

BECOMING A U.S. CITIZEN

Have you ever thought about what it takes to become a U.S. citizen? Whether you're considering becoming a citizen yourself, or want to gain a perspective of the challenges and rewards of meeting the requirements to earn citizenship status, this article will take you through the journey step-by-step.

There are many reasons one would take the steps to become a citizen of the United States. These may include, gaining the right to vote in a U.S. election, being able to serve on a jury, applying for federal jobs, becoming an elected official, becoming eligible for federal grants, scholarships, government benefits, and many other practical benefits that may be advantageous to you and your family.

Getting started:

1) Determine if you are a U.S. citizen: people can become a U.S. citizen by birth or naturalization. Questions to keep in mind for this step are:

- Were you born in the United States or a territory of the United States?
- Is at least one of your parents a U.S. citizen?

If you are not a U.S. citizen by birth or did not acquire it through your parents, follow the next steps!

2) Determine your eligibility:

You may qualify for U.S. citizenship if:

- Are at least 18 years old.
- Have been a "Permanent Resident" for at least 5 years (or 3 if you are married to a U.S. citizen).
- Meet the other eligibility requirements.

Read form N-400, instructions application for Naturalization, available at uscis.gov/n-400 to learn more about the naturalization process and the eligibility requirements

3) Prepare Form N-400 (Application for Naturalization).

Once you meet all the requirements to become a U.S. citizen, you must complete for N-400 to apply for naturalization.

- Complete and sign form N-400.
- Get 2 passport-style photos taken if you reside outside the United States.
- Obtain the necessary documents to demonstrate your eligibility for naturalization (Make sure to review all the documents before submitting form).

USCIS may request additional documents, if application is incomplete

4) Submit Form N-400 (Application for Naturalization).

Make sure to submit the application, documents and fees associated with the application being submitted. Once submitted, you can check the current status and processing time by visiting uscis.gov

Include:

- Form N-400 and biometric fees.
- Form N-648 (Medical certification for disability)
- Any additional evidence demonstrating your eligibility to become a U.S. citizen. Submit 2 passport-style photos, if you reside outside the United States.

5) Go to the biometrics appointment.

USCIS will require you to be fingerprinted and photographed as part of their background check process.

- You will receive an appointment notice in the mail, which will include the location, date and time of your appointment.
- Arrive at the appointment at least 15 minutes before.

6) Interview:

Once all the previous steps have been completed, this is the most important one! This one will be a face-to-face interview which will help you complete the Naturalization process. Make sure to bring the appointment notice with you!!!

*****DO NOT MISS THE INTERVIEW***** If you cannot attend for personal or any reasons, please make sure to notify the office where your interview is being held, and reschedule it. This may delay your Naturalization process for several months.

What to expect at the interview:

- A USCIS officer will ask you questions regarding your application. You must respond with the exact same answer you provided on the application.
- If you are requesting medical exception, you must provide form N-648, if not submitted when form N-400 was submitted.
- The USCIS officer will conduct an English and civics test. Instructions found at uscis.gov/citizenship. They will test your proficiency in English and your knowledge of the United States history.
- The USCIS officer will provide you with a notice of the results for the test, following your interview.

*****If the USCIS officer cannot come to a decision right away, the officer will continue working on your case. You may be asked to provide additional documents later on*****

OUTCOME OF INTERVIEW

- If you fail the English, civics test or both, you will be rescheduled for another interview within 60-90 days after your first interview.

If you fail a second time, your application will be denied.

7) Receiving a decision from USCIS on your Form N-400 (Application for Naturalization)

Granted	Denied
USCIS may approve your Form N-400 if the evidence on record is correct and complete, or meets the requirements for naturalization.	USCIS will deny your application if the evidence on records does not meet the requirement for eligibility for naturalization.

If denied, you will receive a notice from USCIS explaining the reason of denial. If you believe USCIS made a mistake, you may request a hearing to appeal this decision

8) Receive a notice to take the "Oath of Allegiance".

- In some cases, you may be able to participate in the oath ceremony the same day as your interview (if available). However, if not possible, USCIS will send you by mail a letter with the date, time and location where you can take the "Oath of Allegiance".

If you cannot attend the ceremony on the designated date, you must notify USCIS about not attending. They may reschedule you for another time

YOU ARE NOT A U.S. CITIZEN UNTIL YOU HAVE TAKEN THE "OATH OF ALLEGIANCE"!!!

9) Taking the "Oath of Allegiance":

- Complete questionnaire Form N-445, which is the notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony.
- Report to the office to take the oath.
- A USCIS officer will review your responses to Form N-455.
- Turn in your "Permanent Resident Card".
- Take the Oath to become a U.S. citizen.
- Receive your "Certificate of Naturalization" and make sure your name is spelled correctly and your information is accurate.

10) Understanding U.S. citizenship

- Make sure you understand now as a U.S. citizen, you share the same rights and responsibilities as every other American citizen. You must always exercise, honor and respect every law, right and responsibility.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

USCIS website: www.uscis.gov

www.uscis.gov/citizenship

www.uscis.gov/n-400