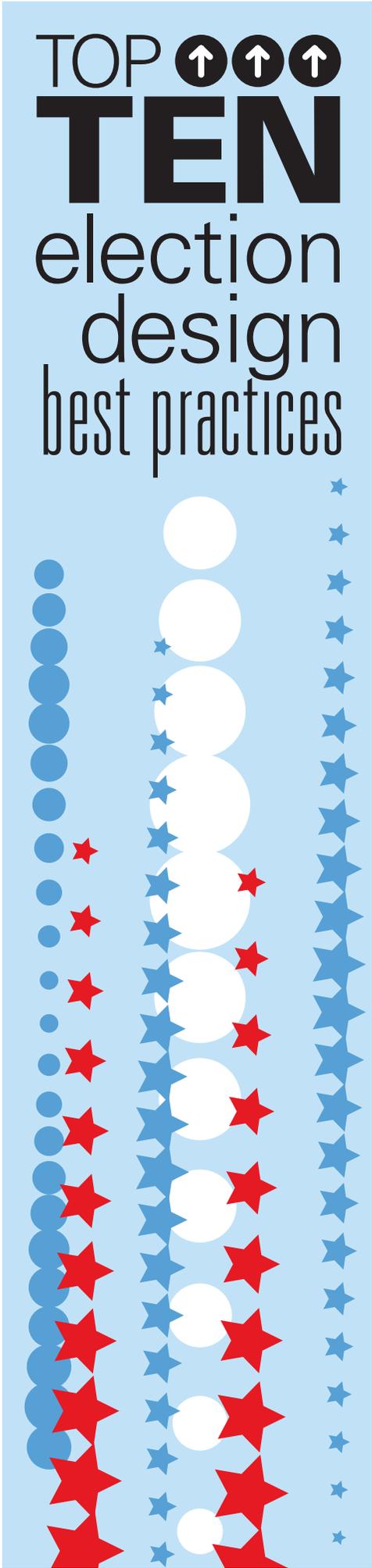


TOP TEN election design best practices



1. Use lowercase letters: Mixed-case letters are more legible than ALL CAPITAL LETTERS because they are easier to recognize.

2. Avoid centered type: Left-aligned type is more legible than centered type, which forces the eye to stop reading in order to find the start of the next line.

3. Use big enough type: “Fine print” is hard to read and may intimidate or alienate voters. Use minimum type sizes: 12-point for optical scan; 25-point for touchscreens. (Following this principle for optical scan ballots may impact printing costs but will be a worthwhile investment in election accuracy.)

4. Pick one sans-serif font: Avoid introducing new fonts, which require the eye to stop reading and adjust. Sans-serif fonts with clean strokes (Arial, Univers, Verdana) are recommended for screen and for the quantity and variation of text found on paper ballots. For dual-language materials, use bold text for the primary language, regular text for the secondary language.

5. Support process and navigation: For optical-scan ballots, offer comprehensive instructions and page numbering. For touchscreen ballots, offer language and mode options, continuous access to instructions, consistent and flexible navigation and clear feedback about selections. Post notable wayfinding and instructional materials in and around the polling place.

6. Use clear, simple language: State instructions and options as simply as possible. Summarize referenda in simple language alongside required formats. Do not include more than two languages on any one material.

7. Use accurate instructional illustrations: Visual instructions help low-literacy and general-population voters. Photo images, which are difficult to shoot and reproduce well, are not recommended. Illustrations must be accurate in their details to avoid misleading voters.

8. Use informational icons (only): Avoid political party icons. Icons that call attention to key information and support navigation are recommended in limited use.

9. Use contrast and color functionally: On optical scan ballots, to differentiate instructions from contents and contests from each other; and on touchscreen ballots, to support navigation, call special attention and provide user feedback. Color cannot be relied on as the only way to communicate important information.

10. Decide what’s most important: Page and screen layout and text sizes should support information hierarchy. For instance, the ballot title should be more prominent than any one contest, a contest header should be more prominent than its candidates’ names and a candidate’s name should be bolder than his/her party affiliation. Candidates’ names and options should be presented with equal importance.

Pop quiz: how many of the Top 10 Election Design Best Practices are being violated in the graphic / type treatment at left? Subversive quiz question: in this instance, does it matter that we’re violating the Top 10?