

GUIDE TO VOTING

GROUP TEXT MESSAGING FROM CREATIVE MESSAGING SOLUTIONS LLC

WELCOME!

This document contains everything you need to know about conducting polls using the group texting services of your account at ChurchTextingManager.com or TextingManager.com.

Text messaging provides a quick and easy way to do polling of your members. Results can be viewed in real time as the votes come in. Once you've defined a voting campaign (see below) you simply ask a question of your members and tell them to text their selection to your group. You can view a graphical or tabular list of results in real time as the text messages are sent to your group.

TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

When you ask a question of your group and collect their answers, we call that a **voting campaign** or sometime just a **vote** or a **poll**. We'll also refer to the replies you get during your voting campaign as **votes** but you should be able to tell from the context which we mean.

A voting campaign has three phases and each of these is discussed in detail below:

1. *Creation of a new voting campaign.* In this phase you tell us when the vote will take place, what the question is that you're asking of your members, and what kind of answers you expect to receive.
2. *Collection of votes.* In this phase your members are submitting their votes. This may overlap with viewing the results (the next phase) in the event that you're watching the results as they come in.
3. *Viewing the results.* You might be viewing results while people are voting. This is often done in front of a group of people with the results being projected so everyone can see. Or this could be done after the fact, once all the votes are submitted

Voting campaigns are conducted using the groups in your account. That is, there's no need (unless you want to) to create a new group just for voting, or to dedicate one of your groups to voting.

Because we allow you to use your existing groups for voting, voting campaigns have to have **start times** and **end times**. Otherwise, if you conducted one vote on the first of the month and another vote on the fifteenth, there'd be no way to know which votes apply to which question.

A voting campaign has a **question**, like "What color should we paint the lobby?" or "How much are you willing to commit to our building project next year?" It also has different **answer types** like **multiple choice**, **numeric**, **yes/no**, or **true/false**. The first question suggests a multiple-choice answer with choices like B for "blue", Y for

“yellow”, and G for “green”. The second question is clearly a numeric answer that is going to generate response like “150”, “2000”, and “5876”.

CREATING A VOTING CAMPAIGN

To launch a vote in your group log into your account at our site and select "Add/List/Edit Voting Campaigns" from the menu on the left (under "Voting"). Select the desired group.

Select "Add New Campaign". Enter the question that you're putting to your members (e.g. "What color should we paint the lobby?" or " How much are you willing to commit to our building project next year?"). Select the type of vote based on what kind of response you want to receive.

Vote types:

- Numeric - Responses will be numbers. Results will be reported as the number of votes for each number along with the minimum, maximum, and average of all the votes.
- Multiple Choice - Responses will be letters from A-Z, corresponding to answers that you will define (e.g. R for Red, Y for Yellow, B for Blue). Results will be shown as the number of votes for each letter.
- True/False and Yes/No - Response will be T or F for True/False, or Y or N for Yes/No votes. Results will be shown as the number of votes for each.

Enter the starting and ending times for the vote. Starting and ending dates don't have to be exact. They only serve to prevent overlapping votes. That is, our system needs to know which of potentially several votes being conducted in one group a response is intended for. If you're having a meeting from 7PM to 8PM in which you'll be conducting a vote, there's no need to start and end the voting exactly at 7 and 8 (unless you want to). You can have voting start immediately and end at midnight if you want.

If you select "multiple choice" for the vote type, after you save the new campaign you'll be shown a screen where you can define your expected answers. Select a letter and enter the response corresponding to that letter, then select "Add Choice". Note that you don't have to use the letters in order (i.e. A, B, C, D) but instead you can use letters that make sense for your choices (for example, R, Y, and B for “Red”, “Yellow”, and “Blue” as described above).

VOTING DISRUPTS SOME NORMAL GROUP OPERATIONS

It is important to note that voting disrupts some of the normal operations of your group. In particular, we normally accept a message that starts with your group name as a request to join your group. Many people have automatic “signatures” that get applied to all their outgoing text messages. If we get **ABCVOTE Nate Smith, President** on any normal day, we would ignore Nate's fancy signature and assume he wants to join your group. But if you're conducting a vote, we will interpret this as a “NO” (for Yes/No votes) or “N” (for a multiple choice vote).

If Nate really wants to join ABCVOTE group during a voting campaign, he merely needs to use the full JOIN command, as in: **JOIN ABCVOTE Nate Smith, President**. This will override the voting and do the normal double opt-in process to make Nate a member of the group.

