

Welcome to the What's Up election guide!

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START HERE

WE RULE!

Singapore belongs to Singaporeans. But, Singapore has more than 3.3 million citizens, so we can't all meet to make decisions about the country. Instead, we choose representatives to make the decisions for us. These representatives go to Parliament, where they discuss problems and solutions, and decide on new laws. They are called **Members of Parliament**, or **MPs**. Elections are held to allow adult citizens to pick their MPs.

THE RESULTS

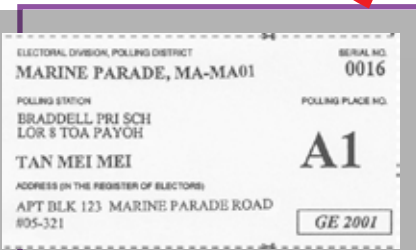
The counting finishes late at night. Candidates with the most votes win. The announcement in each constituency is made by a **Returning Officer**, who is like a referee for the contest. When the winning candidate is announced, it's a time for huge celebrations among supporters – and bitter disappointment for the losing side. But, as long as everyone respects the final result, every election is a victory for Singapore because it shows that people can settle their differences peacefully.



Singaporeans don't have to fear that they will be punished for voting one way or another. Their votes are kept secret: the voter's name is not on the ballot paper. Making sure that the election is carried out properly is the responsibility of the Elections Department. Its staff and helpers make sure that everything goes smoothly and that all sides play fair.

THE COUNT

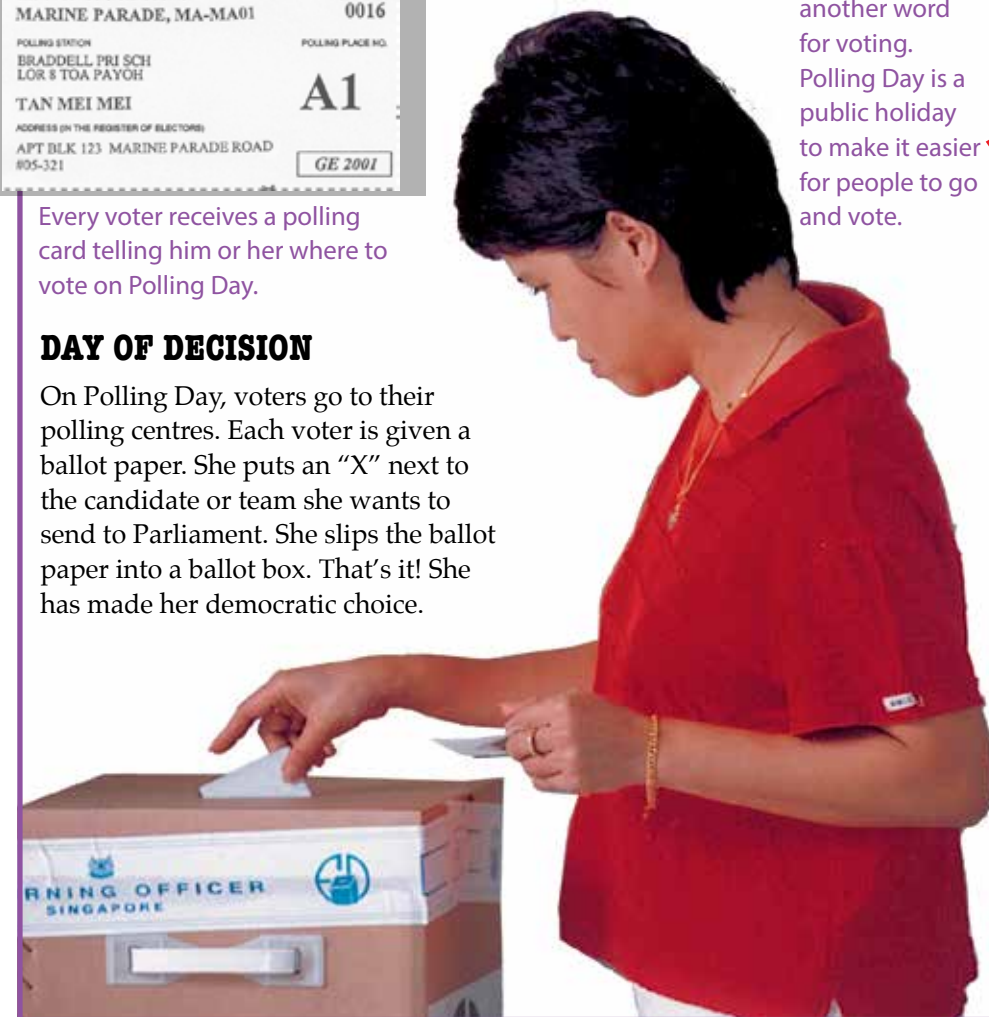
At the end of polling, the ballot boxes are sealed and delivered to counting centres. There, they are opened up and emptied onto tables for counting. Everything is observed by candidates or their agents, to ensure that counting is done fairly with no cheating.



