Ranked Choice Voting (Instant Runoff Voting):

How it works:
RCV is as easy as 1-2-3. Voters rank candidates in order of preference instead of voting for just one candidate. (Oregon RCV)

Rather than just voting for one candidate, voters rank their choices in order of preference. If, on the first tally, no candidate gets a majority, the candidate with the fewest top-choice votes is eliminated. The people who chose the eliminated candidate as their first choice then have their votes go to their second choice candidate. The votes are tallied again, and the lowest-ranking candidate eliminated until one candidate gets a majority. (WWeek)

Video: How does ranked-choice voting work?

Pros provided by Annie:

- Prevents vote-splitting in situations where there are two viable candidates and one un-viable candidate
- Has been used in many places in the U.S. and in Australia's house of representatives
- Finds a majority winner among remaining ballots in the final round

Pros provided by Samantha:

- Advocates say that RCV encourages participation, reduces voters' feelings that their vote doesn't count, and discourages the practice of candidates running as spoilers. (WWeek)
- RCV improves our elections. Voters get to vote honestly and express their true preferences. RCV solves the "spoiler" issue and means that no vote will ever be a "wasted" vote. (Oregon RCV)
- Ranked Choice Voting elects candidates with the broadest possible public support. (Oregon RCV)
- RCV has a demonstrated track record of improving representation for women and people of color. (FairVote)
- RCV has been upheld by every court which has examined it, including federal and state courts. (FairVote)

Cons provided by Annie:

- RCV has exhausted ballots, ballots which are not counted in the final round when voters don't (or can't) rank all the candidates. This disproportionately affects African Americans, Latinos, voters with less education, and those whose first language is not English.
- RCV has high rates of spoiled ballots, ballots which are thrown out due to being incorrectly completed. These appear to be more likely to occur in communities of color and low-income communities.
- RCV is complicated
- RCV fails the "Favorite Betrayal" criterion. In other words, if you rank your favorite candidate first, it could help a lesser-preferred candidate to win. Because of this, RCV has a spoiler effect. Increasing support for a candidate could hurt that candidate in 15% or more of competitive elections. Note: No voting method can pass all desirable criteria (this has been mathematically proven).
- RCV ballots or ballot data must be centrally tabulated. This has impacts on transparency, auditability, and security.
- RCV fails to find a majority winner the majority of the time when additional rounds of tabulation are necessary. This is because RCV does not count all ballots in the final round. Note: RCV finds a majority of ballots that make it to the final round, and if we assume that any exhausted ballots were due to voters choosing not to rank the finalists (rather than running out of allowable rankings), then RCV finds a majority among voters who indicated a preference in that round.

- RCV is not transparent. It is difficult to present the results in such a way that displays the relative support each candidate received. It is also impossible to present full precinct-level results in any meaningful way.

Reports containing criticism of RCV:

Alaska Policy Forum: Report: The Failed Experiment of Ranked Choice Voting

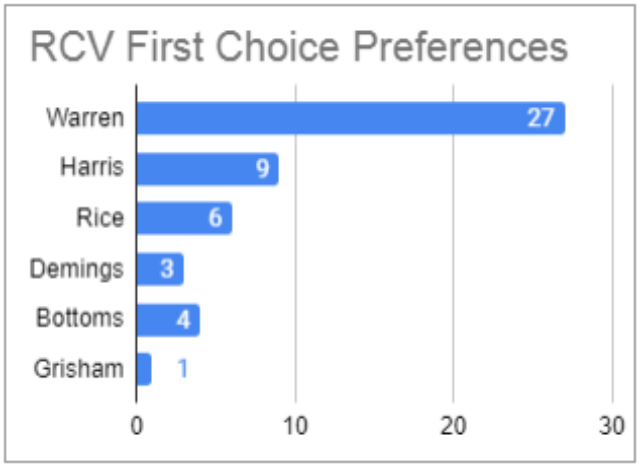
Fair Vote Canada*: Out of the Frying Pan Into the Fire: Lessons on Ranked Ballot from Australia
*Note: Fair Vote Canada is not affiliated with FairVote (U.S.). Both organizations advocate for STV, but Fair Vote Canada is opposed to single-winner RCV (which they call Alternative Vote).

