

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 People Want to Become 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.

Benefits of U.S. Citizenship?

- ◆ **Apply for federal jobs.** [SEP] Certain jobs with government agencies require U.S. citizenship.
- ◆ **Become an elected official.** [SEP] Only citizens can run for federal office (U.S. Senate or House of Representatives) and for most state and local offices.
- ◆ **Keep your residency.** [SEP] A U.S. citizen's right to remain in the United States cannot be taken away.
- ◆ **Become eligible for federal grants and scholarships.** [SEP] Many financial aid grants, including college scholarships and funds given by the government for specific purposes, are available only to U.S. citizens.

Naturalization Statistics

- ◆ In fiscal year 2018, the United States welcomed 757,000 new citizens.
- ◆ In FY 2018, the top countries of origin for naturalization were in the following order: Mexico, India, the Philippines, Cuba and China.
- ◆ 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. (Three years if married to a U.S. citizen.)**
- **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) and Sin Barreras in Charlottesville offer low cost assistance with the N400 application**

Steps to Naturalization

According to the USCIS website, total processing time for application for citizenship is estimated to be 8.5 months to 14 months. This is from the time the application is filed until the oath ceremony.

Fee Waivers and Reductions

- ◆ Applicants may qualify for a fee waiver if their income falls below 150 percent of the current federal poverty guidelines. (\$36,450 for a family of 4, for example.)
- ◆ Applicants may request a reduced fee if their 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. *For many, this is the hardest part.*

The “100 Questions.”



Would You Pass?

According to a recent New York Times article, these are the most difficult of the 100 Civics Questions. How would you do?



Reading and Writing



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



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?**

Oath of Allegiance questions

- ◆ **Do you support the constitution and form of government of the United States?**
- ◆ **Do you understand the full Oath of Allegiance to the United States?**
- ◆ **Are you willing to take the full Oath of Allegiance?**
- ◆ **If the law requires it, are you willing to bear arms on behalf of the United States?**
- ◆ **If the law requires it, are you willing to perform noncombatant services in the Armed Forces?**

What happens if an Applicant Fails?

- ◆ Applicants are informed at the time of their first interview if they have passed and will be recommended for citizenship.
- ◆ If they do not pass any part of the test, they will go back for a second interview and retake only the part that they failed the first time.
- ◆ Applicants who do not pass the second time must start the process all over again...

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

1. USCIS Citizenship Resource Center website:

For teachers: lesson plans, activities, links

For students: interactive study materials

[USCIS Citizenship Resource Center](#)

2. 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: Ready for the Interview / Weintraub
- ◆ Catholic Legal Immigration Network's Guide
- ◆ LVCA booklet: Preparing for the U.S. Citizenship Interview

Citizenship Resources

USA Learns Citizenship Course

- Developed by the Sacramento County Office of Education with input from the USCIS
- Free
- Self-paced
- Covers all aspects of the test including steps to becoming a citizen, N-400 interview practice, civics (100 questions), and preparing for the interview
- Videos, quizzes, practice

Final Questions and Comments

 *Thank you!*