



Checklist for Mail Ballot Instructions*
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By law and/or rule, mail ballot instructions* must include:

- 1) the mechanical process which must be followed in order to properly cast the ballot, and the acceptable marking instruments. Sample language: "To Vote – mark the designated voting area as instructed on the ballot using a black or blue pen. Do not use a marker or felt tip pen or red ink pen."
- 2) the location of the places of deposit **and the days and times** when ballots may be returned to the places of deposit by mail or in person (if the voter chooses not to mail it), if the information is available; or

if the information on location and hours of places of deposit is not available, a section that will allow the information to be added before the instructions are mailed to electors.

Do **not** simply indicate that ballots can be dropped off from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. You need to indicate the hours both before election day (normally 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) **and** election day hours – such as "Ballots can be dropped off from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday until election day, and from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Election Day."
- 3) list the location where the voter may obtain a replacement ballot if the ballot is destroyed, spoiled, lost or not received. Include, at least, the wording "destroyed, spoiled, not received, or lost."
- 4) information on the estimated amount of postage required to return the ballot, including that the elector must provide postage, if such is the case.
- 5) Advice to the voter that:
 - a) election is to be by mail ballot only
 - b) regular polling places will not open
 - c) in order for the ballot to be counted, it must be received by no later than 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election.
- 6) due to a legislative change, all references on the instructions to "Return Envelope" should be changed to "Signature Envelope."

*Feel free to use the updated sample instructions at:
http://sos.mt.gov/Elections/Officials/Forms/Mail_Ballot_Forms/Mail_Ballot_Written_Plan,_Timetable_and_Sample_Instructions.doc.