



# 10 Steps to Naturalization

Understanding the Process  
of Becoming a U.S. Citizen



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

M-1051 (09/12)



# STEP 1



## Determine if you are already a U.S. citizen.

You can become a U.S. citizen by birth or through naturalization. Generally, people are born U.S. citizens if they are born in the United States or if they are born abroad to U.S. citizens. You may also derive U.S. citizenship as a minor following the naturalization of one or both parents.

Were you born in the United States or a territory of the United States?

If yes, you may already be a U.S. citizen.

Is at least one of your parents a U.S. citizen?

If yes, refer to *Form N-600, Application for Certificate of Citizenship* or *Form N-600K, Application for Citizenship and Issuance of Certificate* for more information. If you have a U.S. citizen parent who is a U.S. citizen by either birth or naturalization you may already be a citizen.

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### WHAT TO DO:

If you are not a U.S. citizen by birth, or did not acquire or derive U.S. citizenship from your parent(s) automatically after birth, go to the next step.

If you are not a U.S. citizen—  
Go to **STEP 2**





## STEP 2



### Determine your eligibility to become a U.S. citizen.

In general, you may qualify for naturalization if you are at least 18 years old and have been a permanent resident for at least 5 years (or 3 years if you are married to a U.S. citizen) and meet all other eligibility requirements.

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#### WHAT TO DO:

- Read *Form M-476, A Guide to Naturalization* available at [www.uscis.gov/natzguide](http://www.uscis.gov/natzguide) to learn more about naturalization and eligibility requirements.
- Visit the Citizenship Resource Center at [www.uscis.gov/citizenship](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship) for information on the naturalization test and available study materials.

**Eligible**—Go to **STEP 3**



**Not Eligible**—We encourage you to apply when you are eligible.



## STEP 3



### **Prepare Form N-400, Application for Naturalization.**

When you meet all requirements to become a U.S. citizen, complete *Form N-400* to apply for naturalization. Download *Form N-400* at [www.uscis.gov/n-400](http://www.uscis.gov/n-400) or call the USCIS Forms Line at 1-800-870-3676 to request a copy.

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#### **WHAT TO DO:**

- Complete and sign your *Form N-400*.
- Get 2 passport-style photos taken.
- Collect the necessary documents to demonstrate your eligibility for naturalization. Refer to *A Guide to Naturalization* for more information at [www.uscis.gov/natzguide](http://www.uscis.gov/natzguide).
- Review your *Form N-400* and supporting documents.

**Note:** USCIS may ask for additional information if your application is incomplete. This will delay the processing of your application.

Go to **STEP 4**





## STEP 4



### **Submit *Form N-400*, *Application for Naturalization*.**

Send in your application, photographs, documents, and fees to USCIS. (Refer to [www.uscis.gov/n-400](http://www.uscis.gov/n-400) for filing addresses.)

Once you submit *Form N-400* and get a receipt notice, you can check current processing times and the status of your application by visiting [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) or by calling Customer Service at 1-800-375-5283 or 1-800-767-1833 (hearing impaired).

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#### **WHAT TO INCLUDE:**

- Form N-400* and biometric services fees, if applicable.
- Form N-648, Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions*, if applicable. If you are seeking an exception to the English and/or civics requirement for naturalization because of a physical or developmental disability or a mental impairment, submit *Form N-648* with your package.
- 2 passport-style photos and any additional evidence demonstrating your eligibility for naturalization.

Refer to *Form N-400* instructions for additional documentary requirements. Keep a copy of your completed *Form N-400* and any supporting evidence for your records. You will be required to answer questions about your *Form N-400* at your naturalization interview.

Go to **STEP 5**





## STEP 5



### Go to the biometrics appointment, if applicable.

USCIS requires applicants to be fingerprinted for the purpose of conducting Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) criminal background checks. All applicants must have background checks completed before USCIS will schedule an interview. If you are 75 years old or older at the time of filing, you are exempted from the fingerprint requirements, but are subject to all other background checks.

