Victor the Vote Counter
VO SCRIPT (v8 02-03-11 TL)

1. INTRO

Open to a line of voters, all shapes and sizes, approaching a ballot box. The camera slowly focuses in on the box as the voters shuffle up and post their ballots.

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

Having zoomed close to the slot, a hand posts a ballot paper through and we follow it inside.

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.

The slip flutters down through the darkness, down a cone of light cast by the slot. It lands on the desk of our protagonist, Victor.

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'.
Which one do you want to hear about first?
Click a sign to choose.

<u>Approx 40 secs</u>

2a. FPTP

Victor stands up and walks left. We're now in a new part of the ballot box. The words 'First past the post' are against the wall, and a huge pile of papers sits in a mound on the floor. Victor tumbles in.

'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, and one is marked with a cross.

With 'First past the post', you vote for just 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. One is clearly taller.

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

Victor extends a tape measure and verifies the tallest, 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 the tallest pile, and walks right to return to his desk.

Thank you, Victor!
So, did you understand first past the post?

Back behind his desk, Victor nods. The two signs – 'FPTP' and 'AV' - are illuminated behind him, and a new sign has appeared on the front of his desk. It reads 'I'm done'.

Not you, Victor, our voter!
If you do understand, click 'Alternative Vote' to find out about the other voting system.
If you don't, click the 'First past the post' sign to play this clip again.
And, if you're happy that you understand both systems, just click 'I'm done'.

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

2b. AV

Victor stands up and walks right. We're now in a new part of the ballot box. 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. One of the four candidates is not ranked at all.

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, and you don't have to rank every one.

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. One pile is taller than the rest.

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 '50% 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. His knees quiver, but it doesn't budge.

At this point, the candidate with the fewest number 1 votes is removed from the contest.

The camera lifts away from the floor, removing Victor from view, and focusing on the tops of the four piles front on. The smallest pile disappears with a pop and we hear a thud as Victor falls over.

Each ballot paper in that candidate's pile is then looked at again.

Two ballot papers slide in front of the screen, obscuring the view. The number 1 vote on both (both for the removed candidate) is crossed out. One has a number 2 and number 3 vote on it. The other has no other votes.

If the ballot paper shows a number 2 vote for another candidate, that paper is added to the relevant pile.
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. The word 'Removed' appears above it and it slides down out of frame.

The paper with the number 2 votes is labeled 'Redistributed', and floats back into the scene behind, settling on top of one of the three remaining vote piles, each now taller. The votes that have been added to each pile are coloured differently so we can see them clearly.

We can now see Victor again, rubbing his head sorely. The tallest pile from round 1 is now smaller than the pile next to it. The lead has changed.

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

The dotted line slides lower down the wall, and the label is erased to now read '50% of remaining votes'.

But - as in our example - if no candidate has received more than half of the remaining votes, then another round of counting begins.
Away you go, Victor!

Victor props a ladder against the tallest pile. The camera lifts from the floor as he climbs up and picks up the ballot paper on top. Once more, only the tops of the piles are in shot. He studies the paper in his hand.

Just like before, the candidate with the fewest votes is taken out of the contest, and the ballot papers from that pile are then redistributed or removed.

Victor lowers the ballot paper in his hand and looks to the pile next to him. He reaches over to put it on top, reaching just too far, and tumbling out of shot. The smallest pile collapses along with him.

Like before, two ballot papers slide in front of the scene, obscuring the view. Both have their number 1 and number 2 votes crossed out. One paper has a number 3 vote for a remaining candidate. The other has no more votes on it.

Once again, the paper with no more votes on it is striked through, and slides down out of frame. 'Removed'

The paper with the number 3 vote floats back into the scene behind, settling on top of the tallest of the two remaining vote piles. 'Redistributed'

The tallest pile has broken the 50% line on the wall.

We have a winner! One candidate now has half the remaining votes.

Victor pins a rosette on the tallest pile, and walks left to return to his desk.

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.

Thank you Victor!

Back behind his desk, Victor nods. The two signs are illuminated behind him, and the front of his desk still reads 'I'm Done'.

Hopefully you now understand 'Alternative Vote'.
If you do, click 'First past the post to find out about the other voting system.
If you don't, click the 'Alternative Vote' sign to play this clip again.
And, if you're happy that you understand both systems, just click 'I'm done'.

<u>Approx 1min 55secs (total: 3min 30 secs)</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 on May 5th?

Victor produces the referendum ballot paper from his desk, and holds it forward so it fills the screen.

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.com'

If you'd like to know more, visit aboutmyvote.com. Thanks for watching.

The slot spotlight clicks off, leaving the words 'aboutmyvote.com' visible on a black screen. Just Victor's eyes are left blinking in the darkness - he 'humphs', and we hear his footsteps as he walks out of frame. A replay button appears, and the film finishes.

<u>Approx 30 secs (total: 4mins 5secs)</u>