

Handbook for Citizenship Educators in Illinois

Revised September 2023



Adult Learning Resource Center
Arlington Heights, Illinois

Carol Garcia
Catherine Porter
Sue Barauski, Director

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About this Handbook

The **Handbook for Citizenship Educators in Illinois** (formerly called the *Citizenship Educator Orientation Packet*) was created by the Adult Learning Resource Center (ALRC). It contains information and materials to help citizenship educators prepare their students to pass the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization interview and tests.

This Handbook contains practical information for citizenship teachers and tutors including an overview of the citizenship process, components of the USCIS interview and tests, classroom materials and techniques, and where to find more information. In addition to the materials in this Handbook, citizenship educators need to keep up-to-date with the material at the USCIS website:

- **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Website** www.uscis.gov
- **Citizenship Resource Center** <https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship>

Note: Although the information in this Handbook will benefit all citizenship educators, the Handbook contains some information and resources that are specific to Illinois.



Adult Learning Resource Center

2626 S. Clearbrook Drive
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60005

<https://alrc.thecenterweb.org>

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Important Note about the 2022 Naturalization Test Redesign Initiative

On December 14, 2022 USCIS announced a Naturalization Test Redesign Initiative. The following day, December 15, 2022, additional details were published in the [Federal Register](#).

USCIS plans to conduct a nationwide trial (pilot) of proposed changes to the current naturalization test. This trial will include changes to the English-speaking portion of the test (known as the “speaking test”) and changes to the content and format of the civics portion of the test (known as the “civics test”). The current reading and writing tests are not changing.

A trial test period is expected to run for a five-month period in 2023. The redesign initiative is expected to take approximately 2 years, with the new test expected to be implemented by late 2024. For up-to-date information, see <https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship-resource-center/naturalization-test-and-study-resources/naturalization-test-redesign-development-2022>

All information and all classroom activities in this Handbook pertain to the current naturalization test, also known as the 2008 test.

Overview of Teaching Citizenship

In a citizenship classroom, teachers prepare students for all aspects of the USCIS Naturalization Interview and Tests. This includes teaching students the content of the questions they will be asked during the test and also preparing them for what to expect on the day of their interview. It includes helping them discuss their personal information as well as their knowledge of U.S. history and government in English.

Teaching a citizenship naturalization class can be a very rewarding experience, but it is also a challenge. Naturalization is a very complex, legal process established by the federal government. It has high stakes: students' lives can change for the better if they pass their interviews and become U.S. citizens, or for the worse if they end up failing and lose time and money. In the worst-case scenario, students could be deported and separated from their families. For these reasons, citizenship teachers must become students themselves by building the knowledge base necessary to teach citizenship.

This section of the Handbook addresses the following areas to help citizenship educators learn this very important information:

- **Major Resources:** learning about citizenship
- **The Citizenship Path:** a visual representation of the steps students must take to gain U.S. citizenship
- **Understanding the Path:** additional detail about each step along the Citizenship Path
- **Referring Students to Legal Services:** where to refer students for legal services

Major Resources for Teaching Citizenship

1. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Website USCIS Website

This is the official USCIS website. It contains extensive information and resources including services and benefits, immigration forms, laws and regulations, educational resources, and more. There is a companion website in Spanish that contains some of the information in the English version.

English: www.uscis.gov

Spanish: www.uscis.gov/espanol

2. Citizenship Resource Center

This Resource Center has information, materials, and links for citizenship learners, teachers, and organizations. It contains links to many other USCIS products and materials.

www.uscis.gov/citizenship

3. *Welcome to the USA.gov*

www.uscis.gov/newimmigrants

This website contains links to many government services for immigrants. It has a search engine in which students can find English classes, links to government guides and publications, and more.

USCIS Video Presentation
**Becoming a U.S. Citizen:
An Overview of the Naturalization Process**

*Students can use this page and the next to take notes when viewing the USCIS presentation.
By using the "auto translate" option in YouTube, closed captions can be translated into multiples languages.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDOXgWtCQxY>

1. Most of you can apply to become U.S. citizens after living in the United States for _____ years, or _____ years if you are married to a U.S. citizen.

