

HOW TO BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 
- 1** WHY U.S. CITIZENSHIP?
 - 2** THE PATH TO U.S. CITIZENSHIP
 - 3** BEFORE YOU GET STARTED
 - 4** AM I ELIGIBLE FOR U.S. CITIZENSHIP?
 - 5** SUBMITTING YOUR CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION (FORM N-400)
 - 6** COMMON QUESTIONS (FAQS)
 - 7** GET IN TOUCH

WHY U.S. CITIZENSHIP?

Becoming a U.S. citizen is a huge step in a person's life. Not only do you get to vote in U.S. elections and receive a U.S. passport, you also receive great peace of mind in a time of uncertainty. Becoming a U.S. Citizen is the culmination of many years of living as an immigrant in the United States. It symbolizes belonging to your community. It also comes with many rights and responsibilities.



RIGHTS OF A US CITIZEN

- Vote in federal elections
- Serve on a jury
- Bring family members to the US
- Obtain citizenship for children born abroad
- Travel with a US passport
- Run for federal office
- Become eligible for federal grants and scholarships

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A US CITIZEN

- Support and defend the Constitution
- Serve the country where required
- Participate in the democratic process
- Respect and obey federal, state, and local laws
- Respect the rights, beliefs, and opinions of others
- Participate in your local community



We Can Help You Become a U.S. Citizen

At Passage Immigration Law, we would be honored to represent you through the process of becoming a U.S. citizen. Or if you prefer to represent yourself, we are happy to provide a thorough review of your application packet and give you expert legal advice along the way. Simply let us know how we can help.

THE PATH TO U.S. CITIZENSHIP

Step 1

- Make sure that you are eligible (and that nothing disqualifies you from applying)
- Complete and mail your application



Step 2

- Receive confirmation notice from USCIS with Receipt Number
- Receive Biometrics Appointment Notice from USCIS
- Fingerprints and photo taken by USCIS



Step 3

- Potentially respond to an RFE (Request for Evidence) if more documents are required



Step 4

- USCIS sets a date for your interview and sends a list of what to bring with you
- Attend your interview, complete citizenship tests, and find out that you passed



Step 5

- USCIS sends a notice for the Oath Ceremony
- Attend the Oath Ceremony and receive a Certificate of Naturalization



CONGRATULATIONS!
You are now a
US Citizen!

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED



Before you go any further, some things could prevent you from becoming a U.S. Citizen. If any of the following MAY apply to you, be sure to speak with an immigration attorney.

- One of your parents became a U.S. citizen before you turned 18 years old. You may already be a U.S. citizen.
- You made trips out of the United States for more than six months
- You moved to another country since getting your green card
- You are in deportation or removal proceedings—or—you have been deported
- You haven't filed your federal income taxes
- You haven't supported your children
- You are male and did not register for the Selective Service between the ages of 18 and 26
- You are on probation or parole for a criminal conviction
- You have contradictory information on your application
- You lied or committed fraud to get your Green Card or you weren't originally eligible for your Green Card when you got it
- You have been arrested or convicted of a crime or you have committed a crime
- You lied or committed fraud to receive or to continue to receive public benefits
- You helped someone enter the United States illegally, even if it was a relative
- You claimed to be a U.S. citizen but you weren't
- You have been charged with committing domestic violence, child abuse, or child neglect
- You have voted illegally in the United States
- You have made a living by illegal gambling
- You have been involved in prostitution
- You have been a habitually drunk, a drug abuser, or a drug addict

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR U.S. CITIZENSHIP?

To qualify for Naturalization you must:



- Be at least 18 years old
- Be a permanent resident (have a Green Card) for 5+ years
 - If you are married to & living with a U.S. Citizen for 3 years, then you can apply for citizenship after just 3 years
 - If you had refugee or asylee status, your time spent in this status counts towards the 5 year minimum period
- Show you have lived for at least 3 months in the State or USCIS district where you will file your application.
- Demonstrate continuous residence in the US for 5+ years immediately preceding the date of filing form N-400. This means you cannot have spent too much time outside the U.S. or moved for a time to another country.
- Show that you have been physically present in the US for at least half of the days in the required 5 or 3 year period immediately preceding the date of filing Form N-400.
 - Count all of the days you have been out of the country in that period and make sure they don't exceed the days you have spent in the U.S. during those years.
- Have good moral character.
 - This means, among other things, not having certain problems with the police or other authorities.
- Be able to speak, read, and write English at a basic level.
 - There are exceptions for older people. You do not have to know English if at the time you apply for naturalization:
 - You are 55 years or older and have had a green card for 15 years, or
 - You are 50 years or older and have had a green card for 20 years.
- Be able to pass a test on U.S. history and government.
- Swear that you are loyal to the United States.

