

THE PATH TO U.S. CITIZENSHIP

LVCA TUTOR RETREAT

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Workshop Goals

- ▣ Understanding the Naturalization Process
- ▣ Eligibility
- ▣ Steps to Naturalization
- ▣ Components of the Test
 - Civics questions
 - Reading and Writing
 - English Speaking and the Naturalization Interview
- ▣ Resources

What is Naturalization?

- Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is granted to a foreign citizen or national after he or she fulfills the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Who Administers the Naturalization Test?

- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States.
- The USCIS is an agency within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- “USCIS is funded almost completely by the fees paid by individuals and organizations for immigration and naturalization services. The agency receives very little taxpayer money. “

Why Do You Want to be a U.S. Citizen?



Benefits of U.S. Citizenship?

- **Vote.** Only citizens can vote in federal elections. Most states also restrict the right to vote, in most elections, to U.S. citizens.
- **Serve on a jury.** Only U.S. citizens can serve on a federal jury. Most states also restrict jury service to U.S. citizens. Serving on a jury is an important responsibility for U.S. citizens.
- **Travel with a U.S. passport.** A U.S. passport enables you to get assistance from the U.S. government when overseas, if necessary.
- **Bring family members to the U.S.** U.S. citizens generally get priority when petitioning to bring family members permanently to this country.
- **Obtain citizenship for children under 18 years of age.** In most cases, a child born abroad to a U.S. citizen is automatically a U.S. citizen.
- **Apply for federal jobs.** Certain jobs with government agencies require U.S. citizenship.
- **Become an elected official.** Only citizens can run for federal office (U.S. Senate or House of Representatives) and for most state and local offices.
- **Keep your residency.** A U.S. citizen's right to remain in the United States cannot be taken away.
- **Become eligible for federal grants and scholarships.** Many financial aid grants, including college scholarships and funds given by the government for specific purposes, are available only to U.S. citizens.
- **Obtain government benefits.** Some government benefits are available only to U.S. citizens.

Naturalization Statistics

- Each year, USCIS welcomes approximately 680,000 new citizens.
- In FY 2016, the top countries of origin for naturalization were in the following order: Mexico, India, the Philippines, China, and the Dominican Republic.
- The national pass rate on the naturalization test is 91%.

(USCIS website)

Who is Eligible?

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be a permanent resident (have a “green card”) for at least 5 years (there are exceptions)
- Meet certain continuous residency requirements
- Be able to read, write, and speak basic English
- Have a basic understanding of U.S. history and government (“100 questions”)
- Be a person of good moral character and demonstrate an attachment to the principles of the U.S. Constitution

Some Eligibility Exceptions

- **English Language Exemptions**
- You Are Exempt From The English Language Requirement, But Are Still Required To Take The Civics Test If You Are:
 - Age 50 or older at the time of filing for naturalization and have lived as a permanent resident in the United States for 20 years; OR
 - Age 55 or older at the time of filing for naturalization and have lived as a permanent resident in the United States for 15 years.

Some Eligibility Exceptions

- Even if you qualify for the “50/20” or “55/15” English language exceptions listed above, you must still take the civics test.
- You will be permitted to take the civics test in your native language.
- If you take the test in your native language, you must bring an interpreter with you to your interview.
- Your interpreter must be fluent in both English and your native language.

Steps to Naturalization

- Study for the interview and test
- Submit N-400 Application for Naturalization
 - ▣ (Fee is \$640 plus \$85 biometric fee = total \$725)
- Go to the biometrics (fingerprinting) appointment
- Complete the interview
- After passing the test, take the Oath of Allegiance

- *** International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Charlottesville offers low cost assistance with the N400 application**

Fee Waivers and Redections

- You may qualify for a fee waiver if your income falls below 150 percent of the current federal poverty guidelines. (\$36,450 for a family of 4, for example.)
- You may request a reduced fee if your annual household income is greater than 150 percent and not more than 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. (\$48,600 for a family of 4, for example.)

What are the Components of the Test?

