

APPROVAL VOTING

In approval voting, each voter votes for as many candidates as he or she wants. Each vote is simply a yes vote for that candidate. It means the voter approves of that candidate. The candidate with the most votes wins the election. For example, suppose there are three candidates (A, B, and C) in an election and nine voters who cast their approval ballots as summarized in the table below:

Candidates	Ann	Bob	Chet	Dave	Ellen	Fred	Gayle	Helen	Ian	Total
A	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	7
B		Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes		5
C	Yes		Yes				Yes		Yes	4

With 7 approval votes, candidate A wins the election. Note that a voter can cast anything from 0 votes (as Dave did) to 3 votes (as Chet did) in this election. Note that two of the candidates (A and B) were approved by over half the voters. Through Chet's ballot and Dave's ballot have the same effect on who wins, they have a different effect on a statement like "Over half the voters approve of A."

Approval voting was designed for elections which typically have three or more candidates. For elections between only two candidates, it is essentially equivalent to plurality voting (where each voter has only one vote and the candidate with the most votes wins). In a two candidate election, a voter who wants his or her vote to make a difference should vote for exactly one of the two candidates.

Though approval voting is a little more complicated than plurality voting, it has several comparative advantages:

- Voters are more likely to vote their true convictions rather than to vote strategically.
- The winning candidate is more likely to have received the approval of a majority of the voters.
- The winning candidate is more likely to be the one who would win in a head-to-head contest with each of the other candidates.
- Voters are more likely to feel they have had an impact on the outcome.

Moreover, in elections where several of the top vote getters will be declared winners, approval voting is likely to result in several of the top candidates being approved by a majority of the voters.

Approval voting also has several advantages over each of the several types of voting methods collectively called preferential voting (because each voter ranks the candidates in order of preference and then one of several algorithms is used to determine the winner).

- It is easier to understand and implement than any preferential system.
- The process is unaffected by the number of candidates. If new candidates join the race, the voter does not have to rethink all the rankings.
- Voters find it easier to give a "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" to each of several candidates than to rank them all precisely.