Victor the Vote Counter
VO SCRIPT (v12 11-03-11 TL)

1. INTRO

Open to a close up of a calendar. The box for 'May 5' fills the screen. It's ringed in red pen, and 'REFERENDUM' is written inside the calendar space.

On Thursday May 5th 2011, there will be a referendum on the voting system you use to elect MPs to the House of Commons.

The camera starts to slowly pull back, revealing more dates on the calendar. We see that we're looking at a wall calendar on an office wall.

There are two voting systems for you to choose between: the current system and a different one. To explain them both, I'd like to introduce Victor.

Pulling fully back, Victor and his office are revealed. He's sat at his desk, lit by a cone of light. It's quite dark behind him.

It's Victor's job to count every vote in our elections, and that means he's something of an expert in these things.

Ready to do some explaining, Victor?

He nods. As the VO explains the choices, signs illuminate in the darkness behind his desk.

Great.
So, there are two systems to choose from: 'First past the post' and 'Alternative vote'.

Let's get started shall we?

To pick which one you'd like to find out about first, just click a button below.

<u>Approx 40 secs</u>

2a. FPTP

Victor stands up and walks left. We're now in a new part of the room. The words 'First past the post' are against the wall, and a huge heap of papers sits in a mound on the floor. Victor expertly dives in, headfirst.

'First past the post' is the system we currently use in UK general elections; here's how it works.

Victor emerges clutching a vote slip. We cut to see it full screen. There is a list of candidates, A through D. Candidate B is marked with a cross.

With 'First past the post', you vote for one candidate. You do this by putting a cross into the box of the person you want to vote for.

We cut back to the room. Victor is busily counting votes from the pile, his tongue poked out in concentration.

The votes for each candidate are then put into a pile and counted.

We flash forward. The votes are now all counted in four tall piles against the wall. Candidate A's pile is tallest.

When the counting is finished the candidate with the most votes wins.

Victor extends a tape measure and verifies Candidate A, nodding.

A candidate doesn't need to get a minimum number of votes – to win they only need more votes than any other candidate.

He pins a rosette on candidate A's pile, and walks right to return to his desk.

Thank you, Victor!

Victor is back behind his desk. The two signs – 'FPTP' and 'AV' - are illuminated behind him.

Click a button below to choose what to find out about next.

<u>Approx 55secs (total 1min 35secs)</u>

2b. AV

Victor stands up and walks right. We're now in a new part of the room. The words 'Alternative Vote' are marked on the wall, and a heap of votes swing from the ceiling in a cargo net.

The 'Alternative vote' system is different to the way we currently vote in UK general elections; here's how it works.

Victor releases the votes on to the floor, accidentally burying himself. He pops up, clutching a slip, and we cut to see it full screen. Again we see a list of candidates, A through D, but they are now marked with numbers. B is 1, A is 2, C is 3 and D is 4.

In this system, you use numbers to rank the candidates in order of your preference. You put a 1 next to your first choice, 2 next to your second choice, 3 next to your third choice and so on.

You can choose how many candidates to rank. You don't have to rank every candidate. As long as you rank at least one, your vote will be counted.

We cut back to the room. Victor is busily counting the vote slips around him into tidy piles.

The number 1 votes for each candidate are then put into a pile and counted.
Off you go, Victor!

Flash forward. All of the votes are now counted into four tall piles against the wall. Candidates A & B are joint tallest.

When the counting is finished, if a candidate has received more than half the number 1 votes, that candidate wins and there is no further counting.

A dashed line draws across the wall. It is labeled 'Half of number 1 votes', and sits well above all of the piles.

But, if no candidate has received more than half the number 1 votes, it means there will be at least one more round of counting. So, since no one has enough votes in our example, Victor can start round 2.

Victor walks over and attempts to lift the smallest pile of votes – candidate D.

At this point, the candidate with the fewest number 1 votes is removed from the contest - in this case, Candidate D.

With a good heave, he lifts the whole pile and puts it down at the edge of the screen.

Each ballot paper in Candidate D's pile is then looked at again.

Two ballot papers slide in front of the screen, one in each of Victor's hands. The number 1 vote on both (both for candidate D) is crossed out. One has a number 2 (B) and number 3 vote (A) on it. The other has no other votes.

