

Word Count Guidelines

Pursuant to the interpretation of Section 9 of the Elections Code by the San Mateo County Registration & Elections Division, each word in candidate statements, Ballot Questions, Primary and Rebuttal Arguments and Impartial Analyses will be counted as one word except as specified below:

- Punctuation is not counted. This refers to the following symbols:
, . : ; ! ? () [] ' ”
- Symbols such as \$, #, *, and % are not counted as separate words.
- All proper nouns, including geographical names, shall be considered as one word. Examples are: *City and County of San Francisco, San Mateo County Charter, or John Charles Fremont.*
- Each abbreviation or acronym for a word, phrase or expression shall be counted as one word, such as *Feb.* (February), *Wed.* (Wednesday), *NASA*, *e.g.*, *i.e.*, *J.D.*, *PhD.* and *K-8*.
- Hyphenated words that appear in any generally available standard reference dictionary published in the United States at any time within the 10 calendar years immediately preceding the election for which the words are counted shall be considered as one word. Each part of all other hyphenated words shall be counted as a separate word. The Chief Elections Officer retains discretion to determine whether a word is included in a standard reference dictionary for these purposes.
- Dates shall be counted as one word, whether purely numeric (*06/14/1846*) or otherwise (*July 4, 1776; September Eighth, Nineteen Sixty-Six*).
- Any number consisting of a digit or digits shall be considered one word (*100; 3; 525,600*). Any number which is spelled, such as “one,” shall be considered as a separate word or words. *One* will be counted as one word, while *One Hundred* will be counted as two words and *Five Hundred Thousand* as three words.
- Telephone numbers will be counted as one word.
- Internet website addresses and email addresses will be counted as one word.
- In an itemized list, headers such as “A.)” or “1)” will be counted as one word. Bullet points will not be counted as a separate word.
- Name, age, and occupation located in the header of a candidate statement only are not counted towards the word count.
- If the text exceeds the word limit, the author will be asked to rewrite the text to bring the total number of words within the required word limit. If the author refuses to alter the text in this manner, the County Elections Official will remove words from the bottom up to meet the word limit requirement.