2. Benefits that citizens enjoy include:
 - _____
 - U.S. passport for travel
 - _____

3. The process of becoming a citizen is called naturalization.

4. There are several steps:
 - _____
 - _____
 - Living in the U.S. as a Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) for five years or three years

5. Even if you are not eligible to apply for naturalization right now, there are things you can do to make sure you can become a citizen when you are ready, including:
 - Learn English (speak, read, and write basic English to pass the naturalization test)
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

6. You can get help from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website: www.uscis.gov. At that website, you can get:
 - *Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants* www.uscis.gov/newimmigrants
 - Civics flashcards
 - _____
 - _____
 - *A Guide to Naturalization* www.uscis.gov/natzguide

7. There are other things you must do now to qualify for naturalization. You must:

- _____
- Sign up for selective service
- _____
- Maintain continuous residence
- Maintain physical presence

8. There are some things you must NOT do. You must avoid behaviors that might show LACK of good moral character. Examples of what might be considered a lack of good moral character are:

- _____
- _____
- Lying to get immigration or naturalization benefits

9. Remember to respect and obey the law: _____!

10. When you apply for naturalization, you must report _____ crimes you have committed.

11. Some minor crimes will not keep you from becoming a citizen, but if you lie about your criminal record, your _____ may keep you from becoming a citizen.

12. Also, if you commit certain crimes, you can never become a U.S. citizen. These crimes include:

- Murder
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

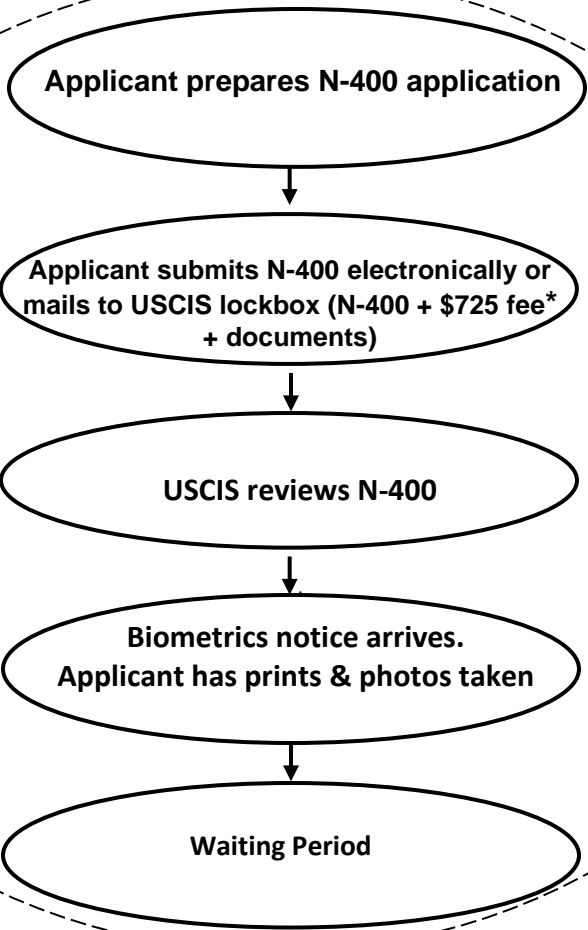
13. After you have been in the United States as a lawful permanent resident for 5 years (or 3 years if married to a U.S. citizen) you can start the process of becoming a citizen.

