U.S. Department of Justice
Immigration and Naturalization Service

A Guide to Naturalization

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Welcome

1

E Pluribus Unum - From Many, One

- Motto of the United States of America

INS Welcome
We are very pleased you want to become a U.S. citizen. The United States is a nation of immigrants. Throughout our history, immigrants have come here seeking a better way of life and have strengthened our nation in the process.

Deciding to become a U.S. citizen is one of the most important decisions in a person's life. If you decide to apply for naturalization, you will be showing your commitment to the United States. You will also be showing your loyalty to its Constitution and its people.

When you are naturalized, you agree to accept all of the responsibilities of being a citizen. In return, you are rewarded with all the rights and privileges that are part of citizenship. Again, we welcome your interest and hope you will read on to learn more about naturalization.

What is Naturalization?
Naturalization is the way immigrants become citizens of the United States. If you were not born a citizen, you must be naturalized to become one.

What is This *Guide* For?
This *Guide* is to help people understand the naturalization process. It is for people 18 years or older who want to become citizens. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) created this *Guide* to provide better and more consistent information to people interested in naturalization.

What Are the Benefits and Responsibilities of Citizenship?

2

Benefits

The Constitution gives many rights to citizens and non-citizens living in the United States. However, there are some rights the Constitution gives only to citizens, like the right to vote. When you are naturalized, you will be given the right to vote.

Having a U.S. passport is another benefit of citizenship. A U.S. passport allows citizens the freedom to travel. In addition, citizens receive U.S. Government protection and assistance when abroad.

The above paragraphs do not include all the benefits of citizenship, but they do give you an idea of some of the most important ones.

Responsibilities

The Oath of Allegiance includes several promises you must make when you become a U.S. citizen, including promises to:

- give up prior allegiances to other countries;
- support and defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States;
- swear allegiance to the United States; and
- serve the country when required.

Citizens have many responsibilities other than the ones mentioned in the oath. Citizens have a responsibility to participate in the political process by registering and voting in elections. Serving on a jury is another responsibility of citizenship. Finally, America becomes stronger when all its citizens respect the different opinions, cultures, ethnic groups, and religions found in this country. Tolerance for differences is also a responsibility of citizenship.

When you decide to become a U.S. citizen, you should be willing to fulfill the responsibilities of citizenship. We hope you will also honor and respect the freedoms and opportunities citizenship gives you. At the same time, we hope you become an active member of your community. For it is by participating in your community that you truly become an American.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q 1. How can I become a U.S. citizen?

A You may become a U.S. citizen (1) by birth or (2) through naturalization.

Q 2. Who is born a U.S. citizen?

A Generally, people are born U.S. citizens if they are born in the United States or if they are born to U.S. citizens:

(1) **If you were born in the United States:**
Including, in most cases, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, **you are an American citizen at birth** (unless you were born to a foreign diplomat). Your birth certificate is proof of your citizenship.

(2) **If you were born abroad to TWO U.S. citizens:**
And at least one of your parents lived in the United States at some point in his or her life, **then in most cases you are a U.S. citizen**.

Your record of birth abroad, if registered with a U.S. consulate or embassy, is proof of your citizenship. You may also apply for a passport to have your citizenship recognized. If you need additional proof of your citizenship, you may file an "Application for Certificate of Citizenship" (Form N-600) with INS to get a Certificate of Citizenship. Call the INS Forms Line at 1-800-870-3676 to request a Form N-600, or download the form from the internet at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov.

(3) **If you were born abroad to ONE U.S. citizen:**
In most cases, you are a U.S. citizen if ALL of the following are true:

- One of your parents was a U.S. citizen when you were born;
- Your citizen parent lived at least 5 years in the United States before you were born; and
- At least 2 of these 5 years in the United States were after your citizen parent's 14th birthday.[1]

Your record of birth abroad, if registered with a U.S. consulate or embassy, is proof of your citizenship. You may also apply for a passport to have your citizenship recognized. If you need additional proof of your citizenship, you may file an "Application for Certificate of Citizenship" (Form N-600) with INS to get a Certificate of Citizenship. Call the INS Forms Line at 1-800-870-3767 to request an N-600 or download the form from the internet at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov.

Q 3. How do I become a naturalized citizen?

A If you are 18 years or older, use the "Application for Naturalization" (Form N-400) to become naturalized. Children who are deriving citizenship from naturalized parents should use the "Application for a Certificate of Citizenship" (Form N-600) to become naturalized. Call the INS Forms Line at 1-800-870-3676 to request these forms, or download the forms from the internet at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov.

Q 4. What are the requirements for naturalization?

A Please see Section 4, “Who is Eligible For Naturalization?”, beginning on page 17 for more details on the eligibility requirements for naturalization. You should also complete the Eligibility Worksheet in the back pocket of the *Guide* to help you find out if you meet the eligibility requirements.

[1] If you were born before November 14, 1986, you are a citizen if your U.S. citizen parent lived in the United States for at least 10 years and 5 of those years in the United States were after your citizen parent’s 14th birthday.

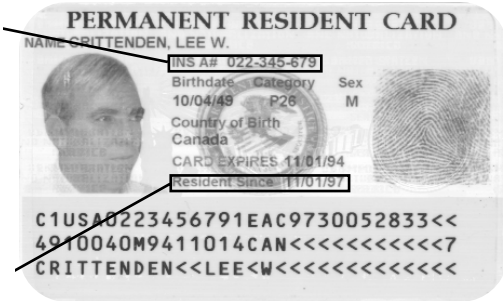
Q 5. When does my time as a Permanent Resident begin?

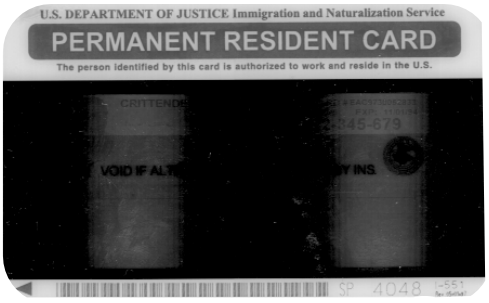
A Your time as a Permanent Resident begins on the date you were granted permanent resident status. This date is on your Permanent Resident Card (formerly known as Alien Registration Card). The sample cards on this page show where you can find important information like the date your Permanent Residence began.

FRONT **BACK**

"A" — number

Date you became a Permanent Resident *(November 1, 1997)*

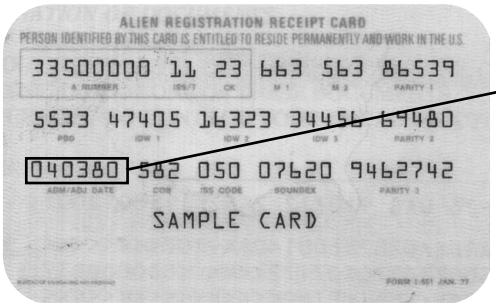




This card does not have Port-of-Entry on it.

"A" — number

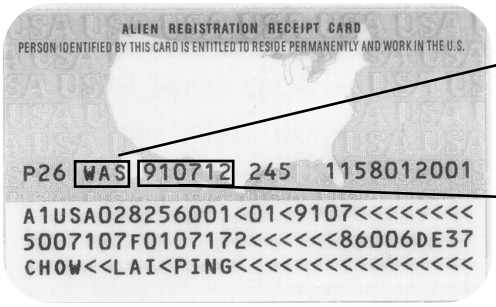
Port-of-Entry or office where you were granted adjustment of status



Date you became a Permanent Resident *(April 3, 1980)*

Port-of-Entry or office where you were granted adjustment of status

"A" — number



Date you became a Permanent Resident *(July 12, 1991)*

Q 6. What form do I use to file for naturalization?

A You should use an "Application for Naturalization" (Form N-400). Call the INS Forms Line at 1-800-870-3676 to request a Form N-400. You may also download the form from the internet at the following address: http://www.ins.usdoj.gov.

Q 7. If I have been convicted of a crime but my record has been expunged, do I need to write that on my application or tell an INS officer?

A Yes. You should always be honest with INS about all:

- arrests (even if you were not charged or convicted);
- convictions (even if your record was cleared or expunged); and
- crimes you have committed for which you were not arrested or convicted.

Important

Even if you have committed a minor crime, INS may deny your application if you do not tell the INS officer about the incident.

Q 8. Where do I file my naturalization application?

A You should send your completed "Application for Naturalization" (Form N-400) to the appropriate INS Service Center. For information about the Service Center that serves your area, see page 34 or the single page called "Your Local INS Office" in the back pocket of this *Guide.* Remember to make a copy of your application. DO NOT send original documents with your application unless the Document Checklist included with the *Guide* states that an original is required. Always make copies of documents that you send to INS.

Q 9. Will INS help me or make accommodations for me if I am disabled?

A INS will make every effort to make reasonable accommodations for applicants with disabilities who need modifications to the naturalization process to demonstrate their eligibility. For example, if you use a wheelchair, we will make sure you can be fingerprinted, interviewed, and sworn in at a location that is wheelchair accessible. If you are hearing impaired, the officer conducting your interview will speak loudly and

slowly or we will work with you to arrange for a sign language interpreter. If you use a service animal, such as a guide dog, your animal may come with you to your interview and oath ceremony.

If you know in advance that you will need some kind of accommodation, write a letter explaining what you will need and send it to the district office that will interview you after you receive your interview notice. We are continuing to work on better ways to make the naturalization process easier for applicants with disabilities.

Q 10. Where is my local INS office?

A For information about the INS office that serves your area, see the single page titled "Your Local INS Office" in the back pocket of this *Guide.*

Q 11. What is the fee for processing an application?

A The current fee for processing a naturalization application can be found on the single page titled "Current Naturalization Fees" in the back pocket of this *Guide*. If you are under 75 years old, you must also pay a fee to have your fingerprints taken.

Q 12. How can I pay my application fee?

A You must pay your application fee (and fingerprinting fee, unless you are 75 years old or older) with a personal or cashier's check or money order drawn on a U.S. bank in U.S. dollars payable to the "Immigration and Naturalization Service." You may pay for both the application and fingerprinting fee with a single check or money order. Please do not combine payments for multiple applications in one check, because if we find a problem with one application, they could all be returned to you.

If you live in Guam, you should make the fee payable to "Treasurer, Guam." If you live in the Virgin Islands, you should make the fee payable to "Commissioner of Finance of the Virgin Islands."

You must send your fee with your application. Remember that your application fee is not refundable even if you withdraw your application or INS denies your case.

Important

Q 13. How long will it take to become naturalized?

A The time it takes to be naturalized varies by location. INS is continuing to modernize and improve the naturalization process and would like to decrease the time it takes to an average of 6 months.

Q 14. Where can I be fingerprinted?

A After we receive your application, we will tell you where you should get fingerprinted. For more information about fingerprinting, see page 35.

Q 15. How do I find out the status of my naturalization application?

A You may call the Service Center where you sent your application. See the one-page insert titled "Your Local INS Office" in the back pocket of this *Guide* to find the telephone number to call for information. We are working hard to create a toll-free number that applicants may call to check the status of their application.

