

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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