14. For more information about preparing to become a U.S. citizen, visit www.uscis.gov.

The Citizenship Path

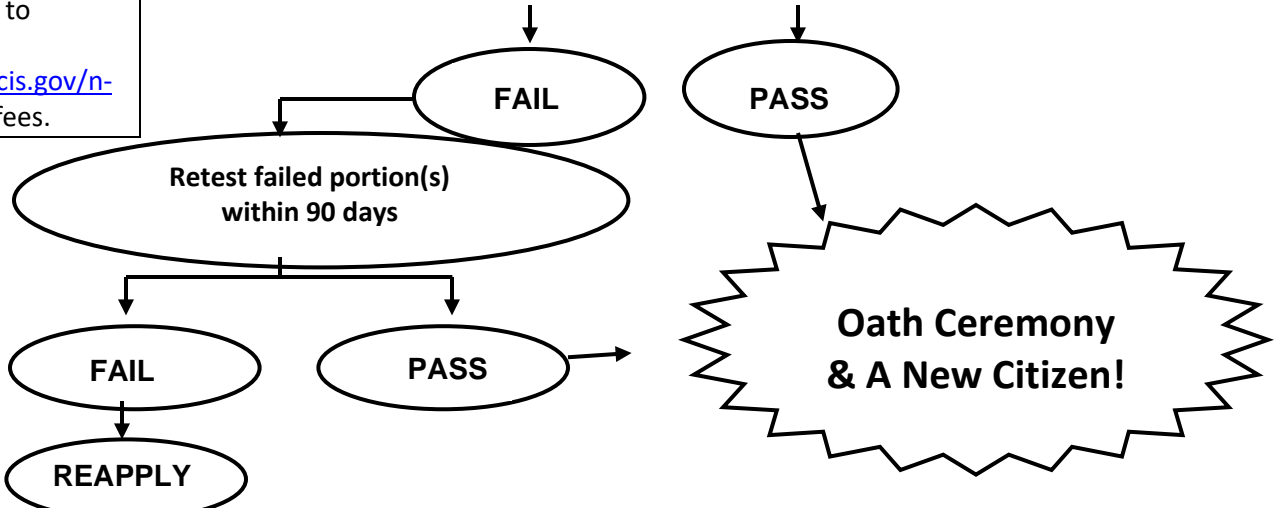
Citizenship Classes

Citizenship Classes



* The \$725 fee includes \$640 for filing the N-400 and \$85 for biometrics (fingerprinting and photos). Some applicants may be eligible for no fees or a reduced filing fee + \$85 biometric fee. Applicants 75 years or older do not have to pay the biometrics fee. Fees are subject to change. Check <https://www.uscis.gov/n-400> for current fees.

- Notice arrives for USCIS Interview & Test
- Applicant reports for appointment
- Interview & Tests consist of:
 - Questions about N-400 Application
 - Questions about U.S. History & Government (Civics)
 - Reading Test & Writing Test



Understanding the Citizenship Path

The following provides a basic overview of the naturalization process. For more information, refer to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website at www.uscis.gov.

Important Note: People need special training before they can help students file for citizenship. Teachers should not help students file, but should be familiar with the process in order to refer their students to places that can help them file. See page 12 for more information.

Applicant Fills Out the N-400

The N-400 is the Application for Naturalization. It can be printed at <https://www.uscis.gov/n-400>.

Keep in mind:

- Applicants should make sure that they are eligible for naturalization before applying in order to avoid wasting time and money as well as risking legal repercussions. Refer to *A Guide to Naturalization* for comprehensive eligibility requirements or check out the basic requirements on the USCIS website.
- All sections of the N-400 must be filled out accurately and completely.
- In many programs, volunteers with special training can help applicants fill out the form. The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights offers many workshops where students can get help filing their N-400. Check out the schedule for upcoming “Citizenship Workshops” at <https://www.icirr.org/event>
- All applicants should make a copy of their completed N-400 to keep before they submit it.

Applicant Submits Packet to USCIS

The applicant must submit the completed N-400 along with the fee and any necessary documents electronically or to the appropriate USCIS addresses.

Keep in mind:

- The application fees are subject to change. Check the USCIS website for the current cost.
- There are several USCIS addresses for filing the N-400. Go to www.uscis.gov/n-400 to see which address applicants use in your location. That website also has instructions for applicants who are filing electronically.
- Applicants need to submit several documents with their N-400. The exact documents needed depend on the applicants’ circumstances. Refer to the “Document Checklist” (Form M-477) found on this page <https://www.uscis.gov/n-400>.

USCIS Reviews N-400

After the application is received, the documents are checked for thoroughness and accuracy, the applicant's payment is processed, and a file is begun for each applicant.

Keep in mind:

- This process can take anywhere from a few months to over a year.
- To check the average processing times for various forms, go to <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>

Fingerprint and Photo Notice Arrives & Applicant Completes Biometric Process

USCIS will send the applicant a letter telling when and where to get fingerprinted and photographed. For their fingerprint appointment, applicants will need to take that letter, their permanent residence card, and another acceptable form of ID with them.

Waiting Period

During this waiting period, USCIS might need additional documents from the applicant. If so, USCIS will send a letter to the applicant. When everything is ready, USCIS will send an interview notice, called the "Request for Applicant to Appear for Naturalization Initial Interview," that states the date, time, and place of the interview.

