, thank everyone for participating!

# Execution

## Best Practices

Every state has different rules regarding voter registration and voter registration drives. Some states, for example, limit to what extent a person can directly assist another person with the registration process. That's why it is important to follow your Secretary of State guidelines and direct people toward the [link to register themselves online](#). Here are some best practices to keep in mind:

### Stay on message.

You're not telling people who to vote for, which political party to support, or suggesting that they vote for or against particular policy issues—you're helping people gain access to participate in our democracy. It's a positive way to celebrate civic engagement and build long-lasting relationships within your community.

Whether you're talking to a friend or family member, or a member of your community, one of the easiest ways to combat voter suppression is to encourage everyone in your network to [check their registration and request a ballot to vote by mail](#) far in advance of November.

### Ask everyone to register.

Be sure to include everyone when recruiting participants to register themselves to vote. Don't be afraid to have a respectful and engaging conversation.

### Questions about your state's rules?

If you have questions about the rules in your state, there are several sites with detailed information in the resources section of this toolkit to help you navigate your state's specific laws.

## Additional Voter Registration Resources

- [ALL IN to Vote Voting Hub](#): One-stop-shop to check your registration, register to vote, request a mail-in ballot in your state, and look up who is on your ballot.
- [Voter Registration Action Guide](#): A guide that includes voter registration resources, instructions to direct voters to register themselves, When We All Vote flyers, and a conversation guide to train your participants on.
- [When We All Vote Know Your Voting Rights page](#): This page refers to great resources and information about voter protection and points to voter ID resources, an election protection hotline, and resources for returning citizens.
- [COVID-proofing your in person voter registration events](#): This guide was designed for national voter registration day to support event planning during this time
- [Fair Elections Center](#): Guides that summarize important registration and voting information for each state, as well as voter registration drive guidelines for each state.
- [Nonprofit Vote](#): Find your state and local election clerk offices and contact information

## Questions?

If you have any questions, you can always reach out to us at [team@voteforastra.org](mailto:team@voteforastra.org).