Q 16. What if I cannot go to my scheduled interview?

A It is very important not to miss your interview. If you have to miss your interview, you should write the office where your interview is scheduled as soon as possible. In your letter, you should ask to have your interview rescheduled. Rescheduling an interview may add several months to the naturalization process, so try not to change your original interview date. If you miss your scheduled interview without notifying INS, we will "administratively close" your case. Unless you contact us to schedule a new interview within 1 year after we close your case, we will deny your application. We will not notify you if we close your case because you missed your interview.

Q 17. What do I do if my address has changed?

A It is important that we have your latest address. If we do not have your current address, you may not get important information from us. For example, we may not be able to notify you about the date and time of your interview or about additional documents you may need to send or bring.

If you move *after* you have filed your application for naturalization (Form N-400), call the National Customer Service Center's toll-free telephone number at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY: 1-800-767-1833) to report your address change. You should also notify the U.S. Postal Service of your new address to help ensure that any mail already on its way will be forwarded to you.

Q 18. Can I change my name when I naturalize?

A You can change your name as part of your naturalization if a court in your area conducts naturalization oath ceremonies. Otherwise, no name change can be recorded on your Certificate of Naturalization unless you already changed your name legally (such as by marriage) before completing the naturalization process.

If you decide to change your name, you will be required to complete a Petition for Name Change during your interview. Petitioning the court to change your name may delay the date of your oath ceremony, in some cases. If you petition to change your name, the new name will not be legally binding until after your oath ceremony. Your new name will appear on your Certificate of Naturalization.

The INS does not process petitions for a name change after naturalization. However, you still may change your name after naturalization by other legal means.

Q 19. If INS grants me naturalization, when will I become a citizen?

A You become a citizen as soon as you take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States. In some places, you can choose to take the Oath the same day as your interview. If that option is not available or if you prefer a ceremony at a later date, INS will notify you of the ceremony date with a “Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony” (Form N-445).

Q 20. What should I do if I cannot go to my oath ceremony?

A If you cannot go to the oath ceremony, you should return the "Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony" (Form N-445) that INS sent to you. You should send the N-445 back to your local office. Include a letter saying why you cannot go to the ceremony. Make a copy of the notice and your letter before you send them to INS. Your local office will reschedule you and send you a new "Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony" (Form N-445) to tell you when your ceremony will be.

Q 21. What can I do if INS denies my application?

A If you feel that we have wrongly denied your naturalization application, you may request a hearing with an immigration officer. Your denial letter will explain how to request a hearing and will include the form you need. The form for filing an appeal is the "Request for Hearing on a Decision in Naturalization Proceedings under Section 336 of the Act" (Form N-336). You must file the form with us with the correct fee within 30 days after you receive a denial letter.

If, after an appeal hearing with INS, you still believe you have been wrongly denied naturalization, you may file a petition for a new review of your application in U.S. District Court.

Q 22. Can I reapply for naturalization if INS denies my application?

A In many cases, you may reapply. If you reapply, you will need to complete and resubmit a new N-400 and pay the fee again. You will also need to have your fingerprints and photographs taken again. If your application is denied, the denial letter should indicate the date you may reapply for citizenship.

If you are denied because you failed the English or civics test, you may reapply for naturalization as soon as you want. You should reapply whenever you believe you have learned enough English or civics to pass the tests.

Q 23. What do I do if I have lost my Certificate of Naturalization? What do I use as proof of citizenship if I do not have my certificate?

A You may get a new Certificate of Naturalization by submitting an "Application for Replacement Naturalization/Citizenship Document" (Form N-565) to INS. You may get an N-565 by calling the INS Forms Line (1-800-870-3676), or by downloading the form off the internet at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov. Submit this form with the fee to your local INS office. It may take up to 1 year for you to receive a new certificate. If you have one, you may use your passport as evidence of citizenship while you wait for a replacement certificate. You should apply for a passport as soon as you become a citizen.

Q 24. Do I need to get a new Permanent Resident Card (formerly known as an Alien Registration Card) when INS issues a new version of the card if I am applying for naturalization?

A If you apply for naturalization six months or more before the expiration date on your Permanent Resident Card, you do not have to apply for a new card. However, you may apply for a renewal Permanent Resident Card if you wish by using the Form I-90 (available from the INS Forms Line or the INS internet site) and paying the appropriate fee.

If you apply for naturalization within six months of the expiration date on your Permanent Resident Card, or don't apply for naturalization until your card has already expired, you must renew your card.

Q 25. If I am naturalized, is my child automatically a citizen?

A Usually if children are Permanent Residents, they can derive citizenship from their naturalized parents. This is true whether the child is a child by birth or adoption.[2]

In most cases, your child is a citizen if ALL of the following are true:

- The other parent is also naturalized **OR**
  You are the only surviving parent (if the other parent is dead) **OR**
  You have legal custody (if you and the other parent are legally separated or divorced);
- The child was under 18 when the parent(s) naturalized;

[2]All adoptions must be completed by the child's 16th birthday in order for the child to be eligible for any immigration benefit, including naturalization.

- The child was not married when the parent(s) naturalized; and
- The child was a Permanent Resident before his or her 18th birthday.

If you and your child meet all of these requirements, you may obtain a passport for the child as evidence of citizenship. If the child needs further evidence of citizenship, you may submit an "Application for Certificate of Citizenship" (Form N-600) to INS to obtain a Certificate of Citizenship. (Note: the child may obtain a passport or Certificate of Citizenship at any time, even after he or she turns 18.) You may obtain an N-600 by calling the INS Forms Line (1-800-870-3676) or by downloading the form off the internet at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov.

Q 26. If I am naturalized but the above situation does not apply to me or my child, how can I apply for citizenship for my child?

A In many cases, citizens may apply for citizenship for their children:

(1) **Children by birth or adoption who are Permanent Residents**

If both parents are alive and still married to each other, but only one parent is a citizen, you may apply for citizenship for your child using an "Application for Certificate of Citizenship" (Form N-600). The child must meet ALL of the following requirements at the time he or she takes the Oath of Allegiance (Note: the Oath may be waived if the child is too young to understand it.):

- The child is under 18;
- The child is not married;
- The child is a Permanent Resident; and
- The child is in legal custody of the parent who is a citizen.

(2) **Children by birth or adoption who are NOT Permanent Residents**

If at least one of the child's parents is a citizen, the parent may apply for citizenship for the child using an "Application for Certificate of Citizenship" (Form N-600). The child must meet ALL of the following requirements at the time he or she takes the Oath of Allegiance (Note: the Oath may be waived if the child is too young to understand it):

- The child is under 18;
- The child is not married;
- The child is lawfully present in the United States in a non-resident status (e.g., with a B-2 or F-1 visa);

- The child is in legal custody of the parent who is a citizen;
- The citizen parent has lived at least 5 years in the United States; and
- At least 2 of these 5 years in the United States were after the citizen parent's 14th birthday.

In some cases, a child may have a parent who is a U.S. citizen but who has not lived in the United States for at least 5 years, 2 of which were after the citizen parent's 14th birthday. In these cases, the U.S. citizen parent may apply for citizenship for the child using an "Application for Certificate of Citizenship" (Form N-600). The child must meet ALL of the following requirements at the time he or she takes the Oath of Allegiance (Note: the Oath may be waived if the child is too young to understand it):

- The child is under 18;
- The child is not married;
- The child is lawfully present in the United States in a non-resident status (e.g., with a B-2 or F-1 visa);
- A U.S. citizen parent has a parent (the child's grandparent) who is also a U.S. citizen;
- The child is in legal custody of the U.S. citizen parent whose parent is also a U.S. citizen;
- The U.S. citizen grandparent lived at least 5 years in the United States; and
- At least two of these years in the United States were after the citizen grandparent's 14th birthday.

Who is Eligible for Naturalization?

Naturalization is the way immigrants become citizens. If you are 18 years or older and wish to apply for naturalization, you should use the "Application for Naturalization" (Form N-400).

If you want to apply for naturalization for a child who is under 18 years old, you should use the "Application for a Certificate of Citizenship" (Form N-600). For more information about applying for citizenship for your children, see questions 25-26 on pages 13-15.

In the next few pages, we describe the naturalization eligibility requirements for people who are 18 years or older and who will use the Form N-400.

The following table summarizes the naturalization requirements for *most* types of applicants. After the table is a section that provides more information on each requirement. If you still have questions about your eligibility, you should consult an immigrant assistance organization or INS.

4

REQUIREMENTS	PR Time as Permanent Resident	Continuous Residence
If you: Have been a Permanent Resident for the past 5 years and have no special circumstances *Note: Over 90% of applicants fall into this category.*	5 years	5 years as a Permanent Resident without leaving the United States for trips of 6 months or longer
If you: Are currently married to and living with a U.S. citizen **AND** Have been married to and living with that same U.S. citizen for the past 3 years **AND** Your spouse has been a U.S. citizen for the past 3 years	3 years	3 years as a Permanent Resident without leaving the United States for trips of 6 months or longer
If you: Are in the U.S. Armed Forces (or will be filing your application within 6 months of an honorable discharge) **AND** Have served for at least 3 years	You must be a Permanent Resident on the day of your interview.	Not Required
If you: Were in the U.S. Armed Forces for less than 3 years **OR** **If you:** Were in the U.S. Armed Forces for 3 years or more, but you were discharged more than 6 months ago	5 years	5 years as a Permanent Resident without leaving the United States for trips of 6 months or longer *Note: If you were out of the country as part of your service, this time out of the country does not break your "continuous residence." It is treated just like time spent in the United States.*
If you: Performed active duty military service during: • World War I (November 11, 1916-April 6, 1917); • World War II (September 1, 1939-December 31, 1946); • Korea (June 25, 1950-July 1, 1955); • Vietnam (February 28, 1961-October 15, 1978); or • Persian Gulf (August 2, 1990-April 11, 1991)	You are not required to be a Permanent Resident. *Note: If you did not enlist or reenlist in the United States or its outlying possessions, you must be a Permanent Resident on the day you file your application.*	Not Required
If you: Were married to a U.S. citizen who died during a period of honorable active duty service in the U.S. Armed Forces *Note: You must have been married to and living with your U.S. citizen spouse at the time of his/her death.*	You must be a Permanent Resident on the day of your interview.	Not Required
If you: Are a U.S. national (a non-citizen who owes permanent allegiance to the United States) AND Have become a resident of any State AND Are otherwise qualified for naturalization	You are not required to be a Permanent Resident.	The same requirements as any other applicant for naturalization, depending on your qualifications. Note: Any time you resided in American Samoa or Swains Island counts the same as the time you resided within a State of the United States.
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TYPE OF APPLICANT

