Four candidates Tim, Vince, Jo and Ed stand for election.

After the election the ballot papers are counted and there are 80 votes recorded.

Therefore, the absolute majority need to win the seat is 41 (50% + 1)

First Count

Tim Vince Jo Ed

15 20 23 22

Nobody has gained an absolute majority so the person with the lowest number of votes is excluded (Tim with 15 votes). Tim’s votes are then distributed according to 2nd preferences marked on those ballot papers.

Each candidate remaining gained second preference votes from Tim’s ballot papers as follows

Vince 6, Jo 3, Ed 6

Second count

Vince Jo Ed

20 + 6 = 26 23 + 3 = 26 22 + 6 = 28

Still nobody has gained the absolute majority so again the candidate with the lowest number of votes is excluded. There are two candidates with equal least votes – Vince and Jo each with 26. In this situation the candidate with the lowest number of votes in the first count is excluded (Vince) and those votes are distributed.

Vince’s second or third preference votes are distributed as follows

Jo 10 Ed 16

Third Count

Jo Ed

26 + 10 = 36 28 + 16 = 44

Now that Ed has 44 votes he has an absolute majority and is elected.

You will see that ed was not the candidate with the most votes in the first count. This highlights then difference between preferential counting and first past the post.