Every voter receives a polling card telling him or her where to vote on Polling Day.

DAY OF DECISION

On Polling Day, voters go to their polling centres. Each voter is given a ballot paper. She puts an "X" next to the candidate or team she wants to send to Parliament. She slips the ballot paper into a ballot box. That's it! She has made her democratic choice.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

"Polling" is another word for voting. Polling Day is a public holiday to make it easier for people to go and vote.

THE ELECTION CYCLE



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

GOVERNMENT IS FORMED

The party with the most MPs becomes the "ruling party". It will get to run the country. The President invites its leader to form the Government. The party leader usually becomes the Prime Minister. He will pick around 15 MPs to serve as Ministers in his Cabinet. The Cabinet is responsible for all Government policies.

THE OPPOSITION

MPs who are not part of the ruling party form the Opposition in Parliament.

PROMISE TO SERVE

The Prime Minister, other Ministers and their fellow MPs must promise to do serve Singapore loyally. These promises or "oaths" are taken before they start work.



Parliament House.

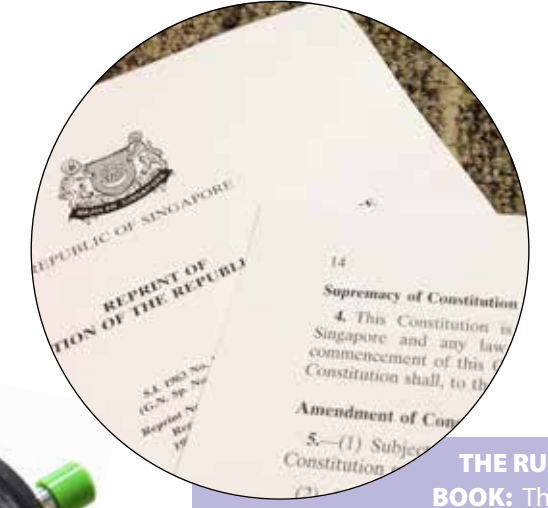
WORKING FOR SINGAPORE

Singapore's Parliament meets regularly to debate ways to solve problems and make Singapore a better place. MPs also ask Ministers questions, to make sure that the Cabinet is running the country properly. The Opposition, especially, keeps a close eye on the Government. You can visit Parliament to observe debates, or follow them in the news.



TIME'S UP!

The Constitution says each Parliament has a time limit of five years. This is to make sure that citizens are not stuck with leaders whom they don't like. The time limit also allows new people to volunteer to serve Singapore. They may have better ideas than the current MPs or Ministers. A new election will give them the chance to persuade citizens to pick them instead.



THE RULE BOOK:

This is the Constitution, Singapore's most important book. It's the Constitution that tells us that leaders can't just hold on to power for as long as they want. They must be voted in – and can be voted out.