	Physical Presence in the United States	Time in District or State	Good Moral Character	English & Civics Knowledge	Attachment to the Constitution
	30 months	3 months	Required	Required	Required
	18 months	3 months	Required	Required	Required
	Not Required	Not Required	Required	Required	Required
	30 months *Note: Time in the U.S. Armed Forces counts as time "physically present" in the United States no matter where you were.*	3 months	Required	Required	Required
	Not Required	Not Required	Required	Required	Required
	Not Required	Not Required	Required	Required	Required
	The same requirements as any other applicant for naturalization, depending on your qualifications. Note: Any time you resided in American Samoa or Swains Island counts the same as the time you resided within a State of the United States.	3 months or not required, depending on your qualifications.	Required	Required	Required
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TYPE OF APPLICANT — REQUIREMENTS	PR Time as a Permanent Resident	Continuous Residence
If you: Served on a vessel operated by the United States **OR** **If you:** Served on a vessel registered in the United States *Note: In this case, the vessel must be owned by U.S. citizens or a U.S. corporation.*	5 years	5 years as a Permanent Resident without leaving the United States for trips of 6 months or longer *Note: If you were out of the country while serving on a vessel, this time out of the country does not break your "continuous residence." It is treated just like time spent in the United States.*
If you: Are an employee or an individual under contract to the U.S. Government	5 years	5 years as a Permanent Resident without leaving the United States for trips of 6 months or longer *Note: An absence from the United States for 1 year or more will break your "continuous residence." You may keep your "continuous residence" if you have had at least 1 year of unbroken "continuous residence" since becoming a Permanent Resident and you get an approved N-470 before you have been out of the United States for 1 year.*
If you: Are a person who performs ministerial or priestly functions for a religious denomination or an interdenominational organization with a valid presence in the United States	5 years	5 years as a Permanent Resident without leaving the United States for trips of 6 months or longer *Note: An absence from the United States for 1 year or more will break your "continuous residence." You may keep your "continuous residence" if you have had at least 1 year of unbroken "continuous residence" since becoming a Permanent Resident and you get an approved N-470 at any time before applying for naturalization.*
If you: Are employed by one of the following: • An American institution of research recognized by the Attorney General; • An American-owned firm or corporation engaged in the development of foreign trade and commerce for the United States; or • A public international organization of which the United States is a member by law or treaty (if the employment began after you became a Permanent Resident)	5 years	5 years as a Permanent Resident without leaving the United States for trips of 6 months or longer *Note: An absence from the United States for 1 year or more will break your "continuous residence." You may keep your "continuous residence" if you have had at least 1 year of unbroken "continuous residence" since becoming a Permanent Resident and you get an approved N-470 before you have been out of the United States for 1 year.*
If you: Have been employed for 5 years or more by a U.S. nonprofit organization that principally promotes the interests of the United States abroad through the communications media	5 years	Not Required
If you: Are the spouse of a U.S. citizen who is one of the following: • A member of the U.S. Armed Forces; • An employee or an individual under contract to the U.S. Government; • An employee of an American institution of research recognized by the Attorney General; • An employee of an American-owned firm or corporation engaged in the development of foreign trade and commerce for the United States; • An employee of a public international organization of which the United States is a member by law or treaty; or • A person who performs ministerial or priestly functions for a religious denomination or an interdenominational organization with a valid presence in the United States **AND** Your citizen spouse is working overseas for at least 1 year according to an employment contract or order.	You must be a Permanent Resident at the time of your INS interview	Not Required
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	Physical Presence in the United States	Time in District or State	Good Moral Character	English & Civics Knowledge	Attachment to the Constitution
	30 months *Note: Time served on the vessel counts as time "physically present" in the United States no matter where you were.*	3 months	Required	Required	Required
	30 months *Note: Time spent in this type of employment counts as time "physically present" in the United States no matter where you are as long as you get an approved N-470 before you have been out of the United States for 1 year.*	3 months	Required	Required	Required
	30 months *Note: Time spent in this type of employment counts as time "physically present" in the United States no matter where you are as long as you get an approved N-470 before you apply for naturalization.*	3 months	Required	Required	Required
	30 months	3 months	Required	Required	Required
	Not required	Not Required	Required	Required	Required
	Not Required	Not Required	Required	Required	Required
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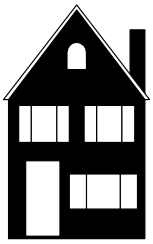
Time as a Permanent Resident

Permanent Residents are people who have "permanent resident" status in the United States as provided for under our immigration laws. Permanent Residents are normally given Permanent Resident Cards. (Note: these cards used to be called Alien Registration Cards.)

In most cases you must be a Permanent Resident for a certain number of years before you may apply for naturalization. But it is not enough to be a Permanent Resident for the right number of years. You must also be in "continuous residence" during that time.



Continuous Residence

"Continuous residence" means that you have not left the United States for a long period of time. If you leave the United States for too long, you may interrupt your "continuous residence."

What if I was outside the United States for between 6 and 12 months? If you leave the United States for more than 6 months, but less than 1 year, you have broken or disrupted your "continuous residence" unless you can prove otherwise. Read the "Document Checklist" in the back pocket of the *Guide* to find out what information you must give to us to prove you did not break your "continuous residence."

What if I was outside the United States for 1 year or longer? In almost all cases, if you leave the United States for 1 year or more, you have disrupted your "continuous residence." This is true even if you have a Re-entry Permit.

If you leave the country for 1 year or longer, you may be eligible to re-enter as a Permanent Resident if you have a Re-entry Permit. But none of the time you were in the United States *before you left* the country counts toward your time in "continuous residence."

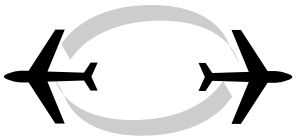
Fortunately, if you return within 2 years, some of your time *out of the country* does count. In fact, the last 364 days of your time out of the country (1 year minus 1 day) counts toward meeting your "continuous residence" requirement.

If you are applying based on 5 years as a Permanent Resident or 3 years as a Permanent Resident married to a U.S. citizen, you may file for naturalization up to 90 days before you meet the "continuous residence" requirement. For example, if you are applying based on 3 years of "continuous residence" as a Permanent Resident married to a U.S. citizen, you can apply any time after you have been a Permanent resident in continuous residence for 3 years minus 90 days. You may send your application before you have met the requirement for "continuous residence" only. Therefore, you must still have been married to and living with your U.S. citizen spouse for 3 years before you may file your application. You must also meet all the other eligibility requirements when you file your application with INS.

There are a few small groups of applicants who do not have any "continuous residence" requirement (for example, members of the U.S. Armed Forces).

There are also a few small groups of people who can leave the country for over 1 year and not disrupt their "continuous residence." To maintain their "continuous residence" while out of the country, these people must file an "Application to Preserve Residence for Naturalization Purposes" (Form N-470). See the table at the beginning of this section for more information on who can use an N-470 and when they must file it.

Physical Presence in the United States



"Physical presence" means that you have actually been in the United States. Most applicants must be physically present in the United States for a certain number of months to be eligible for naturalization.

What is the difference between "physical presence" and "continuous residence"? "Physical presence" involves the total number of days you were outside the United States on all of your trips. "Continuous residence" involves the number of days you were outside the United States during a single trip. Even if you never took a trip that was long enough to disrupt your "continuous residence," you may have taken so many short trips that you do not meet the "physical presence" requirement.

"Continuous Residence" *Example*

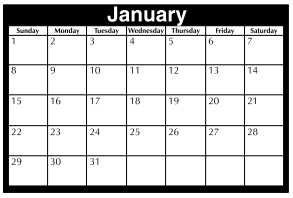
- An applicant became a Permanent Resident on January 1, 1990.
- She lived in the United States for 3 years, then returned to her native country for 1 year and 3 months.
- She got a Re-entry Permit before leaving the United States so that she could keep her Permanent Resident status.
- The applicant re-entered the United States with Permanent Resident status on April 1, 1994.

Question: When is the applicant eligible for naturalization?

Answer: On April 2, 1998, 4 years and 1 day after she returned to the United States The last 364 days the applicant was out of the United States count toward her time as a Permanent Resident in "continuous residence," but the 3 years in the United States before leaving do not.

When counting the total number of days you have been out of the country, include all trips you have taken outside the United States. This includes short trips and trips to Canada and Mexico. For example, if you go to Canada for a weekend, you must include that trip when you are counting how many days you have spent out of the country. Generally, partial days spent in the United States count as whole days spent in the United States.

There are small groups of applicants who may count time abroad as time in the United States for the "physical presence" requirement. For example, any time spent in the U.S. Armed Forces counts as time in the United States even if you were stationed overseas. See the table at the beginning of this section for more information.



Time as a Resident in District or State

Most people must live in the district or state in which they are applying for at least 3 months before applying. A district is a geographical area defined by INS and served by one of the 33 INS "District Offices." You can find out in which district you live by referring to the single page titled "Your Local INS Office," located in the back pocket of this *Guide*.

Students may apply for naturalization either where they go to school or where their family lives (if they are still financially dependent on their parents).

Good Moral Character

To be eligible for naturalization you must be a person of good moral character. INS will make a determination on your moral character based upon the laws Congress has passed. In the following section, we describe some of the things INS may consider.

Criminal Record. Committing certain crimes may cause you to be ineligible for naturalization (INS calls these "bars" to naturalization). Aggravated felonies (committed on or after November 29, 1990) and murder are permanent bars. You may never become a citizen if you have committed one of these crimes.

Other crimes are temporary bars. Temporary bars usually prevent you from becoming a citizen for a certain amount of time after you commit the crime.

The "Application for Naturalization" (Form N-400) asks several questions about crimes. You should report all crimes that you have committed including ones that have been expunged (removed from your record) and ones that happened before your 18th birthday. If you do not tell INS about these crimes and we find out about them, you may be denied naturalization (even if the crime itself was not a crime for which your case could be denied).

Lying. If you do not tell the truth during your interview, INS may deny your application for lacking good moral character. If INS grants you naturalization and you are later found to have lied during your interview, your citizenship may be revoked.

Please note that if you have committed certain serious crimes, INS may decide to remove you from the United States. If you have questions, you may want to seek advice from an immigrant assistance organization or an immigration attorney before applying.

EXAMPLES of Things that Might Show a Lack of Good Moral Character

- Any crime against a person with intent to harm
- Any crime against property or the Government that involves "fraud" or evil intent
- Two or more crimes for which the aggregate sentence was 5 years or more
- Violating any controlled substance law of the United States, any state, or any foreign country
- Habitual drunkenness or drunk driving
- Illegal gambling
- Prostitution
- Polygamy (marriage to more than one person at the same time)
- Lying to gain immigration benefits
- Failing to pay court-ordered child support or alimony payments
- Confinement in jail, prison, or similar institution for which the total confinement was 180 days or more during the past 5 years (or 3 years if you are applying based on your marriage to a United States citizen)
- Failing to complete any probation, parole, or suspended sentence before you apply for naturalization
- If you have recently been ordered deported or removed, you are not eligible for citizenship. If you are in removal proceedings, you may not apply for citizenship until the proceedings are complete and you have been allowed to remain in the country as a Permanent Resident.
- Terrorist acts
- Persecution of anyone because of race, religion, national origin, political opinion, or social group

English and Civics

According to the law, applicants must demonstrate:

- "an understanding of the English language, including an ability to read, write, and speak...simple words and phrases...in ordinary usage in the English language...."
- "a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of the history, and of the principles and form of government, of the United States...."