Keep in mind:

- It is extremely important for applicants to notify USCIS immediately if they move so that notices from USCIS will go to the right address. Information on reporting a change of address is found here: <https://www.uscis.gov/addresschange>
- If an applicant has to reschedule their naturalization interview, they should contact the USCIS office where their interview is scheduled. They should explain the reason they cannot attend the interview and request that it be rescheduled. Proof of request is required.
- Applicants can find out about the status of their cases at: <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/checking-your-case-status-online>

USCIS Interview and Tests

The applicant receives the interview notice and reports to the local USCIS Office or other designated place at the time and date given in the letter.

Keep in mind:

- Applicants will be asked questions about the information on their N-400 and may need to update their information and clarify when necessary.
- Applicants will be asked up to ten questions from the *USCIS 100 Civics Questions* on U.S. history, government, and geography. They must get at least six correct.
- Applicants will be asked to read a sentence aloud and write a sentence that is dictated. Applicants get up to three chances at reading and writing those sentences.

Exemptions to the English Tests based on Age & Time as a Lawful Permanent Resident

Applicants are exempt from the English language requirement (and English tests), but are still required to take the civics test if they are:

50/20 Exemption: Age 50 or older at the time of filing and have lived as a lawful permanent resident (LPR, or Green Card holder) in the U.S. for 20 or more years

OR

55/15 Exemption: Age 55 or older at the time of filing and have lived as a lawful permanent resident in the U.S. for 15 or more years

Special 65/20 Exemption

If applicants are 65 years old or older at the time of filing and have been a lawful permanent resident of the U.S. for 20 or more years, they may study just the 20 questions marked with an asterisk *.

All categories above may bring an interpreter to their interview and take the civics test in their native language.

Results of the Interview and Test

At the end of the interview, applicants will receive Form N-652 which has the results of their test.

Keep in Mind:

- If applicants fail a portion of the test, another interview will be scheduled within 30- 60 days of the first one. If applicants fail a second time, their application will be denied. Then they must reapply, submit all the paperwork, and pay the fees again.
- Sometimes a USCIS Officer will say that additional documents are necessary before the Officer can make a decision.
- If USCIS decides to deny an application for naturalization, the applicant will receive a written notice explaining that decision.

Oath Ceremony

If citizenship is granted, USCIS will send form N-445, "Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony," that indicates the place, date, and time of the ceremony.

Keep in mind:

- Applicants must arrive at the ceremony early to check in.
- At the ceremony, applicants must turn in their permanent residence cards and receive their Certificates of Naturalization.
- Applicants may be asked questions about what has happened since the naturalization interview such as if the applicant has made any additional trips outside of the country.
- Applicants must take the Oath of Allegiance during the ceremony.

Referring Students to Legal Services

The role of the citizenship teacher is to teach citizenship preparation classes. This includes preparing students to pass their Naturalization Interview and tests. Citizenship teachers do not have the qualifications to assist students in filling out their Form N-400 Application for Naturalization. They are legally bound to refrain from giving legal advice. Instead, citizenship teachers should learn which local agencies are qualified to provide legal services to immigrants and refer their students to those agencies.

In Illinois

- **Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.** This site provides information about the New Americans Initiative (NAI) and its citizenship application workshops in which trained individuals help students file their Form N-400 Application for Naturalization. Each workshop includes qualified legal representatives who will help students ascertain their eligibility for Naturalization. This site also includes a link to the *ICIRR Legal Services Directory* (last updated in April 2023) which includes a list of non-profit agencies and private attorneys in Illinois which provide free and low-cost immigration legal services.
<https://www.icirr.org/nai>
- The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) online directory described below includes Illinois and is updated frequently.

Nationwide

- The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has an online directory by state of agencies with DOJ accreditation. This directory, *Recognized Organizations and Accredited Representatives Roster by State and City*, is updated frequently.
<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognized-organizations-and-accredited-representatives-roster-state-and-city>
- The “Finding Legal Assistance” page in the publication *Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants* has links to organizations and individuals recognized by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to provide legal services, as well as agencies that provide free legal services. The publication is available in multiple languages.
<https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/civic-integration/settling-in-the-us>
- The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) maintains the Immigrant Services Directory: Public Resource for Intake Referrals.
<https://www.aclu.org/other/immigrant-services-directory-public-resource-intake-referrals>

Main Components of the Naturalization Interview

At the naturalization interview, USCIS Officers will ask many questions of the citizenship applicant in order to ascertain the following:

- That the applicant speaks, reads, and writes basic English
- That the applicant knows the required information about U.S. history and government
- That all of the information on the applicant's Form N-400 Application for Naturalization is true and correct

Therefore, citizenship teachers need to organize their classes around teaching the following main components of the naturalization interview and tests.

