



COOL, CALM AND COUNTING

*A Guide To Keeping Calm
at the Polls*

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About This Guide

This pocket-size guide includes tips to help de-escalate tense situations 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 can be emotionally charged. They should also recognize that de-escalation techniques will not make every situation better, so it is important to 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 jurisdiction when de-escalation is necessary. Likewise, in situations where personal safety is a concern, election workers should contact law enforcement using the jurisdiction's established procedures.

Rules of Body Language

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



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

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 Standing off to the side of the person and remaining relaxed and alert
- 2 Keeping your hands down, open and visible at all times
- 3 Using slow, deliberate movements
- 4 Maintaining a neutral and attentive facial expression

Five Purposeful Actions



REMAIN CALM

Purposefully demonstrate calm and composure.



CHANGE THE SETTING

If possible, remove people from the area. This may 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 and ask questions, and avoid changing the subject or interrupting.



EMPATHIZE

Present genuine concern and a willingness to understand without judging.

Verbal Communication

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

TONE + RATE OF SPEECH
+ VOLUME + INFLECTION

VERBAL DE-ESCALATION

TONE

Speak calmly to demonstrate empathy.

RATE OF SPEECH

Speak slowly – though not too slowly – because slower speech can be soothing.

VOLUME

Avoid raising your voice and monitor your volume.

INFLECTION

Be aware of emphasizing words or syllables 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?”