To circumvent all these problems, you can dedicate a group to voting and don't allow people to join it. Make it an announcement-only group that sends an announcement that says "This group is used for voting and no votes are active today." Nobody will be able to join and there will be no confusion. On the other hand, this will cost you a few message credits and isn't absolutely essential. Under normal circumstances you can use any group you'd like for voting and it won't be a problem.

SETTING UP CAMPAIGNS IN ADVANCE

Because of the start/end times included in each campaign, you can set up your voting campaigns in advance of a series of meetings to save you time during the meeting. For example, if you were going to conduct a vote during every class at your school and want to keep the results separate, you could create a campaign corresponding to each class time. You could do this the day before so that you don't have to spend any class time setting it up.

COLLECTING VOTES

Once you enter the information about your campaign, you have to tell your members to vote. How you do that is up to you – we don't provide any automatic notification. You can, of course, text the question and the choices to your members. It might take a couple messages to state the question and all the choices, plus information on how to vote. So normally you'll do this through another channel. You might announce it in person at a meeting, or through a newsletter, or an email, or by a phone call. Whatever works for you is fine.

In general, the way a person votes is to text the group name followed by their choice. Assuming a vote is being conducted in a group called MYGROUP, here's how you would vote:

- Multiple-choice vote:

MYGROUP C

Upper and lower case characters are treated the same. So a vote for "B" is the same as a vote for "b".

- Numeric vote:

MYGROUP 100

Note that numeric votes must be whole numbers (no decimal points). No dollar signs or any other descriptive text or symbols are allowed. Numbers can be negative, which is indicated by a minus sign in front of the number, as in:

MYGROUP -100

- True/False vote:

MYGROUP T

or

MYGROUP F

Note that any word starting with "T" or "F" is interpreted as a vote, and upper/lower case is ignored. So "T", "t", "TRUE", "tRuE", and "Tom" are all interpreted as a vote for "True", and "F", "f", "FALSE", "FaLSe", and "Feelin' Groovy" are all interpreted as a vote for "False".

- Yes/No vote:

MYGROUP Y

or

MYGROUP N

Comments are similar to True/False votes. Any word starting with "Y" or "y" is a "Yes" vote; any word starting with "N" or "n" is a "No" vote. Additional words are ignored.

CHANGING YOUR VOTE

When you display the results of your vote, you'll choose whether you want to see only one vote per person or if you want *all* votes to count. For most polling situations, you'll choose to view one vote per person. In that case if a person votes more than once, you'll see only the *most recent* vote that person sent.

So to change your vote when each person counts only once, simply vote again. Your last vote is the one that counts.

If all votes are being included in the results, there's no way of changing your vote short of voting more times for the choice you want than you did for the choice you didn't want.

VIEWING RESULTS

To view results, log into your account at our site. Select "Add/List/Edit Voting Campaigns" from the menu on the left. Choose your group.

Select the "View Results" button next to the vote you're interested in. You'll see the results both as a bar or pie chart and in table form. There are a few options you can choose:

- Refresh rate - To view results in real time, select a refresh rate like 5 or 10 seconds, then select "Update Display". This will cause the screen to be updated every 5 or 10 seconds with new results.
- Show one vote per person - You may want to limit each person to only one vote to prevent someone from skewing the results by sending several responses. Check this box then "Update Display" to see the results using only the most recent vote from each person.
- Open chart in new window - This displays the chart in a larger size that is suitable for projection in front of your group. This page will use the refresh rate and one-vote-per-person settings you've previously selected.

VIEWING LIVE RESULTS AS VOTES ARE CAST

You may be in a situation where you want to show the results of a vote “live” as votes are received. To do this, you’ll need to be able to log into your account on our Web site from the computer you’re using to project or view the results. When you get to the results page, choose a refresh rate of 5 or 10 seconds, choose whether or not you want one vote per person, then choose the “Update Display” button. This will cause the page to be refreshed with the options you’ve selected.

Now, choose “Open chart in new window”. This will display just the results chart on a page by itself. You can project this page on a screen to show the results to your group.

COPYING RESULTS TO A DOCUMENT

Voting results are displayed as a graphics image in your Web browser. You can right-click on this image and copy it to the clipboard and paste it into a word processor document.

CUSTOMIZING YOUR RESULTS CHART

You can embed a results chart into your own Web page and set many options to enhance the appearance of the chart to make it match the style of your Web site. Documentation of this feature is in progress; contact support@TextingManager.com if you want to try this and we’ll give you more information.