This means that to be eligible for naturalization, you must be able to read, write, and speak basic English. You must also have a basic knowledge of U.S. History and Government (also known as "civics").

What if I cannot meet the English or civics requirements? Certain applicants, because of age or disability, have different English and civics requirements.

Age — There are three important exemptions for testing based on age:

(a) **If you are over 50 and have lived in the United States as a Permanent Resident for periods totaling at least 20 years,** you do not have to take the English test. You do have to take the civics test in the language of your choice;

(b) **If you are over 55 and have lived in the United States as a Permanent Resident for periods totaling at least 15 years,** you do not have to take the English test. You do have to take the civics test in the language of your choice;

(c) **If you are over 65 and have lived in the United States as a Permanent Resident for periods totaling at least 20 years,** you do not have to take the English test, but you do have to take a simpler version of the civics test in the language of your choice.

Important

You must meet these requirements for age and time as a Permanent Resident at the time you file your application to qualify for an exemption.

To qualify for one of these exceptions, your time as a Permanent Resident does not have to be continuous. You are eligible for the exemption as long as your total time residing in the United States (as a Permanent Resident) is at least 15 or 20 years. You may not count time when you were not a Permanent Resident.

Disability — If you have a physical or developmental disability or a mental impairment, you may be eligible for an exception to the English and civics requirements. To request an exception, you must file a "Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions" (Form N-648) with your application. If you believe you qualify, contact a licensed medical or osteopathic doctor or licensed clinical psychologist who will need to complete and sign your N-648.

If you qualify for a waiver of the English proficiency requirement you must be prepared to bring an interpreter.

To apply for a disability exception, your disability:

- must be at least 1 year old (or be expected to last 1 year); and
- must not have been caused by illegal drug use.

Important

If you qualify for a medical exception from the English and civics requirement, you must still be able to take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States. If you cannot communicate an understanding of the meaning of the Oath because of a physical or mental disability, the INS may excuse you from this requirement.

How can I prepare for the tests? Many schools and community organizations help people prepare for their citizenship tests.

You can find sample civics questions in the back pocket of this *Guide*. You can also find a set of sample sentences similar to the ones you might be asked to write or read aloud during your English test. Study materials are also available on the internet at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov, including a practice test of U.S. History and Government that you can take online.

Attachment to the Constitution

All applicants for naturalization must be willing to support and defend the United States and our Constitution. You declare your "attachment" to the United States and our Constitution when you take the Oath of Allegiance. In fact, it is not until you take the Oath of Allegiance that you actually become a U.S. citizen.

What does the Oath require? When you take the oath, you must promise to do three things:

(1) **I Will Renounce Foreign Allegiances.** As stated in the Oath, you must renounce all foreign allegiances to become a U.S. citizen.

(2) **I Will Support the Constitution.** You must also be willing to support and defend the principles of the U.S. Constitution and the laws of the United States.

(3) **I Will Serve the United States.** When required by law, you must be willing to (1) fight in the U.S. Armed Forces, (2) perform non-combatant service in the U.S. Armed Forces, and (3) perform civilian service for the United States.

What if I am against fighting in the military because of my beliefs? If, because of your religious teachings and beliefs, you are against fighting or serving in the military, INS may exempt you from these requirements. You will need to send a letter with your application requesting a modified oath and explaining why you are unable to take the Oath as it is written above. Please see page 39 for more information about this process.

What else will INS consider about my promise to serve the United States?

In addition to your promise to serve the United States when required, INS also considers the following three things when determining if you are truly willing to serve the United States:

(1) *Selective Service* — If you are male, you generally need to register with the Selective Service before applying for naturalization. If you are male and lived in the United States (in any status other than as a lawful nonimmigrant) at any time between your 18th and 26th birthdays, you must be registered with the Selective Service System. If you are male and entered the United States after you turned 26 years old, you do not have to register with the Selective Service.

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.

If you were required to register, you will need to provide your Selective Service number to INS when you apply. You may get your Selective Service number by calling 1-847-688-6888 if you were born after December 31, 1959. If you were born before March 29, 1957, you should call 1-703-605-4047.

If you have not registered, you must register at a United States post office or on the Internet to receive a Selective Service number. The Selective Service System Internet site can be reached at http://www.sss.gov or through the INS Internet site at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov. You must have a Social Security number to register on the Internet.

If you were required to register but did not register before you turned 26, you must do the following:

- Call 1-847-688-688 and complete the Selective Service System's Questionnaire Form (males born before March 29, 1957, should call 1-703-605-4047);
- Receive a "status information letter" from the Selective Service; and
- Send the "status information letter" with your application.

(2) *Alien Discharge from the U.S. Armed Forces* — If you ever received an exemption or discharge from the U.S. Armed Forces because you are an alien, you may not be eligible for naturalization.

(3) *Desertion from the U.S. Armed Forces* — If you were ever convicted of desertion from the U.S. Armed Forces, you are not eligible for naturalization. Desertion means that you left military service before you were discharged.

What Should I Expect from the Naturalization Process?

Preparing to Apply

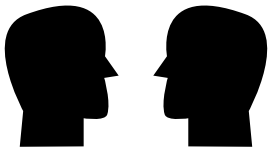
- Read *A Guide to Naturalization*
- Complete the Naturalization Eligibility Worksheet
- Get an Application for Naturalization (Form N-400)

Completing Your Application and Getting Photographed

- Complete your application
- Get two photographs taken
- Collect the necessary documents
- Send your application, documents, and fee to the appropriate Service Center

Getting Fingerprinted

- Receive an appointment letter from INS
- Go to the fingerprinting location
- Get your fingerprints taken
- Mail additional documents if INS requests them
- Wait for INS to schedule your interview



Being Interviewed

- Receive an appointment for your interview
- Go to your local office at the specified time
- Bring identification and provide additional documents if INS requests them
- Answer questions about your application and background
- Take the English and civics tests
- Receive a decision

Taking the Oath

- Receive a ceremony date
- Check in at the ceremony
- Return your Permanent Resident Card
- Answer questions about what you have done since your interview
- Take the oath
- Receive your Certificate of Naturalization

Preparing to Apply

1. Read *A Guide to Naturalization*

Reading *A Guide to Naturalization* is the first step in the naturalization process. We realize that some naturalization requirements may be difficult to understand. If you read this *Guide* before beginning the naturalization process, many of your questions will be answered.

We hope that the information in the *Guide* will help you prepare your application. If you are well prepared, and send us the necessary information and documents, we can process your application more quickly. It is your responsibility to enter the naturalization process fully informed and ready to provide the necessary information and documents.

2. Complete the Naturalization Eligibility Worksheet

Complete the eligibility worksheet in the back pocket of this *Guide* to decide if you are eligible to apply for naturalization. If you do not meet all the requirements, you may save both time and money by waiting until you are eligible to apply.

If you complete the eligibility worksheet and have questions about your eligibility, you should seek advice by:

- calling the National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283;
- reviewing the information on the INS web site at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov;
- going to an INS information counter;
- contacting a community immigrant assistance organization; or
- talking to an immigration attorney.

3. Get an Application for Naturalization (Form N-400)

Once you have completed the eligibility worksheet and believe that you are eligible for naturalization, you should obtain an application. The application is called the "Application for Naturalization" (Form N-400). You may obtain an N-400 by calling the INS Forms Line (1-800-870-3676) or by downloading it from the internet: (http://www.ins.usdoj.gov)

Completing Your Application and Getting Photographed

1. Complete your application

Once you have an N-400, you must fill it out completely. INS may ask for additional information if you leave it out of your application. This will delay the processing of your naturalization application.

You will be required to answer questions about your application at your interview. When completing your application, you should answer all questions honestly. Be sure to keep a copy of your completed application for your records.

2. Get two photographs taken

You should include two color photographs with your application. If you do not send photographs with your application, INS will return the application to you.

Your photographs should be the same size as the sample below. Be sure there is enough white space in the margin of the photographs so you will have room to sign your full name if your application is approved. The photographs must also be:

- unmounted and printed on thin paper, on a white background with a 3/4 profile view of the right side of your face and your right ear; and
- taken within 30 days of the date they are sent to INS.

Finally, your head should be bare (unless you are required to wear a headdress by a religious order). In all cases your facial features must be visible.

You should print your name and "A"– number lightly in pencil on the back of each photograph. For more information on the photograph requirements, see the single page titled "Color Photograph Specifications," located in the back pocket of this *Guide*.

3. Collect the necessary documents

You will need to send copies of several documents with your application. How many and which documents you will need to send will depend on your individual situation. If you do not send the additional documents with your application, the processing of your application may be delayed.

In most cases you should send a copy of a document, but you should be prepared to bring the originals with you to your interview. We may also ask you to send other documents to us before your interview, or to bring additional documents with you to your interview.

Use the Document Checklist in the back pocket of the Guide to make sure you send the right documents.

Be sure to send an English translation with any document that is not already in English. The translation must include a statement from the translator that he or she is competent to translate and that the translation is correct.

If you do not have a required document and cannot get a certified copy of the original, submit a certification from the original recording authority explaining why it cannot be provided. In that case we will consider other evidence such as notarized affidavits.

Important

The Document Checklist will tell you when you need to send original documents and when you may send copies. Remember to make and keep copies of all documents you send to us.

4. Send your application, documents, and fee to the appropriate Service Center

Send your application directly to the Service Center that serves your area. If you try to take or mail your application to a local INS office, it will be returned to you.

The current fee you must send with your application is on the one page insert titled "Current Naturalization Fees" in the back pocket of this *Guide.*

If you are applying based on 5 years as a Permanent Resident or 3 years as a Permanent Resident married to a U.S. citizen, you may file for naturalization up to 90 days before you have met the "continuous residence requirement. For example, if you are required to be in "continuous residence" for 5 years before you naturalize, you may apply once you have been in "continuous residence" 5 years minus 90 days. Do not apply too early or your application will be returned to you or denied.

Unless you are living overseas or are currently serving in active duty military service, use the following list to determine where to send your application, documents, and fee:

If you live in Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Territory of Guam, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, send your application to:

California Service Center
P.O. Box 10400
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607-0400

If you live in Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, or Wyoming, send your application to:

Nebraska Service Center
P.O. Box 87400
Lincoln, NE 68501-7400

If you live in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, or Texas, send your application to:

Texas Service Center
P.O. Box 851204
Mesquite, TX 75185-1204

If you live in Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands, send your application to:

Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Weldon Street
St. Albans, VT 05479-0001

What if I live overseas? If you are overseas and filing an N-400, you should send your application to the Service Center that serves the INS office where you want to be interviewed. For example, if you want to be interviewed in the Honolulu office, you should send your application to the California Service Center.

What if I am currently serving in active duty status in the military? If you are applying for naturalization based on qualifying military service, and are currently serving in an active duty status, you should go to your service's personnel office for information on how to prepare your application. You should speak to your personnel office even if you are stationed overseas.

Getting Fingerprinted

1. Receive an appointment letter from INS

Once you have filed your application with INS, we will send you a letter telling you where and when to have your fingerprints taken.

