

What to Expect When You're:

Getting Started

Getting Oriented

Getting Informed

Getting into Discussions

Getting Involved

Getting to the Polls

Staying Engaged

Election Day is October 21

# what to expect when you're ELECTING

Presented by  
The Samara Centre  
for Democracy

## 3 Getting Informed



Welcome to the third explainer in the What to Expect When You're Electing series. This week: **where to find information about parties, candidates, and election issues, and how to avoid being misled by bad information.**

For more explainers, go to [samaracanada.com/what-to-expect](http://samaracanada.com/what-to-expect).

### LEARN ABOUT:

- ✓ Sources of information on the parties, candidates, and issues
- ✓ National leaders' debates
- ✓ Finding trustworthy news sources

**1** Where should I look for information on who to vote for?



### FROM PARTIES AND CANDIDATES

**Political party websites** tell you all about their platform and their leader. They should also have a section with information on the party's candidate running in your constituency. (For more about platforms, see our [previous explainer](#).)

**Door knocking** is when local candidates or volunteers from their campaigns come right to your door in hopes of winning your vote. Such visits are a chance to find out more about the candidates, so you may want to keep a list of questions you'd like to ask by the door.



### IN DEBATES

**National leaders' debates** will be broadcast on several major TV channels and streamed online.

Mark your calendars! The leaders will debate in English on October 7 and in French on October 10.

**Local debates:** There is no official process for organizing local debates, but community groups often hold at least one in each constituency. Keep an eye on your local news or search online for your riding name along with the phrase "candidate debate."



## FROM NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

News outlets compare the parties' promises and look at how they would work in practice.

**National news outlets** focus on issues that matter nationwide. They also report on the party leaders' events and announcements during the campaign.

**Regional and local news outlets** may cover some national issues but also look at what election promises could mean for your province, city, or town. They also have more information about the candidates running in your local constituency.



## ONLINE

**Political "matchmaking" platforms** ask you questions about issues and match you to the party whose platform most closely aligns with your views. However, they don't include information about your local candidate and tend to oversimplify party platforms.

**Advocacy organizations** often run informational campaigns alongside an election and provide online resources that compare parties' promises on various election issues.

**Social media** is a convenient way to learn about the election, but keep in mind that what appears in your news feed is shaped by each platform's algorithms, advertiser spending, and even "bots" (robot accounts designed to promote certain stories).

Check out our [Field Guide to Online Political Conversations](#) for tips on how to keep it civil.

## 2 How can I know the information I'm getting is trustworthy?

To evaluate news sources and online content, use the five **Ws** to ask:

**Who wrote this article, provided this information, or created this post?**

→ Look up the author or organization behind the story or post. What is their mission? Where do they get their funding? Who supports them?

**What kind of content is it?**

→ Is it a news article? An advertisement? An opinion piece? Satire, joke, or meme?

→ Don't limit yourself to the headline. You need more context—especially if the whole item is only a few seconds of video, an image, or one quote from a politician.

→ Ask yourself, "What's missing?" Even in an opinion piece, a good author will discuss opposing views.

**Where did this content come from?**

→ Is the source trustworthy?

→ Follow the links if there are any. Do they support the information or opinion in the story or post?

→ Look at more than one source of news. Check other news organizations to see how—or even if—the same story is covered.

**When was this piece written or the content created?**

→ Stories from a long time ago are sometimes recycled.

**Why is the news outlet, organization, or person raising this issue?**

→ What is their political bias or leaning?

→ Are all stories or posts from this source negative towards a political party or, on the other hand, do they only seem to support a single party or perspective?

## Still have questions? Want to learn more?

Visit [samaracanada.com/what-to-expect](http://samaracanada.com/what-to-expect) or email [info@samaracanada.com](mailto:info@samaracanada.com)

**Coming up next:** "You want to talk about *what* at the dinner table?!"

Advice on how to have those sometimes difficult, but always important, discussions about politics

The Samara Centre for Democracy is a non-partisan charity dedicated to strengthening Canada's democracy. To learn more, visit [samaracanada.com](http://samaracanada.com).

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