

FIRST PAST THE POST AND THE ALTERNATIVE VOTE

In elections to the House of Commons, a single individual is elected from a Parliamentary constituency to serve as the Member of Parliament.

This can be done either by the current voting system known as “First Past The Post” (FPTP), or by the Alternative Vote (AV) system. This note describes the operation of the two systems.

First Past The Post

In elections held under FPTP, each voter makes a mark next to one candidate on the ballot paper. First Past The Post is a “plurality” voting system: the candidate who wins the most votes in each constituency is elected.

The “Alternative Vote”

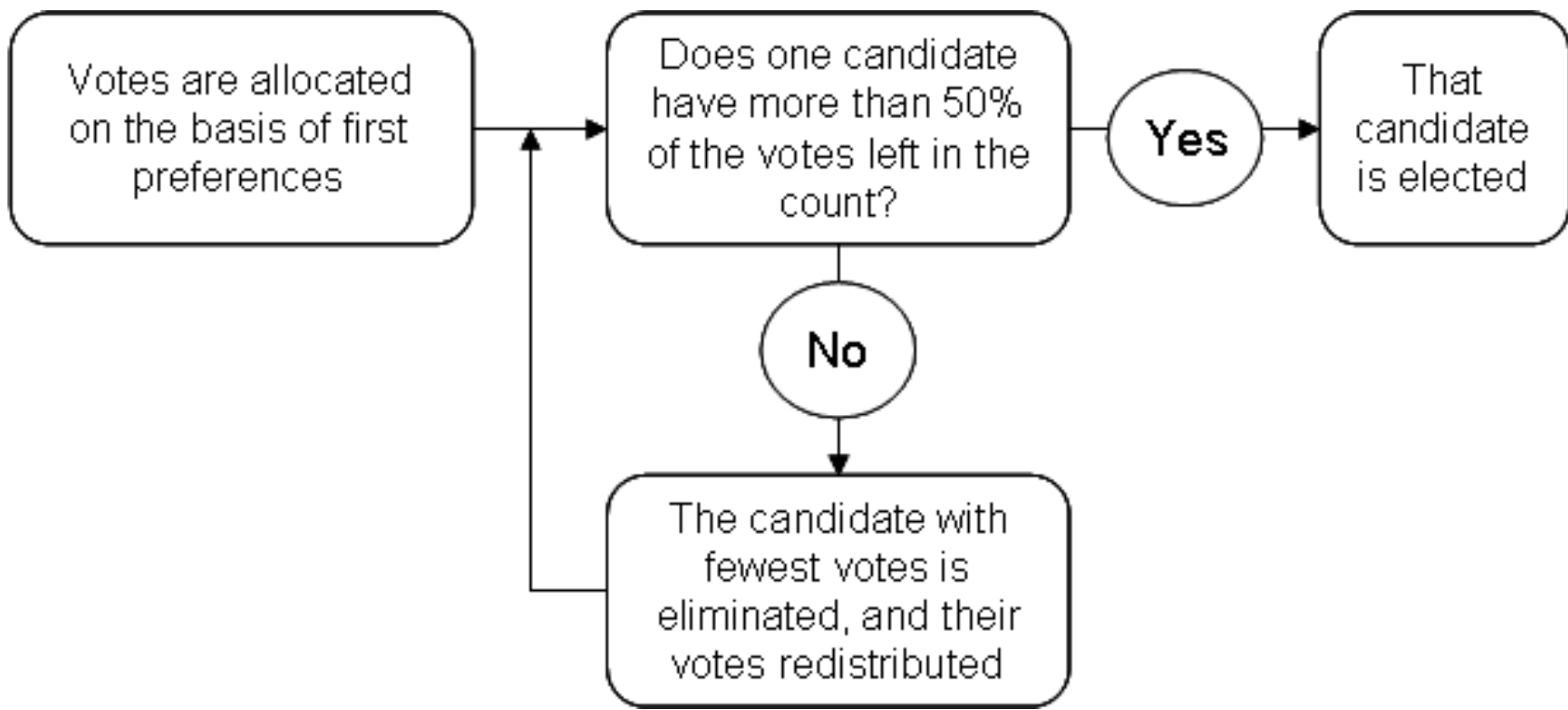
In elections held under the Alternative Vote, each voter may rank candidates on the ballot paper in order of preference (1, 2, 3 etc.). For this reason, the Alternative Vote is known as a “preferential” voting system. After marking their first preference, voters may then choose to express further preferences for as many, or as few, candidates as they wish.

The count begins by allocating votes in line with first preferences. If a candidate has an “absolute majority” – more than 50% – of the votes after this allocation they are elected.

If no candidate has an absolute majority, then the candidate in last place is eliminated and their votes are reallocated according to the next highest preference expressed on each ballot paper; if a voter has not marked a preference for any candidate that remains in the contest, then the ballot paper is set aside from the count.

This process continues until a candidate has an absolute majority of the votes left in the count, and is elected.

Alternative Vote



Example of Ballot Papers under both systems

First Past the Post ballot paper

BALLOT PAPER FOR PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTION UNDER THE FIRST PAST THE
POST SYSTEM

VOTE FOR ONE CANDIDATE ONLY

Candidate A The A Party	[Emblem]	X
Candidate B The B Party	[Emblem]	
Candidate C The C Party	[Emblem]	
Candidate D The D Party Candidate	[Emblem]	
Candidate E Independent		
Candidate F The F Party	[Emblem]	
Candidate G The F Party	[Emblem]	
Candidate H Independent		
Candidate I The I Party Candidate	[Emblem]	

Alternative Vote ballot paper

BALLOT PAPER FOR PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTION UNDER THE ALTERNATIVE VOTE
SYSTEM

Put the number 1 next to the name of the candidate who is your first choice (or your only choice, if you want to vote for only one candidate).

You can also put the number 2 next to your second choice, 3 next to your third choice, and so on.

You can mark as few or as many choices (up to the number of candidates) as you wish.

Do not use the same number more than once.

Candidate A The A Party	[Emblem]	1
Candidate B The B Party	[Emblem]	
Candidate C The C Party	[Emblem]	3
Candidate D The D Party Candidate	[Emblem]	2
Candidate E Independent		4
Candidate F The F Party	[Emblem]	
Candidate G The F Party	[Emblem]	
Candidate H Independent		5
Candidate I The I Party Candidate	[Emblem]	