In most cases, the letter will tell you to go to an Application Support Center or a police station. A van will come to certain areas to fingerprint applicants who are located far away from the nearest fingerprinting location. Your notice from INS will tell you if a van serves your area.

2. Go to the fingerprinting location

Take your notice letter from INS, your Permanent Resident Card, and another form of identification (drivers license, passport, state identification card) with you. Your second form of identification should have your photograph on it.

If you are 75 years or older at the time you file your application you do not have to be fingerprinted. If you are living overseas, we will tell you to be printed at a U.S. consular office.

3. Get your fingerprints taken

Currently, most sites are using ink to take fingerprints. Eventually, every fingerprinting site will use electronic technology to take fingerprints without ink.

In order to do a criminal background check, INS will send your fingerprints to the FBI. In some cases, the FBI may reject your fingerprints because of the quality of the prints.

If the FBI rejects your fingerprints, INS will notify you and schedule a second visit to the fingerprinting site. You will not be asked to pay again.

If the FBI rejects your fingerprints twice, you may be asked to provide police clearances for each place you have lived in the past 5 years. You will need to contact the police departments in the places you have lived to get these clearances.

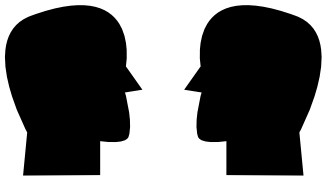
4. Mail additional documents if INS requests them

While the FBI is checking your background, INS will be locating your immigration file. Sometimes INS may need additional documents from you before we can schedule your interview. If INS needs more information from you, we will send you a letter telling you what we need and where to send it.

5. Wait for INS to schedule your interview

Once everything is ready, INS will schedule you for an interview. INS will send you an interview notice in the mail that will tell you the date, time, and place of your interview.

Being Interviewed



1. Receive an appointment for your interview

INS will send you a notice in the mail telling you when and where you must appear for your interview. You will not receive a second notice.

What if I cannot go to my interview? If you must reschedule your interview, you should write to the office where your interview is scheduled as soon as possible. You should explain your situation and ask to have your interview rescheduled. When a new date has been set, INS will send you a new interview notice.

Important

To make sure you get your interview notice, you must notify INS every time your address changes.

2. Go to your local office at the specified time

You should go to the office where you are to be interviewed before the time of your interview. Many INS offices are crowded. So unless you need to, you may not want to bring other people with you to your interview.

If you do not go to your interview and do not contact INS beforehand, we will "administratively close" your case. If we "administratively close" your case and you do not contact INS within 1 year to reopen your case, we will deny your application.

Important

Rescheduling an interview may add several months to the naturalization process, so try to attend your original interview date.

3. Bring identification and provide additional documents if INS requests them

You should bring the following identification to your interview: (1) your Permanent Resident or Alien Registration Card, (2) your passport (even if it has expired), and (3) any Reentry Permits you have.

In some cases, INS may ask you to bring additional documents to the interview. These documents will be listed on your appointment letter. If you don't bring the necessary documents, your case may be delayed or denied.

4. Answer questions about your application and background

At your interview, an INS officer will explain the purpose of the interview, ask to see your identification, and place you under oath. He or she will ask you about:

- your background;
- evidence supporting your case;
- your place and length of residence;
- your character;
- your attachment to the Constitution; and
- your willingness to take an Oath of Allegiance to the United States.

In addition, the INS officer may ask you some other questions to make sure that you meet all the eligibility requirements. Be prepared to explain any differences between your application and the other documents you have provided to INS.

Important

Remember that you are under oath. Always tell the truth during your interview. If you lie during your interview, you will be denied citizenship. If you are granted citizenship but then INS finds out that you lied on your application or during your interview, your citizenship may be taken away.

If you want a representative to accompany you to your interview, you must first send us a "Notice of Entry of Appearance as Attorney or Representative" (Form G-28) with your application.

Also, if you are exempt from the English requirements, you may bring an interpreter to the interview or INS may select one for you. If you have any disabilities, you may bring a family

member or legal guardian with you at the discretion of the INS officer.

5. Take the English and civics tests

During your interview, an INS officer will also test your ability to read, write, and speak English (unless you are exempt from the English requirements). You will also be given a civics test (to test your knowledge and understanding of U.S. History and Government) unless you are exempt.

English. Your English will be tested in the following ways:

(1) **Reading.** To test your reading ability you may be asked to:
- read out loud parts of the N-400;
- read a set of civics questions and then answer them; or
- read several simple sentences out loud.

(2) **Writing.** To test your writing skills, the INS officer will ask you to write one or two simple sentences (see the sample sentences in the back pocket of this *Guide*).

(3) **Speaking.** We will test your speaking ability when you answer questions about yourself and your application during your interview.

Civics. During your interview, we will ask you to verbally answer a set of civics question or to take a written multiple-choice test with up to 20 questions (see the sample civics questions in the back pocket of this *Guide*).

6. Receive a decision

After your interview, we will give you a Form N-652 that gives you information about the results of your interview. Based on all the information you have given us, we will either grant, continue, or deny your naturalization application after your interview.

Granted. Sometimes INS can tell you if you will be granted citizenship at the end of your interview. In some cases, you may be able to take an oath ceremony the same day as your interview (where available). Otherwise, you will receive a notice telling you when and where your oath ceremony will be.

Continued. The INS officer may also "continue" your case. This means your case is put on hold. If your case is continued, it will add time to your naturalization process. The most common reasons for continuation are (1) failing the English and civics tests, and (2) failing to give INS the documents we need.

When your case is continued, you will be asked to do one of two things:

(1) **Come back for a second interview.** If you fail one or both of the tests, we will reschedule you to come back for another interview, usually within 60-90 days of the first interview. At that time, you will be tested again. If you fail the test(s) a second time, we will deny your application.

(2) **Provide additional documents.** If we need more information from you, we will give you a Form N-14. This form explains what information or documents you must provide us, and tells you when and how you should return the information to us. If you do not follow the instructions, we may deny your application.

Denied. INS may also deny your application for naturalization. If INS denies your application for naturalization, you will receive a written notice telling you why.

What can I do if INS denies my application? If you feel that we wrongly denied you citizenship, you may request a hearing with an INS officer. Your denial letter will explain how to request a hearing and will include the form you need. The form for filing an appeal is the "Request for Hearing on a Decision in Naturalization Proceedings under Section 336 of the Act" (Form N-336). You must file the form with us with the correct fee within 30 days after you receive a denial letter.

If, after an appeal hearing with INS, you still believe we wrongly denied you naturalization, you may file a petition for a new review of your application in U.S. District Court.

Taking the Oath

1. Receive a ceremony date

If INS approves your application for naturalization, you must attend a ceremony and take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States. INS will notify you by mail of the time and date of your ceremony.

The notice INS sends you is called the "Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony" (Form N-445). In some cases, INS may give you the option to take the Oath on the same day as your interview.

If you decide to take a "same-day" oath, INS will ask you to come back to the office later that day.

At this time, you will take the Oath and receive your Certificate of Naturalization.

2. Check in at the ceremony

When you arrive at the ceremony, you will be asked to check in with INS. Try to arrive early. Remember that often there are many other people being naturalized with you who must also be checked in.

If you cannot attend the ceremony on the day you are scheduled, you should return the INS notice (Form N-445) to your local office. You should include a letter explaining why you cannot be at the ceremony and asking INS to reschedule you.

3. Return your Permanent Resident Card

You must return your Permanent Resident Card to INS when you check in for your oath ceremony. You will no longer need your Permanent Resident Card because you will get your Certificate of Naturalization at the ceremony.

4. Answer questions about what you have done since your interview

If more than a day has passed between your interview and the ceremony, we will ask you several questions. These questions will be on the back of the notice INS sends you (Form N-445).

Some questions on the back of the N-445 are: "Have you traveled outside the United States?" and "Have you claimed exemption from military service?" You should read the questions carefully and mark your answers before you arrive at the ceremony.

Answer the questions on the back of the Form N-445 only for the time since your interview.

5. Take the oath

You are not a citizen until you have taken the Oath of Allegiance. You will take the Oath during the ceremony. An official will read each part of the Oath slowly and ask you to repeat his or her words. The Oath can be found on page 28 of this *Guide*.

Changes to the Oath. You may take the Oath, without the words "to bear arms on behalf of the Unites States when required by law..." if you provide enough evidence that you are against fighting for the United States because of your religious training and beliefs.

If you provide enough evidence and INS finds that you are against any type of service in the Armed Forces because of your religious training and beliefs, you may leave out the words "to perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by law."

If INS finds that you are unable to swear the Oath using the words "on oath," you may replace these words with "and solemnly affirm." Finally, if INS finds that you are unable to use the words "so help me God" because of your religious training or beliefs, you may leave out these words.

If you believe you qualify for a modified Oath, you should write us a letter explaining your situation with your application. INS may also ask you to provide a document from your religious organization explaining its beliefs and stating that you are a member in good standing.

If you cannot communicate an understanding of the meaning of the Oath because of a physical or mental disability, the INS may excuse you from this requirement.

Hereditary Titles. If you have any hereditary titles or positions of nobility, you must give them up at the oath ceremony.

6. Receive your Certificate of Naturalization

Once you have taken the Oath, you will receive your Certificate of Naturalization. You may use this document as proof that you are a U.S. citizen.

Important

We strongly recommend that you apply for a U.S. passport soon after your naturalization ceremony.

A passport serves as evidence of citizenship and is easier to carry around than a Certificate of Naturalization. In addition, if you lose your Certificate of Naturalization, it can take up to 1 year to receive a new certificate. If you do not have a passport, you will not have evidence of citizenship during the time you are waiting for a new certificate. You can often get an application for a passport at your oath ceremony or at most post offices.

What Kind of Customer Service Can I Expect?

You should expect INS staff to be:
- Professional
- Courteous
- Knowledgeable

You should expect the naturalization process to be:
- Fair
- Consistent
- Timely

You should expect information on the naturalization process and on the status of your application to be:
- Accurate
- Readily available

INS also expects certain things from you. You should:
- Treat INS employees with courtesy
- Read *A Guide to Naturalization*
- Read and follow the instructions on your application
- Be prepared at each step of the process

Making a Customer Service Complaint

INS realizes that in some offices it takes a long time to process applications. We are currently working to reduce processing times.

If you have a complaint about the way that an INS employee treated you, you should speak with that employee's direct supervisor if possible. If your complaint is not handled to your satisfaction or you could not speak with the supervisor, you may write a letter to the Director of your District Office. Filing a complaint will not affect your eligibility for naturalization.

You can also use the "Report of Complaint" (Form I-847). This form is a pre-addressed postcard that is sent to INS Headquarters in Washington, DC. You may order the I-847 from the INS Forms Line (1-800-870-3676).

Where do I Go for Help?

There are many resources available to naturalization applicants. Some of these are:

National Customer Service Center. If you need more information about the naturalization process and you live in the continental United States, you may call the National Customer Service Center at no charge (1-800-375-5283) for help. Not all services may be available to callers from all areas.