100 Civics Questions (2008 Civics Test)

This is a list of questions and answers about U.S. history, government, and integrated civics. Students will be asked up to 10 of these questions at their citizenship interview to demonstrate their knowledge about the United States. This list can be found at:

<https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test>

Important Notes:

- The 100 Civics Questions were part of the 2008 redesign of the U.S. naturalization test and are sometimes referred to as the "2008 Civics Test." This is the current civics test.
- On November 13, 2020 USCIS announced a new version of the civics test with 128 study questions; this test was referred to as the "2020 Civics Test." The 2020 Civics test was rescinded on February 22, 2021. No applicants were required to take the 2020 Civics Test.
- On December 22, 2022 USCIS announced a redesign and trial of the civics test and the speaking test. These tests *may* be in use in late 2024. See page 3 for more information.
- All information and all activities in this Handbook pertain to the 2008 (current) tests.

Reading and Writing Vocabulary

This is composed of two lists, one for reading and another for writing. The sentences that the USCIS Officers will have students read and write when dictated will be composed of words from these lists.

Reading Vocabulary List:

https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/PDFs/reading_vocab.pdf

Writing Vocabulary List:

https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/PDFs/writing_vocab.pdf

Form N-400 Application for Naturalization

This is a multi-page legal document that the student submits at the start of the naturalization process in order to show eligibility for U.S. citizenship. At the test, the student must be able to answer, discuss, and explain all of the information on it.

Questioning is done by the USCIS Officer both to test the applicant's speaking ability and to clarify information contained in the application to determine the student's eligibility. This document can be found at: www.uscis.gov/n-400

Civics Test: 100 Civics Questions

At some point during the naturalization interview, the USCIS Officer will conduct the Civics Test.

Purpose: To test the applicant's knowledge of U.S. history and government.

Procedure: The USCIS Officer will ask up to ten questions which the student answers orally. If the student answers the first six questions correctly, the USCIS Officer will not ask all ten.

To Pass: Applicants must answer at least six of the questions correctly.

The ten questions asked at the interview come from a list of 100 Civics Questions found here:

<https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test>

Special Features of the 100 Questions

1. The 100 Civics Questions are divided into the following main areas, with subsets under each.

- **American Government**
Principles of American Democracy; System of Government;
Rights and Responsibilities
- **American History**
Colonial Period and Independence; 1800s;
Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information
- **Integrated Civics**
Geography; Symbols; Holidays

2. About half of the 100 Civics Questions have more than one correct answer. Unless otherwise indicated, students only have to give one. Here are some examples of questions with different answering requirements:

- **Just One Correct Answer**
Q7. How many amendments does the Constitution have?
- *twenty-seven (27)*
- **Several Correct Answers – Students Only Need to Give One**
Q8. What did the Declaration of Independence do?
- *announced our independence (from Great Britain)*
- *declared our independence (from Great Britain)*
- *said that the United States is free (from Great Britain)*
- **Several Correct Answers – Students Need to Give More Than One**
Q9. What are two rights in the Declaration of Independence?
- *life*
- *liberty*
- *pursuit of happiness*

Classroom Activity: Listening for Key Words

Goal: This activity helps students listen and respond to key words from the *100 Civics Questions* including WH question words: Who, What, Where, Why, When, and How.

During their interview, students might not hear every word contained in an individual question, but by identifying key words (including the WH question words) they can make very good guesses about the correct answer. This activity reinforces listening skills by the teacher giving the students only the key words in a question. It encourages reasonable guesses which can be very helpful in real-life contexts including the naturalization interview.

This activity is appropriate for all students who have studied the *100 Civics Questions* and understand the vocabulary. It is best used as a review technique.

Caution: For the *100 Civics Questions*, students can usually answer a question even if they didn't hear every single word. However, when answering the officers' questions about the information on their N-400 Application, students should NEVER answer a question if they don't fully understand it. Instead, they should ask for repetition or clarification until they understand the question that the officer is asking.