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#### WHAT TO DO:

- Receive an appointment notice that will include your biometrics appointment date, time, and location.
- Arrive at the designated location at the scheduled time.
- Have biometrics taken.
- At a later date, you will receive an appointment notice for your naturalization interview.

Go to **STEP 6**





## STEP 6



### Complete the interview.

Once all the preliminary processes on your case are complete, USCIS will schedule an interview with you to complete the naturalization process. You must report to the USCIS office at the date and time on your appointment notice. Please bring the appointment notice with you.

It is very important not to miss your interview. If you have to miss your interview, you should write to the office where your interview is to be conducted as soon as possible and ask to have your interview rescheduled. Rescheduling an interview may add several months to the naturalization process, so make all attempts to attend your original interview date.

**Note:** You must notify USCIS if you change your address after filing your *Form N-400* within 10 days of your relocation by filing *Form AR-11, Change of Address*, with USCIS. For information on filing a change of address, go to the USCIS website at [www.uscis.gov/addresschange](http://www.uscis.gov/addresschange) or call Customer Service at 1-800-375-5283. You must notify USCIS **EVERY TIME** you change your address.

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Continued on next panel

Step 6 continued from previous panel

## WHAT TO EXPECT:

- ✓ At the interview, you will meet with a USCIS officer and answer questions about your *Form N-400*.
- ✓ If you are requesting a medical exception to the English and civics testing requirements, submit *Form N-648, Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions* if you did not submit it at the time you filed your *Form N-400*.
- ✓ You will take the English and civics tests, unless exempt. Refer to *A Guide to Naturalization* for more information on exemptions. Visit [www.uscis.gov/citizenship](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship) for test preparation study materials.
- ✓ USCIS will provide you with a notice of interview results following your interview.
- ✓ In some cases, the USCIS officer will not be able to make a decision on your *Form N-400* the day of your naturalization interview. In those cases, the USCIS officer will continue your case. This may include a request for you to provide additional evidence or require a second interview. Go to STEP 6A for more information on a **continued** application.

**If your application  
is continued—Go to STEP 6A**

**If your application receives  
a final decision—Go to STEP 7**



# STEP 6A



## Application Continued

The most common reasons for continuation are:

- You fail the English and/or civics test. USCIS will schedule you to come back for another interview within 60-90 days of your first interview. USCIS will only retest you on the part (English or civics) that you failed. USCIS will deny your *Form N-400* if you fail the test(s) a second time.
- The USCIS officer determines you need to provide additional documents/evidence. USCIS may ask you to submit additional documents by giving you *Form N-14, Request for Additional Information, Documents or Forms*. You will need to provide the additional documentation requested to continue the naturalization process.
- You fail to provide USCIS the correct documents.

Go to **STEP 7**





## STEP 7



### Receive a decision from USCIS on your *Form N-400, Application for Naturalization*.

You will be issued a written notice of decision.

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- **Granted**—USCIS may approve your *Form N-400* if the evidence on record establishes your eligibility for naturalization.
  - **Denied**—USCIS will deny your *Form N-400* if the evidence on record establishes you are not eligible for naturalization.

If your application is granted—  
Go to **STEP 8**



If your application is denied—  
Go to **STEP 7A**



# STEP 7A

## Application Denied

You will receive a letter from USCIS explaining the reason for your *Form N-400* denial. If you believe that USCIS incorrectly denied your *Form N-400*, you may request a hearing to appeal this decision.

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### WHAT TO DO:

The denial notice you receive will have instructions on how to appeal the USCIS decision by filing *Form N-336, Request for a Hearing on a Decision in Naturalization Proceedings*. Visit [www.uscis.gov/n-336](http://www.uscis.gov/n-336) to download the form and detailed instructions.

You **MUST** file *Form N-336* with the appropriate fee within 30 days of the *Form N-400* decision date.

If a request for hearing is not filed within the time allowed, the denial decision is final. Refer to *A Guide to Naturalization* for more information by visiting [www.uscis.gov/natzguide](http://www.uscis.gov/natzguide).