Community Based Organizations (CBOs). In most communities, there are organizations that assist immigrants who want to become naturalized. These organizations often offer classes in English and civics. They may also help immigrants complete their applications. CBOs may charge a fee or they may offer their services free of charge.

You may locate a CBO by contacting your local INS office. You may also look in the phone book under "Immigration and Naturalization" or "Immigration and Naturalization Consultants" or talk to other immigrants who have been naturalized.

Important

You should be certain that the organization or attorney you contact is reliable and has a good reputation. One way to be sure of the quality of a CBO is to ask them for references or if the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) accredits them.

INS Internet Home Page. You can learn more about naturalization, download the Form N-400 and this *Guide*, and get other information from the INS web site at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov.

Immigration Attorneys. If you have questions about your eligibility, you may want to talk to an immigration attorney. Attorneys are usually listed in the phone book under "Lawyers" or "Attorneys." In many cases, the phone book also has a directory of attorneys by the type of law they practice. You may be able to find attorneys who assist immigrants by looking in the directory under "Immigration and Naturalization."

INS Information Counters. If you have questions that have not been answered either by this *Guide* or by the other resources listed here, you may always go to the information counter at your local INS office. There you may speak directly to an INS employee.

Glossary of Terms

A Guide to Naturalization – The brochure you are reading is *A Guide to Naturalization.*

Aggravated Felony – Usually refers to particularly serious crimes. If you have committed an aggravated felony, you may be permanently ineligible for naturalization. The Immigration and Nationality Act and the laws in each state determine what is considered an aggravated felony.

Application Support Center (ASC) – INS offices where applicants usually have their fingerprints taken. Once you have filed your application with INS, you will receive a notice telling you which ASC serves your area.

AR-11, Alien's Change of Address Card – This is the form you use to tell INS when you have moved to a new address. The AR-11 is pre-printed with INS' address. It is very important to tell INS when your address changes. This way you will receive any information we send you, including interview notices and requests for additional documents.

Certificate of Naturalization – A certificate given at the oath ceremony. It serves as proof of your citizenship. INS also recommends getting a United States passport as evidence that you are a citizen.

Community Based Organization (CBO) – Organizations that assist immigrants who are new to the United States or who are going through the naturalization process. Many CBOs will help you complete your application and guide you through the naturalization process. CBOs may charge a fee or offer their services free of charge.

Constitution – The supreme law of the United States. It may be changed only through amendment by Congress and ratification by three-fourths of the states.

Continued – One of three things that may happen to your case after your interview (granted, denied, or continued). If your case is continued, it is put on hold until further action is taken by you or INS. If your case is continued, INS may ask you to provide more documents or to come to an additional interview.

Continuous Residence – An important requirement for naturalization. "Continuous residence" may be broken if you take a single trip out of the country that lasts for 6 months or more.

Denied – One of three things that may happen to your case after your interview (granted, denied, or continued). If your application is denied, you have not met the eligibility requirements for naturalization.

Districts – The geographic divisions of the United States used by INS. There are 33 INS districts in the United States.

G-28, Notice of Entry of Appearance as Attorney or Representative – The form you must file with your N-400 if you wish to bring a representative with you to your INS interview.

Good Moral Character – Good moral character is an important eligibility requirement for naturalization. When determining if an applicant has "good moral character," INS considers such things as honesty and criminal records.

Granted – One of three things that may happen to your case after your interview (granted, denied, or continued). If you are eligible, your application will be approved or "granted." After you take the Oath of Allegiance, you will be a United States citizen.

I-847, Report of Complaint –You may use this form if you have a complaint about the service at INS. The I-847 is a postcard that is addressed to INS Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

INS Forms Line – The INS Forms Line distributes all forms for immigration and naturalization. You can call the Forms Line at 1-800-870-3676 to have any INS forms sent to you, including the "Application for Naturalization" (Form N-400).

INS Information Counter – INS offices have information counters staffed by INS employees called Immigration Information Officers (IIOs). IIOs are available to answer questions you have about naturalization.

N-400, Application for Naturalization – The N-400 is the application that all people 18 years of age or older use to become naturalized.

N-445, Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony – If you are approved for naturalization, you will receive an N-445 telling you when and where to attend your swearing in ceremony. On the back of the form will be several questions that you must answer before you check in at the ceremony.

N-470, Application to Preserve Residence for Naturalization Purposes – The N-470 is a form that can be used by a small group of people who leave the country for longer than 1 year to maintain their "continuous residence."

N-565, Application for Replacement Naturalization/ Citizenship Document – If you lose your Certificate of Naturalization or your Certificate of Citizenship, you may file an N-565 to get a new one. This process may take up to 1 year, so INS advises naturalized citizens to also get a U.S. passport as evidence of their U.S. citizenship.

N-600, Application for Certificate of Citizenship – If you are a citizen by birth or by law, you may file an N-600 to get a Certificate of Citizenship. This applies to people who were born outside of the United States to United States citizen parents and to people who become citizens based on their parents' naturalization.

N-648, Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions – The form used to apply for a disability exemption. If you have a qualifying medical disability that prevents you from fulfilling the English and civics requirement, you must have a licensed medical or osteopathic doctor, or licensed clinical psychologist complete and sign an N-648. You must submit the N-648 with your application.

Naturalization – Naturalization is the process by which immigrants become citizens.

Naturalization Eligibility Worksheet – A tool that you may use to determine if you are eligible for naturalization. There is an eligibility worksheet in the back pocket of this *Guide*. You do not send this worksheet to INS at any time; it is for your use only.

Oath Ceremony – To become a naturalized citizen of the United States, you must attend an oath ceremony where you take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States.

Oath of Allegiance to the United States – The oath you take to become a citizen. When you take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States, you are promising to give up your allegiance to other countries and to support and defend the United States, the Constitution, and our laws. You must be able to take and understand the Oath of Allegiance in order to become a naturalized citizen.

Outlying Possessions - The current outlying possessions of the United States are American Samoa and Swains Island.

Permanent Resident – A Permanent Resident is a person who has been granted permanent resident status in the United States and has (or is waiting for) a Permanent Resident Card.

Permanent Resident Card –
The Permanent Resident Card is an INS document that identifies a person as a Permanent Resident. The Permanent Resident Card may be identified as either Form I-151 or Form I-551. The Permanent Resident Card used to be known as the Alien Registration Card and "green card."

Physical Presence – Physical presence in the United States is an important eligibility requirement. Most naturalization applicants must spend a specified amount of time in the United States in order to meet the "physical presence" requirement for naturalization. Except in a few cases, time spent outside of the United States, even if you go to Canada or Mexico briefly, does not count toward your "physical presence."

Port-of-Entry – The Port-of-Entry is the place where you legally entered the country or where you were granted an adjustment of status to a Permanent Resident.

Selective Service – The Selective Service is the Federal agency responsible for providing manpower to the U.S. Armed Forces in an emergency. Male applicants generally need to register with the Selective Service before applying for naturalization. See pages 28-29 for information on who is required to register, how to register, and what to do if you were required to register but did not, or call the Selective Service at 1-847-688-6888 for more information.

Service Center – There are four INS Service Centers in the United States You must send your naturalization applications to one of these Service Centers. See page 35 for more information about the Service Center to which you send your application.

U.S. National (but not U.S. Citizen) -
A person who owes permanent allegiance to the United States, and who may naturalize based on living in an outlying possession of the United States.

United States Passport – A U.S. passport is a document that identifies you as a U.S. citizen. All naturalized citizens are encouraged to get a passport as soon as possible after they are naturalized.

Document Checklist

All applicants must send the following 3 things with their N-400 application:

1. A photocopy of both sides of your Permanent Resident Card (formerly known as the Alien Registration Receipt Card or "Green Card"). If you have lost the card, submit a photocopy of the receipt of your Form I-90, Application to Replace Alien Registration Receipt Card;
2. Two (2) identical color photographs, with your name and "A" number written lightly in pencil on the back of each. For details about the photo requirements, see part 5 of *A Guide to Naturalization* and the Form M-378 instructions distributed with your application. Do not wear eyeglasses or earrings for the photo. Note that if your religion requires you to wear a head covering, your facial features and your right ear must still be exposed in the photo for purposes of identification; AND
3. A check or money order for the application fee and the fingerprinting fee, as stated in the M-479 Current Naturalization Fees enclosure in the *Guide*. (Applicants 75 years of age or older are exempted from fingerprinting and the fingerprinting fee). Write your "A" number on the back of the check or money order.

Send COPIES of the following documents, unless we ask for an original.

If an attorney or accredited representative is acting on your behalf, send:
❑ A completed original Form G-28, "Notice of Entry of Appearance as Attorney or Representative."

If your current legal name is different from the name on your Permanent Resident Card, send:
❑ The document(s) that legally changed your name (marriage certificate, divorce decree, or court document).

If you are applying for naturalization on the basis of marriage to a U.S. citizen, send the following 4 things:

1. Evidence that your spouse has been a U.S. citizen for the last 3 years:
   - birth certificate (if your spouse never lost citizenship since birth), OR
   - naturalization certificate, OR
   - certificate of citizenship, OR
   - the inside of the front cover and signature page of your spouse's current U.S. passport, OR
   - Form FS240, "Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States of America"

2. Your current marriage certificate; AND

3. Proof of termination of ALL prior marriages of your spouse (divorce decree(s), annulment(s), or death certificate(s)); AND

4. Documents referring to you and your spouse:
   - tax returns, bank accounts, leases, mortgages, or birth certificates of children, OR
   - IRS-certified copies of the income tax forms that you both filed for the past 3 years, OR
   - an IRS tax return transcript for the last 3 years.

If you were married before, send:
❑ Proof that ALL earlier marriages ended (divorce decree(s), annulment(s), or death certificate(s)).

If you were previously in the U.S. military service, send:
❑ A completed original Form G-325B, "Biographic Information."

If you are currently in U.S. military service AND are seeking citizenship based on that service, send:
❑ A completed original Form N-426, "Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service;" AND

❑ A completed original Form G-325B, "Biographic Information."

If you have taken any trip outside of the United States that lasted for 6 months or more since becoming a Permanent Resident, send evidence that you (and your family) continued to live, work, and/or keep ties to the United States, such as:

❑ An IRS tax return "transcript" or an IRS-certified tax return listing tax information for the last 5 years (or for the last 3 years if you are applying on the basis of marriage to a U.S. citizen)

❑ Rent or mortgage payments and pay stubs.

If you have a dependent spouse or children who do not live with you, send:

❑ Any court or government order to provide financial support; AND

❑ Evidence of your financial support (including evidence that you have complied with any court or government order), such as:

- cancelled checks
- money order receipts
- a court or agency printout of child support payments
- evidence of wage garnishments
- a letter from the parent or guardian who cares for your children

If you answer "Yes" to any of questions 1 through 15 in Part 7, send:

❑ A written explanation on a separate sheet of paper.

If you answer "No" to any of questions 1 through 5 in Part 8, send:

❑ A written explanation on a separate sheet of paper.