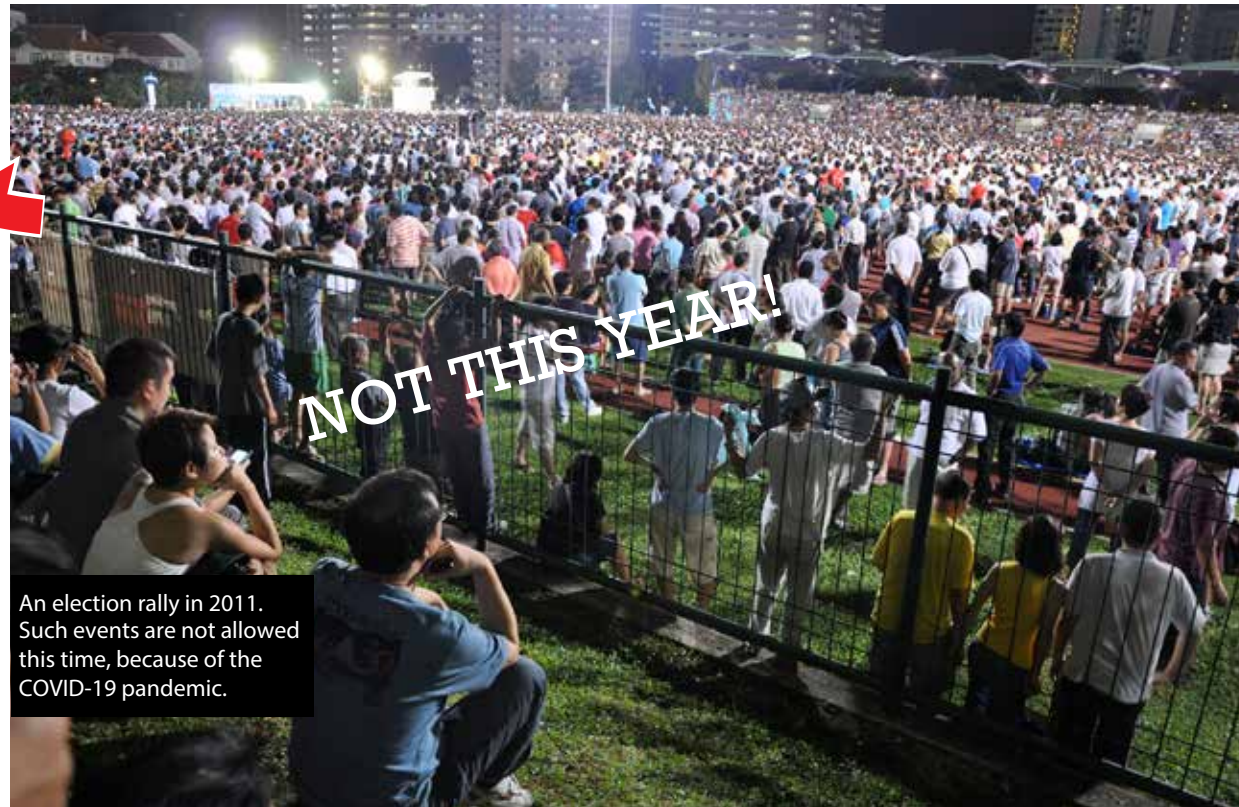
PARLIAMENT REBOOTS

Before Parliament's five-year time limit is up, the Prime Minister will decide when it is time to wrap up. He will then ask the President to "dissolve Parliament". Singapore's 13th Parliament was dissolved on 23 June.

WANT TO FIGHT?

Nomination Day is when people step forward and declare that they want to compete in the elections. They go to a Nomination Centre and hand in their forms. He or she must bring along at least six supporters. If the application is all in order, the person is then officially an election **candidate** – someone voters can elect.

In a stable democracy, elections are a never-ending cycle. When they are conducted peacefully and respectfully, and when voters choose wisely, everyone ends up winning.



An election rally in 2011. Such events are not allowed this time, because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



A PAP candidate in 2011.

THE TERRITORIES

Parliament has 93 seats for elected members. Each represents one part of Singapore. Fourteen of these areas are small, single constituencies or SMCs. The others are in groups of four or five. These grouped seats are called GRCs.



CHERIAN GEORGE

THE TEAMS

Most candidates are members of **political parties**, which are teams specially set up to fight elections. They have different logos and colours to make it easy for people to identify them. Since 1959, the biggest party in Singapore has been the People's Action Party, PAP. The party that wins an election and gets to be in charge of the Government is called the **ruling party**. Its opponents are called **opposition parties**. The biggest opposition party is the Workers' Party.

CAMPAIGNING

The candidates are given a minimum of 9 days to persuade voters to pick them. They are allowed to go house-to-house, put up banners, speak on television, and use the internet.

PROMISES

Candidates make promises to win votes. A set of promises or policies is also called a "platform". The platform is contained in a "manifesto" – a document that summarises what the party believes in.

MEETING PEOPLE

During the campaign, candidates rush around to talk to the people. They visit food centres and homes to introduce themselves to voters and explain why they deserve to be elected.

MEDIA

Television, radio, newspapers and the internet are all important for election campaigns. The internet is effective for younger Singaporeans, but older voters still read newspapers more.

MONEY

Candidates are not allowed to spend too much on their campaigns. Otherwise, rich candidates would have a big advantage. The maximum amount is equal to \$3 per voter.

Pictures: CHERIAN GEORGE