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**COOL, CALM AND COUNTING**

*A Guide to Keeping Calm   
at the Polls*

**About This Guide**

This pocket-sized guide includes helpful tips and

reminders for de-escalating tense situations that may arise at voting locations.

When faced with a situation that may require the use of de-escalation techniques, election workers should above all be genuine in their attempts to reduce tension – understanding that situations related to voting are in many cases already emotionally charged. They should also recognize that de-escalation techniques will not make every situation better and have a plan for escalating the response to election officials or other authority figures.

Election workers should follow all relevant guidance provided to them by their jurisdictions for situations in which de-escalation is necessary. Likewise, in cases where one fears for his, her or their personal safety, law enforcement should be contacted using procedures established by the jurisdiction.

**Five Purposeful Actions**

**REMAIN CALM**

A purposeful demonstration of calmness & composure.

**CHANGE THE SETTING**

If possible, remove people from the area. This could involve parties to the conflict and onlookers.



**RESPECT PERSONAL SPACE**

Maintain a safe distance and avoid touching the other person.

**LISTEN**

Give your full attention, nod, ask questions, and avoid changing the subject or interrupting.

**EMPATHIZE**

Present genuine concern and a willingness to understand without judging.

**Verbal Communication**

Remain respectful and courteous. Address the individual with civility and use phrases such as “please” and “thank you.”

TONE + VOLUME + RATE OF SPEECH  
+ INFLECTION

=

**VERBAL DE-ESCALATION**

**TONE**

Speak calmly to demonstrate empathy.

**VOLUME**

Monitor your volume and avoid raising your voice.

**RATE OF SPEECH**

Speak slowly – though not too slowly – because it is soothing.

**INFLECTION**

Be aware of emphasizing words or syllables as that can negatively affect the situation.

**What to Say Instead**

**INSTEAD OF:**

“Calm down.”

“I can’t help you.”

“I know how you feel.”

“Come with me.”

**TRY:**

“I can see that you are upset…”

“I want to help, what can I do?”

“I understand that you feel...”

“May I speak with you?”

**Rules of Body Language**

  
Be aware of your non-verbal communications. Ensure your tone, facial expressions, body language, and gestures relay calm and empathy.

**GOOD BODY LANGUAGE**

**#1** Keep a relaxed and alert stance off to the side of the person.

**#2** Keep your hands down, open, and visible at all times.

**#3** Use slow, deliberate movements.

**#4** Maintain a neutral and attentive facial expression.

**Rules of Body Language (cont.)**



**BAD BODY LANGUAGE**

**#1** Standing rigidly directly in front of the person.

**#2** Pointing your finger.

**#3** Excessive gesturing or pacing.

**#4** Faking a smile.

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*More resources are available at electionsgroup.com*