If you have ever been arrested or detained by any law enforcement officer for any reason, and <u>no charges were filed</u>, send:

❑ An <u>original</u> official statement by the arresting agency or applicable court confirming that no charges were filed.

If you have ever been arrested or detained by any law enforcement officer for any reason, and <u>charges were filed</u>, send:

❑ An <u>original</u> or court-certified copy of the complete arrest record and disposition for each incident (dismissal order, conviction record, OR acquittal order).

If you have ever been convicted or placed in an alternative sentencing program or rehabilitative program (such as a drug treatment or community service program), send:

❑ An <u>original or court-certified copy</u> of the sentencing record for each incident; AND

❑ Evidence that you completed your sentence:

- An <u>original or certified copy</u> of your probation or parole record, OR
- Evidence that you completed an alternative sentencing program or rehabilitative program

If you have ever had any arrest or conviction vacated, set aside, sealed, expunged, or otherwise removed from your record, send:

❑ An <u>original</u> or court-certified copy of the court order vacating, setting aside, sealing, expunging, or otherwise removing the arrest or conviction, OR an original statement from the court that no record exists of your arrest or conviction.

If you have ever failed to file an income tax return since you became a Permanent Resident, send:

❑ All correspondence with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regarding your failure to file.

If you have any federal, state, or local taxes that are overdue, send:

❑ A signed agreement from the IRS or state or local tax office showing that you have filed a tax return and arranged to pay the taxes you owe; AND

❑ Documentation from the IRS or state or local tax office showing the current status of your repayment program.

If you are applying for a disability exception to the testing requirement, send:

❑ An <u>original</u> Form N-648, "Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions," completed less than 6 months ago by a licensed medical or osteopathic doctor or licensed clinical psychologist.

If you did not register with the Selective Service and you 1) are male, 2) are 26 years old or older, and 3) lived in the United States in a status other than as a lawful nonimmigrant between the ages of 18 and 26, send:

❑ A "Status Information Letter" from the Selective Service (Call 1-847-688-6888 for more information).

Current Naturalization Fees

The fee for filing your naturalization application is:	**$260**
The fee for having your fingerprints taken is:*	**+$50**
	$310

You must pay this fee with a check or money order drawn on a U.S. bank payable to the “Immigration and Naturalization Service.” INS does not accept cash.

Residents of Guam should make the fee payable to "Treasurer, Guam," and residents of the Virgin Islands should make the fee payable to "Commissioner of Finance of the Virgin Islands."

You must send your fee with your application. Remember that your application fee is not refundable even if you withdraw your application or INS denies your case.

*If you are 75 years or older or if you are filing from overseas, DO NOT send the $50 fingerprinting fee with your application.

Naturalization Eligibility Worksheet Instructions

What is the purpose of this worksheet?

The attached "Eligibility Worksheet" will help you decide if you are eligible to apply for naturalization. **Do not send the completed worksheet to INS.**

Who SHOULD complete this worksheet?

If you are 18 years of age or older and are thinking about applying for naturalization based on your years as a Permanent Resident, you should complete this worksheet.

Who SHOULD NOT use this worksheet?

You SHOULD NOT use this worksheet to decide if you are eligible if you are:

- Under 18 years of age and want to apply for naturalization based on your parents' or adopted parents' citizenship (see questions 25-26 on pages 12-14 in *A Guide to Naturalization* for information on how to obtain citizenship).

- A Permanent Resident whose spouse was a U.S. citizen who died while on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces (see pages 18-19 in *A Guide to Naturalization* for information on your naturalization requirements).

- Applying for naturalization based on active duty service in the U.S. Armed Forces (see pages 18-19 in *A Guide to Naturalization* for information on your naturalization requirements).

- A spouse of a U.S. citizen who is (a) a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, (b) an employee or contractor of the U.S. Government, (c) an employee of an American institution of research, (d) an employee of an American-owned firm, (e) an employee of a public international organization, or (f) a clergy member (see pages 20-21 in *A Guide to Naturalization* for more information).

Directions for the Eligibility Worksheet:

1. Answer the questions on the worksheet by checking "True" or "Not True." If you answer "Not True" to certain questions, you may be asked to answer additional questions on pages 3-4. Most applicants will NOT need to answer the questions on pages 3-4.

2. If you have completed the worksheet and believe you are eligible for naturalization, please call the INS Forms Line (1-800-870-3676) to request an application (Form N-400), or download the form from the internet at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov.

3. If you have completed the worksheet and you still have questions regarding your eligibility, you should read *A Guide to Naturalization*. You may also wish to get advice from an immigrant assistance organization or immigration attorney.

Naturalization Eligibility Worksheet

	True	Not True	
1. I am at least 18 years old.	☐	☐ STOP	You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.
2. I am a Permanent Resident of the United States, and I have been issued a Permanent Resident Card (formerly called Alien Registration Card).	☐	☐ STOP	You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.

3. I have been a Permanent Resident for:

- 5 years or more* → ↓
- 3 to 5 years* → See Attachment A on page 3
- less than 3 years → STOP → You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.

	True	Not True	
4. During the last 5 years, I have NOT been out of the United States for 30 months or more.	☐	☐ STOP	For exceptions see Attachment B on page 3.
5. During the last 5 years (or the last 3 years if I qualify under Attachment A), I have not taken a trip out of the United States that lasted 1 year or more.	☐	☐ STOP	For exceptions see Attachment C on page 3.
6. I have resided in the district or state in which I am applying for citizenship for the last 3 months.	☐	☐ STOP	You must wait until you have lived in the state or district for 3 months to apply.
7. I can read, write, and speak basic English.	☐	☐ STOP	For exceptions see Attachment D on page 4.
8. I know the fundamentals of U.S. history and the form and principles of the U.S. government.	☐	☐ STOP	For exceptions see Attachment E on page 4.

Go to question 9.

*Naturalization applicants may file their applications 90 days before they have satisfied the "continuous residence" requirement.

Form M-480
(Rev. 12/00)N

Naturalization Eligibility Worksheet

	True	Not True	
9. I am a person of good moral character.	☐	☐ STOP	You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.
10. One of the following is true: (a) I am female, OR (b) I am a male registered with the Selective Service, OR (c) I am a male who did not enter the United States under any status until after my 26th birthday, OR (d) I am a male who was in the United States between the ages of 18 and 26 but who did not register with the Selective Service, and I will send a "Status Information Letter" from the Selective Service explaining why with my application.	☐	☐ STOP	You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.
11. I have never deserted from the U.S. Armed Forces.	☐	☐ STOP	You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.
12. I have never received an exemption or discharge from the U.S. Armed Forces on the grounds that I am an alien.	☐	☐ STOP	You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.
13. I am willing to perform either military OR civilian service for the United States if required by law. (Note: if your religious teachings and beliefs prohibit you from performing military service, you must be willing to perform non-military service.)	☐	☐ STOP	You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.
14. I will support the Constitution of the United States	☐	☐ STOP	You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.
15. I understand and am willing to take an oath of allegiance to the United States.	☐	☐ STOP	You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.

STOP HERE: You are probably eligible to apply for naturalization.
Please call the Forms Line (1-800-870-3676) for an "Application for Naturalization" (Form N-400) and be sure to read *A Guide to Naturalization*.

Form M-480
(Rev. 12/00)N

Attachment A — Naturalization Eligibility Worksheet

I have been a Permanent Resident for 3 to 5 years.

	True	Not True
I am married to and living with a U.S. citizen.	☐	☐ STOP → You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.
I have been married to that U.S. citizen for at least the past 3 years.	☐	☐ STOP → You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.
My spouse has been a U.S. citizen for at least the past 3 years.	☐	☐ STOP → You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.
During the past 3 years, I have *not* been out of the country for 18 months or more.	☐	☐ STOP → You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.

If you answered "true" to all 4 questions, go to question 5 on page 1.

Attachment B

I have been out of the country for 30 months or more.

	True	Not True
I am: (a) a person who has served on board a vessel operated by or registered in the United States, **OR** (b) an employee or an individual under contract to the U.S. Government, **OR** (c) a person who performs ministerial or priestly functions for a religious denomination or an interdenominational organization with a valid presence in the United States.	☐	☐ STOP → You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.

If you answered "true," see pages 20-21 in *A Guide to Naturalization* to get more information and go to question 5 on page 1.

Attachment C

I have been out of the country for one year or more.

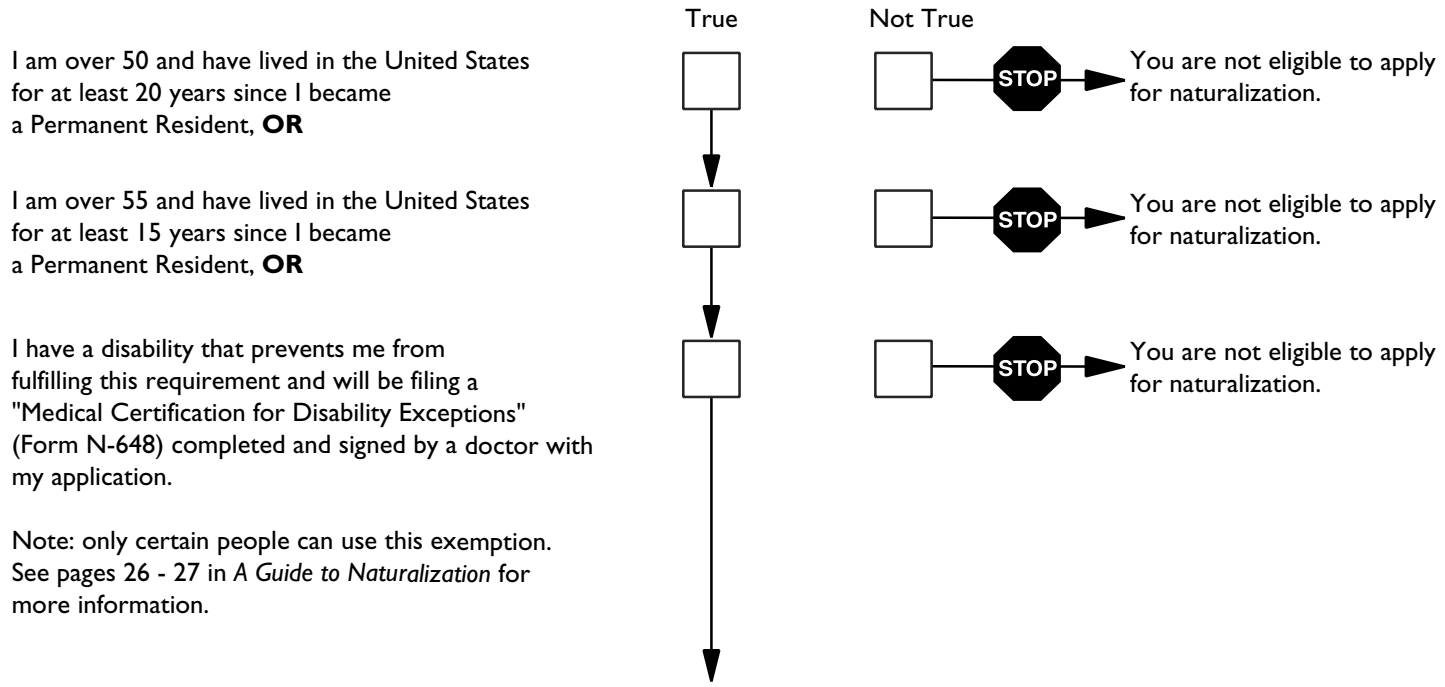
	True	Not True
Since becoming a Permanent Resident, I have not taken a trip out of the United States that lasted for 1 year or more without an approved "Application to Preserve Residence for Naturalization Purposes" (Form N-470).	☐	☐ STOP → You are not eligible to apply for naturalization.

