



Managing Challenging Interactions

The information in this guide is adapted from a [U.S. Election Assistance Commission \(EAC\) and the American Psychological Association \(APA\) video](#). It shares tips to help election workers stay calm, handle stress, and help voters.

Why it Matters:

Election workers play an important role in helping voters feel safe and welcome. Some voters may feel confused, upset, or stressed. By staying calm and professional, you can help reduce tension, show voters respect, and maintain a safe and organized voting environment.

Tip Sheet

Before the Polls Open

- **Before your shift:**
 - Ensure you know your role and responsibilities.
 - Arrive well rested.
- **Tell Yourself:**
 - I know what I'm doing. I am happy and proud to be doing this job.
 - I know I can ask for help if I need it.

Stay Calm

- **If you begin to feel stressed**
 - Take slow, deep breaths.
 - Inhale slowly.
 - Hold your breath for a second or two.
 - Exhale slowly.
- **Before responding to someone who is upset**
 - Take one or two slow breaths.
 - Begin speaking after you exhale.



Practice Reflective Listening

Reflective listening helps people feel heard and lets them know you are taking their concern seriously.

- **Listen carefully to what the person is saying, then:**
 - Repeat their concern in your own words.
 - Ask if you understood them correctly.
 - Focus on what they are saying before responding.

Practice Active Listening

Active listening uses your ears, eyes, and body language.

- **You should:**
 - Look at the person who is speaking.
 - Give them your full attention. Avoid multi-tasking.
 - Nod your head when appropriate.



Respond Calmly

- **If someone is angry or upset:**
 - Stay calm and in control.
 - Speak in a calm, steady voice.
 - Model the behavior you want the other person to show.
 - Ask them to repeat their concern if needed so you understand it clearly.
- **If they interrupt you, explain that:**
 - You want to help and have heard their concern.
 - You would like the opportunity to respond.



Stay Focused on Helping

Your goal is to help the person cast their vote.

- **You can say:**
 - "I will do what I can to find a solution to your issue to ensure that your vote is cast."

Be Respectful

Respect the rights of others to express themselves, ask questions, and challenge you, but request they treat you with respect.

- **Do not:**
 - Appear disinterested or respond in a condescending way.
- **Instead:**
 - Be assertive, but not aggressive.
 - Ask questions.



When Someone is Disruptive

- **If someone becomes disruptive:**
 - Ask them to step aside so you can talk privately.
 - Let them know you hear and understand their concerns.
 - Show empathy.
- **You can say:**
 - "I know you are upset and worried, and I understand your concerns, but please be assured that your concern will be addressed."

Key Takeaways

The key to de-escalation is to remain calm, empathetic, and solution focused.

- You are not alone.
- If you cannot answer a question, ask for help.
- Stay calm and show empathy.
- Stay focused on finding a solution.



For More Information

Watch the EAC/APA election worker training on managing challenging interactions:

[EAC & APA Election Worker Training: Managing Challenging Interactions.](#)