Process: Go around the room and ask each student an abbreviated question. If students don't know how to respond, they can pass. Encourage them to guess. Present questions from the *100 Civics Questions* in as few key words as possible, such as:

Question: Who...lived...America...before?

Answer: Native Americans

Question: What...highest...court?

Answer: the Supreme Court

From 100 Civics Questions

- What...supreme...law...land?
- What...amendment?
- How many...amendments?
- Who...Senator...represent?
- Who ...Father....Country?
- Month...vote...President?
- Who...Commander-in-Chief?
- What...judicial...do?
- Who...Governor...state?
- What...responsibility...U.S....citizens?
- How...old...citizens...vote?
- Who...wrote...Declaration?
- When...Constitution...written?
- Name...problem...Civil...War?
- Who...President...World...War...1?
- What...ocean...west?
- Where...Statue...Liberty?

Classroom Activity: Tell Me All About...

Citizenship students often memorize the answers to the *100 Civics Questions* that are used in the citizenship test. If the adjudicator varies the wording of the question even a little, the applicant may be unable to understand what is being asked.

To help students improve their civics knowledge and their listening comprehension, the “Tell Me All About...” activity will vary the traditional question/answer format. It is best used as a review technique. Simply instruct the students to tell you all about a subject or person from the *100 Civics Questions*. By summarizing everything they know about a subject or person, students will increase their ability to talk about U.S. history and civics and demonstrate their civics knowledge.

Example: “Tell me all about George Washington.” “Tell me all about the American Flag.”

Subject	Person
Supreme Court	Abraham Lincoln
Constitution	Ben Franklin
Amendments	Susan B. Anthony
Bill of Rights	Woodrow Wilson
Declaration of Independence	Martin Luther King, Jr.
July 4 th	Thomas Jefferson
American Flag	George Washington
Executive Branch	Franklin Roosevelt
Judicial Branch	The President
Legislative Branch	John Roberts
Washington, D.C.	Kevin McCarthy
Senate	Joseph Biden
House of Representatives	Kamala Harris
	Dick Durbin*
	Tammy Duckworth*
	J.B. Pritzker*



*Note: These are elected officials in Illinois. If you are from another state, use the blank cards at the end to make cards for your state's elected officials. The blank cards can also be used when new officials are elected.

Tell me all about . . .

Supreme Court

Tell me all about . . .

The Constitution

Tell me all about . . .

Amendments

Tell me all about . . .

The Bill of Rights

Tell me all about . . .

The Declaration of Independence

Tell me all about . . .

July 4th

Tell me all about . . .

The American Flag

Tell me all about . . .

The Executive Branch

Tell me all about . . .

The Judicial Branch

Tell me all about . . .

The Legislative Branch

Tell me all about . . .

Washington, D.C.

Tell me all about . . .

The Senate

Tell me all about . . .

The House of Representatives

Tell me all about . . .

Ben Franklin

Tell me all about . . .

Abraham Lincoln

Tell me all about . . .

Woodrow Wilson

Tell me all about . . .

Susan B. Anthony

Tell me all about . . .

Thomas Jefferson

Tell me all about . . .

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Tell me all about . . .

Franklin Roosevelt

Tell me all about . . .

George Washington

Tell me all about . . .

John Roberts

Tell me all about . . .

The President

Tell me all about . . .

Joseph Biden

<p>Tell me all about . . .</p> <p>Kamala Harris</p>	<p>Tell me all about . . .</p> <p>Kevin McCarthy</p>
<p>Tell me all about . . .</p> <p>Dick Durbin</p>	<p>Tell me all about . . .</p> <p>J.B. Pritzker</p>
<p>Tell me all about . . .</p> <p>Tammy Duckworth</p>	<p>Tell me all about . . .</p> <hr/>
<p>Tell me all about . . .</p>	<p>Tell me all about . . .</p>

Classroom Activity: Numbers Game

This activity focuses on listening skills and mastery of the content of some of the difficult questions in the *100 Civics Questions*. This is a review activity for the questions that deal with numbers or years. Students usually enjoy this game and the challenge of the material.