Note: only certain people can use the N-470. See pages 18-21 in *A Guide to Naturalization* for more information.

If you answered "true," go to question 6 on page 1.

Attachment D — Naturalization Eligibility Worksheet

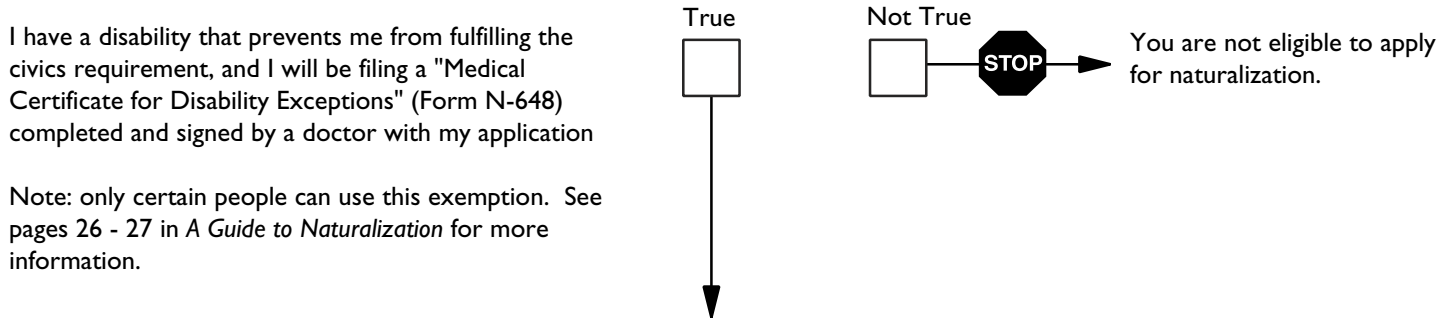
I cannot read, write, or speak basic English.



If you answered "true" to one of these questions, go to question 8 on page 1.

Attachment E

I have a disability that prevents me from fulfilling the civics requirement.



If you answered "true" to the question, go to question 9 on page 2.

OMB No. 1115-0009

Naturalization Study Guide

To be eligible for naturalization, you must be able to read, write, and speak basic English. You must also have a basic knowledge of U.S. History and Government. See pages 26-27 in *A Guide to Naturalization* for more information about the English and civics requirements.

The questions on the next few pages are **examples** of questions an INS officer may ask you at your interview.

The sentences in this section are **examples** of the types of sentences an INS officer may ask you to read aloud or write during your interview.

Please remember that the questions and sentences in this study guide are **examples only**. The INS officer who interviews you may ask you to answer other questions or to read or write other sentences.

Sample Civics Questions

1. What are the colors of our flag?
   Red, white, and blue

2. What do the stars on the flag mean?
   One for each state

3. How many stars are there on our flag?
   50

4. What color are the stars on our flag?
   White

5. How many stripes are there on the flag ?
   13

6. What do the stripes on the flag represent?
   The first 13 states

7. What colors are the stripes on the flag?
   Red and white

8. How many states are there in the Union (the United States)?
   50

9. What do we celebrate on the 4th of July?
   Independence Day

10. Independence Day celebrates independence from whom?
    England

11. What country did we fight during the Revolutionary War?
    England

12. Who was the first president of the United States?
    George Washington

13. Who is the President of the United States today?
    George W. Bush*

14. Who is the Vice President of the United States today?
    Dick Cheney*

15. Who elects the President of the United States?
    The Electoral College

16. Who becomes our President if the President dies?
    The Vice President

17. What is the Constitution?
    The supreme law of the land

18. What do we call changes to the Constitution?
    Amendments

19. How many changes, or amendments, are there to the Constitution?
    27*

20. What are the three branches of our Government?
    Executive, Judicial, and Legislative

21. What is the legislative branch of our Government?
    Congress

22. What makes up Congress?
    The Senate and the House of Representatives

23. Who makes the Federal laws in the United States?
    Congress

24. Who elects Congress?
    The citizens of the United States

25. How many Senators are there in Congress?
    100

26. For how long do we elect each Senator?
    6 years

* **Note:** the answers to questions marked with asterisks will change. Check to be sure you have the correct answer.

27. Name the two Senators from your state.*

28. How many voting members are in the House of Representatives?
435

29. For how long do we elect each member of the House of Representatives?
2 years

30. Who is the head of the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government?
The President

31. For how long is the President elected?
4 years

32. Name the highest part of the Judiciary Branch of our Government?
The Supreme Court

33. What are the duties of the Supreme Court?
To interpret and explain the laws

34. What is the supreme law of the United States?
The Constitution

35. What is the Bill of Rights?
The first 10 amendments to the Constitution

36. What is the capital of the state you live in?

37. Who is the current governor of the state you live in?*

38. Who becomes President if both the President and Vice President die?
Speaker of the House

39. Who is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court?
William Rehnquist*

40. What were the 13 original states?
Virginia, Massachusetts, Maryland, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, North Carolina, South Carolina, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Georgia

41. Who said, "Give me liberty or give me death?"
Patrick Henry

42. Name some countries that were our enemies during World War II?
Germany, Italy, and Japan

43. What was the 49th state added to our Union (the United States)?
Alaska

44. How many full terms can a President serve?
2

45. Who was Martin Luther King, Jr.?
A civil rights leader

46. What are some of the requirements to be eligible to become President?
Candidates for President must:
- **be natural born citizens,**
- **be at least 35 years old,**
- **have lived in the United States for at least 14 years.**

47. Why are there 100 senators in the United States Senate?
Each state elects two

48. Who nominates judges for the Supreme Court?
The President

49. How many Supreme Court justices are there?
9

50. Why did the Pilgrims come to America?
To gain religious freedom

51. What is the head executive of a state government called?
Governor

52. What is the head executive of a city government called?
Mayor

53. What holiday was celebrated for the first time by American colonists?
Thanksgiving

54. Who was the main writer of the Declaration of Independence?
Thomas Jefferson

Sample Civics Questions
(Continued)

55. When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?
July 4, 1776

56. What are some of the basic beliefs of the Declaration of Independence?
That all men are created equal and have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

57. What is the national anthem of the United States?
The Star-Spangled Banner

58. Who wrote The Star-Spangled Banner?
Francis Scott Key

59. What is the minimum voting age in the United States?
18

60. Who signs bills into law?
The President

61. What is the highest court in the United States?
The Supreme Court

62. Who was President during the Civil War?
Abraham Lincoln

63. What did the Emancipation Proclamation do?
It freed the slaves

64. What special group advises the President?
The Cabinet

65. Which President is called the "Father of our Country?"
George Washington

66. Which President was the first Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Army and Navy?
George Washington

67. What was the 50th state added to our Union (the United States)?
Hawaii

68. Who helped the Pilgrims in America?
The American Indians/Native Americans

69. What is the name of the ship that brought the Pilgrims to America?
The Mayflower

70. What were the 13 original states of the United States called before they were states?
Colonies

71. What group has the power to declare war?
Congress

72. Name the amendments that guarantee or address voting rights.
15th, 19th and 24th

73. In what year was the Constitution written?
1787

74. What are the first 10 amendments to the Constitution called?
The Bill of Rights

75. Whose rights are guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?
All people living in the United States

76. What is the introduction to the Constitution called?
The Preamble

77. Who meets in the U.S. Capitol building?
Congress

78. What is the name of the President's official home?
The White House

79. Where is the White House located?
Washington, DC

80. Name one right or freedom guaranteed by the first amendment.
The rights of freedom:
- **of speech,**
- **of religion,**
- **of assembly, and**
- **to petition the Government**

81. Who is the Commander-in-Chief of the United States military?
The President

82. In what month do we vote for the President?
November

83. In what month is the new President inaugurated?
January

84. How many times may a senator or Congressman be re-elected?
No limit

85. What are the two major political parties in the United States today?
Democratic and Republican

86. What is the executive branch of our Government?
The President, the Cabinet, and departments under the cabinet members

87. Where does freedom of speech come from?
The Bill of Rights

88. What Immigration and Naturalization Service form is used to apply for naturalized citizenship?
Form N-400 (Application for Naturalization)

89. What kind of government does the United States have?
A Republic

90. Name one purpose of the United Nations.
For countries to discuss and try to resolve world problems or to provide economic aid to many countries

91. Name one benefit of being a citizen of the United States.
To obtain Federal Government jobs, to travel with a U.S. passport, or to petition for close relatives to come to the United States to live

92. Can the Constitution be changed?
Yes

93. What is the most important right granted to United States citizens?
The right to vote

94. What is the White House?
The President's official home

95. What is the United States Capitol?
The place where Congress meets

96. How many branches are there in the United States Government?
3

Sample Civics Questions for Elderly Applicants

Persons over the age of 65 who are Permanent Residents and who have resided in the United States as Permanent Residents for at least 20 years have different requirements for history and government knowledge. They may also be tested in the language of their choice since they are exempt from the English literacy requirements.

1. Why do we celebrate the Fourth of July?
   It is Independence Day

2. Who was the first President of the United States?
   George Washington

3. Who is the President of the United States now?
   George W. Bush*

4. What is the Constitution?
   The supreme law of the land

5. What are the first 10 amendments to the Constitution called?
   The Bill of Rights

6. Who elects Congress?
   The citizens of the United States

7. How many Senators are there in Congress?
   100

8. For how long do we elect each Senator?
   6 years

9. For how long do we elect the each member of the House of Representatives?
   2 years

10. Who nominates judges to the Supreme Court?
    The President

11. What are the three branches of our Government?
    Legislative, Executive, and Judicial

12. What is the highest court in the United States?
    The Supreme Court

13. What major river running North to South divides the United States?
    The Mississippi River

14. The Civil War was fought over what important issues?
    Slavery and states' rights

15. What are the two major political parties in the United States today?
    Republican and Democrat

16. How many states are there in the United States?
    50

17. What is the capital of the United States?
    Washington, DC

18. What is the minimum voting age in the United States?
    18

* **Note:** the answers to questions marked with asterisks will change. Check to be sure you have the correct answer.

19. Who was Martin Luther King, Jr.?
A civil rights leader

20. What nation was first to land a man on the moon?
The United States

21. What is the capital of your state?

22. What is it called if the President refuses to sign a bill into law and returns it to Congress with his objections?
Veto

23. What two oceans border the United States?
The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans

24. What famous American invented the electric light bulb?
Thomas Edison

25. What is the national anthem of the United States?
The Star-Spangled Banner