## STEP 8



## Receive a notice to take the Oath of Allegiance.

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### WHAT TO EXPECT:

You may be able to participate in the oath ceremony on the same day as your interview. If a same day oath ceremony is unavailable, USCIS will mail you a notification with the date, time, and location of your scheduled oath ceremony.

If you cannot attend the oath ceremony on the day USCIS scheduled you, return the USCIS notice *Form N-445, Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony*, to your local USCIS office. Include a letter explaining why you cannot attend the oath ceremony. Ask USCIS to reschedule you.

Go to **STEP 9**





## STEP 9



### Take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States.

You are not a U.S. citizen until you take the Oath of Allegiance at a naturalization ceremony. The oath is administered by USCIS at an administrative ceremony or by a judge in a judicial ceremony. A court has exclusive authority to conduct the ceremonies in certain USCIS districts.

You receive your Certificate of Naturalization after taking the Oath of Allegiance.

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#### WHAT TO DO:

- ✓ Complete the questionnaire *Form N-445, Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony*.
- ✓ Report for your oath ceremony.
- ✓ Check-in with USCIS.
- ✓ A USCIS officer will review your responses to *Form N-445*.
- ✓ Turn in your Permanent Resident Card.
- ✓ Take the Oath of Allegiance to become a U.S. citizen.
- ✓ Receive your Certificate of Naturalization and review it before leaving the ceremony site. Notify USCIS of any corrections to your certificate at that time.

Go to **STEP 10**





# STEP 10

## Understanding U.S. citizenship.

Citizenship is the common thread that connects all Americans. Below is a list of some of the most important rights and responsibilities that all citizens—both Americans by birth and by choice—should exercise, honor, and respect. While some of these responsibilities are legally required of every citizen, all are important to ensure the continued vitality of our country and democracy.

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### Rights

- Freedom to express yourself.
- Freedom to worship as you wish.
- Right to a prompt, fair trial by jury.
- Right to vote in elections for public officials.
- Right to apply for federal employment requiring U.S. citizenship.
- Right to run for elected office.
- Freedom to pursue “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

### Responsibilities

- Support and defend the U.S. Constitution.
- Stay informed of the issues affecting your community.
- 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.
- Pay income and other taxes honestly, and on time, to federal, state, and local authorities.
- Serve on a jury when called upon.
- Defend the country if the need should arise.

# Helpful Resources

The decision to apply for U.S. citizenship is up to each individual. USCIS has a variety of educational resources to help you prepare. You will find information on eligibility and testing, the application process, and study materials. You can also learn more about citizenship rights and responsibilities and find a free USCIS information session in your area.

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U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States.

[www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

The USCIS Citizenship Resource Center provides learners and applicants with a one-stop resource for locating citizenship preparation materials.

[www.uscis.gov/citizenship](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship)

USCIS regularly holds free information sessions for the public. Topics covered at these sessions include naturalization eligibility requirements, the naturalization process, and the naturalization test.

[www.uscis.gov/citizenshipsessions](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenshipsessions)

*Form M-476, A Guide to Naturalization* provides information on the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship, an overview of the naturalization process, eligibility requirements, and what to expect at your naturalization interview.

[www.uscis.gov/natzguide](http://www.uscis.gov/natzguide)

*Form N-400, Application for Naturalization* is the form you will use to apply for U.S. citizenship.

[www.uscis.gov/n-400](http://www.uscis.gov/n-400)

If you believe you are already a U.S. citizen, determine if you are eligible to file *Form N-600, Application for Certificate of Citizenship* or *Form N-600K, Application for Citizenship and Issuance of Certificate*.

[www.uscis.gov/n-600](http://www.uscis.gov/n-600)

[www.uscis.gov/n-600k](http://www.uscis.gov/n-600k)

To update your address with USCIS, file *Form AR-11, Change of Address*.

[www.uscis.gov/addresschange](http://www.uscis.gov/addresschange)