Maine Policy Institute: False Majority: The Failed Experiment of Ranked Choice Voting

Lindsey Cormack: Cataloging the Promises of RCV in New York City

Presentation of results:

To present ranked choice voting results, one option is to publish only first-choice rankings, which look very similar to plurality results, as it exaggerates the apparent support of frontrunners.



Another option would be to publish the full report of how votes were distributed over the multiple rounds:

Official Election Site of Alameda County

Registrar of Voters > Voting > Ranked-Choice Voting > Results > November 2010 Results > Mayor of Oakland

Ranked-ChoiceVoting
Voting made easy.

Ranked-Choice Voting Official Final Accumulated Results - Mayor of Oakland

Official Final Accumulated results last updated: Friday, November 19, 2010

Accumulated Results Detail (PDF) ** Ballot Image File (TXT) Master Lookup File (TXT) Ballot Image Help (PDF) ** Comprehensive Report (PDF) **

	Round 1			Round 2			Round 3			Round 4			Round 5			Round 6		
	Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%	Transfer	Votes	%	Transfer
DON PERATA	40342	33.73%	+32	40374	33.80%	+81	40455	33.90%	+151	40606	34.08%	+122	40728	34.24%	+86	40814	34.39%	+550
TERENCE CANDELL	2315	1.94%	+1	2316	1.94%	+70	2386	2.00%	+111	2497	2.10%	+116	2613	2.20%	+67	2680	2.26%	-2680
GREG HARLAND	966	0.81%	+2	968	0.81%	+91	1059	0.89%	+28	1087	0.91%	-1087	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0
DON MACLEAY	1630	1.36%	+6	1636	1.37%	+41	1677	1.41%	+42	1719	1.44%	+133	1852	1.56%	-1852	0	0.00%	0
JEAN QUAN	29266	24.47%	+33	29299	24.53%	+92	29391	24.63%	+123	29514	24.77%	+131	29645	24.93%	+855	30500	25.70%	+384
ARNOLD FIELDS	733	0.61%	+5	738	0.62%	-738	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0
JOE TUMAN	14347	12.00%	+10	14357	12.02%	+114	14471	12.13%	+81	14552	12.21%	+228	14780	12.43%	+169	14949	12.60%	+253
MARCIE HODGE	2994	2.50%	+5	2999	2.51%	+34	3033	2.54%	+122	3155	2.65%	+45	3200	2.69%	+50	3250	2.74%	+375
LARRY LIONEL "LL" YOUNG JR.	933	0.78%	+6	939	0.79%	+37	976	0.82%	-976	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0
REBECCA KAPLAN	25813	21.58%	+18	25831	21.62%	+59	25890	21.69%	+136	26026	21.84%	+91	26117	21.96%	+379	26496	22.32%	+335
Write-In	268	0.22%	-268	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	0
Exhausted by Over Votes	355		+1	356		+6	362		+9	371		+5	376		+4	380		+21
Under Votes	2306		0	2306		0	2306		0	2306		0	2306		0	2306		0
Exhausted Ballots	0		+149	149		+113	262		+173	435		+216	651		+242	893		+762
Continuing Ballots	119607	100.00%		119457	100.00%		119338	100.00%		119156	100.00%		118935	100.00%		118689	100.00%	
TOTAL	**122268**		**0**	**122268**		**0**	**122268**		**0**	**122268**		**0**	**122268**		**0**	**122268**		**0**
REMARKS	***Tie resolved in accordance with election law.**																	

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* Portable Document Format (PDF) file requires the free Adobe Reader.

** To view Microsoft Office Word, Excel, or PowerPoint documents, you can download a free trial version of Office 365. Per Microsoft, you will be able to continue viewing files even after the trial has expired.

A third option would be to publish a Sankey diagram which visually shows how votes were distributed: