

SWING VOTE SAM EXPLAINS

Ranked Choice in 30 Seconds

SAM SAYS

"Banned. Imagine banning a backup flavor."

You want chocolate. If they're out, you'll take vanilla. So you rank them. Nobody has a majority of first choices? Last place drops out, those ballots move to their next pick, repeat until someone has a majority.

Nearly 14 million American voters in 49 jurisdictions already vote this way. Maine since 2018, for primaries and federal general elections. Washington, D.C. since its June 2026 primary. Portland, Oregon elects its council with a proportional version, and Nebraska's legislature has run without party labels since 1937. Not perfect: in over 400 ranked-choice races since 2004, two picked someone who would have lost head-to-head.

Headwinds: 19 states have banned it. Find out how your state counts.

The facts

1. 49 American jurisdictions use ranked choice voting, reaching nearly 14 million voters across 22 states and Washington, D.C. (FairVote, March 2026).[1]
2. Maine uses ranked choice in state primaries and in general elections for federal offices only; general elections for governor and the legislature still use plurality.[2]
3. Washington, D.C. used ranked choice voting for the first time in its June 16, 2026 primary. In November 2024 Portland, Oregon elected its city council by proportional ranked choice, three members per district, for the first time. Nebraska's one-house legislature has run without party labels since 1937.[3,4,5]
4. Of over 400 single-winner ranked-choice elections since 2004 with enough data to check, all but two elected the candidate who would have won every head-to-head matchup (FairVote).[6]
5. 19 states ban ranked choice voting as of March 2026 (Ballotpedia).[7]

What you can do

1. Find out how your state and city count votes. Your election office knows. **usa.gov/state-election-office**
2. If your city or state is debating it, go to the hearing and listen to both sides.
3. Show up.

Scan to watch Sam explain it

swingvotesam.com/issues/ranked-choice

Sources

1. FairVote, "Ranked Choice Voting Information (data as of March 2026)". https://fairvote.org/our-reforms/ranked-choice-voting-information/
2. Maine Secretary of State, "Ranked-Choice Voting Frequently Asked Questions". https://www.maine.gov/sos/elections-voting/ranked-choice-voting-frequently-asked-questions
3. DC Board of Elections, "Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in DC". https://www.dcboe.org/rcv
4. City of Portland, "Election Methods". https://www.portland.gov/transition/annual-report-2023/election-methods
5. Nebraska Legislature, "Facts on Unicameralism". https://nebraskalegislature.gov/about/ou_facts.php
6. FairVote, "Research and data on RCV in practice". https://fairvote.org/resources/data-on-rcv/
7. Ballotpedia News, "Ohio becomes second state this year to ban ranked-choice voting", March 19, 2026. https://news.ballotpedia.org/2026/03/19/ohio-becomes-second-state-this-year-to-ban-ranked-choice-voting/

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