- Applicants must:
 - Correctly answer 6 out of 10 questions about U.S. history, government, symbols, holidays, and geography. To prepare, applicants must study all 100 possible questions; and
 - Correctly read 1 sentence (3 chances); and
 - Correctly write 1 dictated sentence (3 chances); and
 - Demonstrate the ability to speak English based on answers to questions normally asked during the interview, including questions about the N400.

The “100 Questions.”



Would You Pass?

- ◆ The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are these words?
- ◆ Who is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court?
- ◆ What is the economic system in the United States?
- ◆ Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
- ◆ Who was president during WWI?
- ◆ How many voting members in the U.S. House of Representatives?

Reading Vocabulary

Reading Vocabulary for the Naturalization Test

PEOPLE	CIVICS	PLACES	HOLIDAYS	QUESTION WORDS	VERBS	OTHER (FUNCTION)	OTHER (CONTENT)
Abraham Lincoln	American flag	America	Presidents' Day	How	can	a	colors
George Washington	Bill of Rights	United States	Memorial Day	What	come	for	dollar bill
	capital	U.S.	Flag Day	When	do/does	here	first
	citizen		Independence Day	Where	elects	in	largest
	city		Labor Day	Who	have/has	of	many
	Congress		Columbus Day	Why	is/are/was/be	on	most
	country		Thanksgiving		lives/lived	the	north
	Father of Our Country				meet	to	one
	government				name	we	people
	President				pay		second
	right				vote		south
	Senators				want		
	state/states						
	White House						

Sample Reading Questions

- Who is the Father of our Country?
- What colors are on the American Flag?
- When is Independence Day?
- What state has the most people?

Sample Writing Questions

- George Washington is the Father of Our Country.
- The flag is red, white, and blue.
- Independence Day is in July.
- California has the most people.

The Naturalization Interview

- Applicants demonstrate basic English speaking proficiency during the interview:
 - ▣ By engaging in greetings and “small talk”
 - ▣ Following commands
 - ▣ Answering N400 questions: Personal information
 - ▣ Answering N400 questions: Good moral character / “Have you ever...” questions

Examples of Vocabulary from N400

- Verify
- Swear
- Marital Status
- Spouse
- Advocated
- Prior
- Resident
- Dependents

Examples of “Have you EVER...?”

- Been a member of any organization, party, club or society in any country?
- Been a member of the Communist Party? Any other totalitarian party? A terrorist organization?
- Not filed your federal, state, or local taxes since becoming a permanent resident?
- Committed or attempted to commit a crime for which you were not arrested?
- Had a hereditary title or order of nobility in any foreign country?

“Moral Character” questions

- Have you ever been:
 - ▣ A habitual drunkard?
 - ▣ A prostitute?
 - ▣ Married to more than one person at the same time?
 - ▣ Gambled illegally or received income from illegal gambling?
 - ▣ Failed to support your dependents or to pay alimony?

What Happens Next?

- Applicants who pass the test will be scheduled for a public ceremony where they will take the Oath of Allegiance:
- *"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God."*

New Citizens!



Citizenship Resources: USCIS

- USCIS Citizenship Resource Center website:
 - ▣ For teachers: lesson plans, activities, links
 - ▣ For students: interactive study materials

[USCIS Citizenship Resource Center](#)

- Flash cards for 100 questions and reading and writing vocabulary
- Learn About the United States: Quick Civics Lessons USCIS

Citizenship Resources

- From the LVCA Library:
 - ▣ Citizenship: Literacy Skills / Weintraub
 - ▣ Citizenship: Civics and Literacy / Weintraub
 - ▣ Citizenship Now! / Hilgeman
 - ▣ Catholic Legal Immigration Network's Guide

- ▣ LVCA booklet: Preparing for the U.S. Citizenship Interview

Citizenship Resources

- YouTube videos showing mock interviews:
 - ▣ [Interview with Mr. Dada](#)
 - ▣ [Interview with Ms Garcia](#)

Catholic Legal Immigration Network's graphic novel depicting the naturalization interview:

- [Miguel's Naturalization Interview](#)

Final Questions and Comments

□ *Thank you!*