If the ballot paper shows a number 2 vote for another candidate, it is added to that candidate's pile. For example, this ballot paper shows a number 1 vote for Candidate D and a number 2 vote for Candidate B, so it will be moved to Candidate B's pile.

The number 2 vote for Candidate B is circled.

If a ballot paper does not show a number 2 vote, it is no longer used.

The paper with no more votes on it is striked through. Victor's hand then lowers the removed ballot paper from the frame.

We then fade back to the room. Candidate D's pile is slightly smaller to indicate removed votes, though we don't draw attention to it. Victor jumps into fast-forward, Candidate D's pile shrinks and the three remaining piles grow as Victor zips between them in a blur. As each pile grows, a coloured section appears on top of the existing votes, showing where the moved votes have ended up.

The line on the wall now reads 'Half of remaining votes'.

The fast forward stops as Victor is reaching up on his tip-toes to add the last of the redistributed votes to candidate A's pile. A & B are no longer the same height, and A now has a small lead.

If a candidate has received more than half of the remaining votes, that candidate has won and the counting stops.

But in this case there is still no candidate with more than half of the remaining votes, so another round of counting is needed.

Away you go, Victor!

Once more, Victor goes to lift the smallest pile (Candidate C).

Again, the candidate with the fewest votes is taken out of the contest. This time it's Candidate C.

As this pile is taller than the last one he lifted, his knees knock and he strains to lift it. Puffing and panting with wobbly legs, he carries it to the edge of the screen and puts it down.

Each ballot paper on Candidate C's pile is looked at again to see if any of the remaining candidates are ranked.

Like before, two ballot papers slide in front of the screen, one in each of Victor's hands. Both have their number 1 and number 2 votes crossed out (C&D). On the left, the ballot paper is ranked D, C, B, then A. On the right, the paper is ranked C, A then D.

If so, the ballot paper is moved to the pile of the candidate ranked highest on that ballot paper.

On the left, the number 3 vote for Candidate B is circled. On the right, the number 2 vote for Candidate A is circled.

If none of the remaining candidates are ranked the ballot paper is no longer used.

We then fade back to the room again. . Victor jumps into fast-forward again. Candidate C's pile shrinks and the two remaining piles grow as Victor zips between them in a blur. As each pile grows, another coloured section appears on top of the existing votes, showing where the moved votes have ended up.

The fast-forward stops and Victor is now on a ladder, reaching to put the last of the redistributed votes on top of the Candidate A's pile. It has broken the line on the wall.

We have a winner! Candidate A now has more than half of the remaining votes.

Victor pins a rosette on Candidate A's pile.

Of course, this is just one example. If more candidates are involved, this process can be repeated until one candidate has more than half the remaining votes.

He slides down his ladder like a pro, and walks off screen to the left.

Thank you Victor!

Back behind his desk, Victor nods. The two signs are illuminated behind him.

Click a button below to choose what to find out about next.

<u>Approx 2min 40secs (total: 4min 15secs)</u>

3. END

Cropping in closer to Victor behind his desk, we can no longer see the signs in the background. He wipes his brow and 'phews'.

So, now we've explained the voting systems, what happens when you go to vote on May 5th?

Victor produces the referendum ballot paper from his desk, and holds it forward so it fills the screen. The 'Yes' and 'No' boxes are clearly visible.

You'll receive a ballot paper with this question:

"At present, the UK uses the first past the post' system to elect MPs to the House of Commons. Should the 'alternative vote' system be used instead?"

Vote 'yes' if you think alternative vote should be used. Vote 'no' if you think first past the post should be used.

Victor removes the ballot paper and puts it back in his desk, smiling.

That's it! Thanks for your help Victor.

Cutting back to the wide view, the signs have been replaced with the words 'aboutmyvote.co.uk'

For more information on voting, visit aboutmyvote.co.uk. Thanks for watching.

The slot spotlight clicks off, leaving the words 'aboutmyvote.co.uk' visible on a black screen, as 'Polling stations open 7am-10pm' fades in beneath.

Victor's eyes are left blinking in the darkness - he 'humphs', and we hear his footsteps as he walks out of frame.

<u>Approx 35secs (total: 4mins 50secs)</u>