SUBMITTING YOUR CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION (FORM N-400)

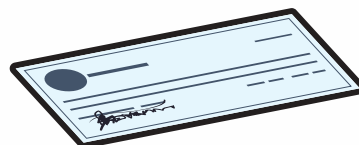
Here's what you must include with your submission:



- Form N-400: Answer all questions and sign and date Part 13.
- Additional pages: Include these for work and residence history, trips, prior marriages, children or for other questions that need a continuation sheet.
- Proof of your permanent resident status: Copy of front and back of your Green Card, or copy of I-551 stamp in your passport indicating your A-Number.
- If your current legal name is different from the name on your Permanent Resident Card, include:
 - 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, include the following four (4) items:
 - Evidence that your spouse has been a U.S. citizen for the last 3 years:
 - Birth certificate; or
 - Certificate of Naturalization; or
 - Certificate of Citizenship; or
 - The inside of the front cover and signature page of your spouse's current U.S. passport; or Form FS-240, Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States of America;
 - Your current marriage certificate;
 - Proof of termination of all prior marriages of your spouse (divorce decree(s), annulment(s), or death certificate(s)); and
 - 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 or transcripts that you both filed for the past 3 years.

SUBMITTING YOUR CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION (CONTINUED)

- If you were married before, include:
 - Proof that all earlier marriages ended (divorce decree(s), annulment(s), or death certificates(s)).
- If you are currently in the U.S. military service and are seeking citizenship based on that service, include:
 - A completed original Form N-426, Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service.
- If you have a dependent spouse or child(ren) who do not live with you, include:
 - 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),
- Check or Money Order for the application fee and biometrics services: Made payable to **“U.S. Department of Homeland Security.”**
 - Write your name and A-Number on the front of the check or money order.
 - You may also pay by credit card by submitting a completed and signed Form G-1450 Authorization for Credit Card Transactions.
 - If you meet the requirements, you may also submit Form I-912, Request for Fee Waiver with supporting documents or Form I-942, Request for Reduced Fee with supporting documents.
 - Note: Applicants 75 and older are exempt from paying the biometric fee and must appear in person to have their photos taken at the Application Support Center (ASC), unless special accommodations are requested.



SUBMITTING YOUR CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION (CONTINUED)

- Mail your complete application and documents using the USPS, FedEx, UPS, or DHL to the USCIS address with jurisdiction over where you live. Go to www.uscis.gov to find out what jurisdiction you are in.



****Remember, keep a copy of everything you send to USCIS, your postal receipts, and the receipts for the money order, if you sent one.**

****For the current fee amounts, check the website www.uscis.gov/n-400**



Processing Times

To check on how long USCIS expects to take to make a decision on your application, you can check the USCIS website for N-400 processing times. Do this by visiting www.uscis.gov and clicking on “Tools” and then select “See Office Case Processing Times”. At the bottom of the next page, choose your local Field Office and click the button that says “Field Office Processing Dates.”



FAQS

Q: I was arrested in the past. Should I still try to naturalize?

A: If you have been arrested, it is important to speak with an attorney before applying for citizenship. There are situations where it would be better to not apply for citizenship, but rather to continue as a legal permanent resident.

Q: I missed filing a tax return or owe taxes to the government. How will this affect my ability to become a citizen?

A: You definitely will need to get in touch with the IRS to file your missing tax returns for the past 5 years. Sometimes applicants choose to set up a payment plan with the IRS if they are unable to pay off back taxes they may owe.

Q: When did I become a “Permanent Resident”?

A: The date you became a Legal Permanent Resident is the date on your green card after “Resident Since”.

Q: What are “Biometrics”?

A: “Biometrics” is the term used by USCIS to describe how a person is identified by physical traits. At a “Biometrics” appointment your photograph, fingerprints, and signature will be taken. USCIS will use the information to complete a background check and confirm your identity.

FAQS (CONTINUED)

Q: What is the Naturalization test like?

A: During the naturalization interview, the USCIS Officer will ask questions about your Naturalization Application (Form N-400) and background. You will also take an English and civics test unless you qualify for an exemption or waiver (based on age or disability). The English test has three components: reading, writing, and speaking. The civics test covers important U.S. history and government topics.

Q: How well do I need to speak English?

A: You will need to show that you can speak and read in English at your citizenship interview. The USCIS officer who interviews you will speak to you in English, and observe how well you respond to questions and instructions. The officer will also ask you to read a short passage, and to write a sentence that he or she says aloud (dictates) to you. The USCIS website has many materials to help you study, including reading and writing vocabulary flashcards and other study guides.

Q: Where can I go to get help with my English?

A: If you aren't already comfortable with the English language, taking a class at a local school or citizenship program will help. Get regular practice speaking English with a Citizenship Coach or another English speaker.



GET IN TOUCH



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