Process:

- Review the pronunciation of the numbers and years on the next page.
 - Have students point to the numbers as you read them in random order.
 - Ask about the significance of the numbers. Example: "What does the number 13 mean in citizenship studies?" Answer: *13 original colonies* or *13 stripes on the flag*.
 - After reviewing well, read these directions to the students:
1. Write the letter A next to the number of justices on the Supreme Court. (9)
 2. Write the letter B next to the number of U.S. Senators. (100)
 3. Write the letter C next to the last day in April when federal income tax forms can be sent. (15)
 4. Write the letter D next to the number of voting members in the House of Representatives. (435)
 5. Write the letter E next to the number of amendments in the Bill of Rights. (10)
 6. Write the letter F next to the number of stripes on the American flag. (13)
 7. Write the letter G next to the age when citizens can vote. (18)
 8. Write the letter H next to the year the Constitution was written. (1787)
 9. Write the letter I next to the number of years we elect U.S. Representatives. (2)
 10. Write the letter J next to the number of amendments to the Constitution. (27)
 11. Write the letter K next to the number of years we elect a president. (4)
 12. Write the letter L next to the number of years we elect a U.S. Senator. (6)
 13. Write the letter M next to the number of stars on the American flag. (50)
 14. Write the letter N next to the year the Declaration of Independence was adopted. (1776)

Classroom Activity: Numbers Game

Write the letter on the line next to the correct answer.

_____ **100**

_____ **10**

_____ **9**

_____ **50**

_____ **2**

_____ **1787**

_____ **13**

_____ **18**

_____ **435**

_____ **1776**

_____ **27**

_____ **4**

_____ **6**

_____ **15**

The Reading and Writing Tests

At some point during the naturalization interview, the USCIS Officer will conduct the Reading and Writing tests.

Purpose: To test the applicant's ability to read and write English.

Procedure: In October 2018, USCIS began administering the Reading and Writing tests via digital tablet. The Officer will instruct the applicant how to use the tablet and stylus before administering the tests.

- For the Reading Test, a sentence (a question) will appear on the tablet and the Officer will ask the applicant to read aloud the sentence that is shown on the tablet.
- For the Writing Test, several lines will appear on the tablet, replicating the look of a blank sheet of paper. The Officer will read a sentence aloud and ask the applicant to use the stylus to write the sentence on the tablet.

If applicants fail in reading or writing their first sentences, they will receive up to two more chances with other sentences.

Note: The USCIS Officer may use discretion on a case-by-case basis to administer both tests using paper. In this situation, the Officer gives the student a paper with a sentence to read aloud. Next the Officer will dictate a sentence which the student must write on a lined piece of paper.

To Pass: USCIS Officers assess whether what is read aloud and what is written are meaningful and understandable. They are not expecting 100% accuracy. For more information about the passing criteria, view *Scoring Guidelines for the English Portion of the Naturalization Test* at https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/PDFs/Test_Scoring_Guidelines.pdf

The sentence that the student reads aloud and the sentence that the Officer dictates may be a question/answer set like the example below:

The student reads this sentence aloud from the electronic tablet:

Who was Abraham Lincoln?

The USCIS Officer dictates this sentence to the student who writes it with a stylus on the electronic tablet:

Lincoln was President during the Civil War.

Although USCIS does not publish the sentences used during the Reading and Writing Tests, USCIS publishes two vocabulary lists, one for each test. The sentence that students are asked to read is made up of words from the reading vocabulary list. The dictated sentence is made up of words from the writing vocabulary list.

Reading Vocabulary List:

https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/PDFs/reading_vocab.pdf

Writing Vocabulary List:

https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/PDFs/writing_vocab.pdf

ALRC has analyzed the Reading and Writing Vocabulary Lists and developed a list of 38 question/answer sets that students are likely to encounter during their interviews. These are found on pages 25 and 26. Citizenship educators can use these sentences to prepare their students to pass the Reading and Writing tests.

Special Features of the Reading and Writing Tests

1. The sentences that the USCIS Officer asks the students to read and write at the naturalization interview are about civics. The vocabulary lists that the words in the sentences come from are divided into categories such as *people, civics, places, months, holidays, verbs*, and more. Many of the words are on both the Reading and Writing vocabulary lists. Combined, there are about 100 different words and phrases.
2. Although USCIS designed the Reading and Writing Tests to use questions and answers, such as the Lincoln example on the previous page, it's possible that the question that the applicant will read aloud will be unrelated to the sentence the Officer dictates. Therefore, the Reading and Writing Test sequence could look like this:

The student reads this sentence aloud from the electronic tablet:

Who was Abraham Lincoln?

The USCIS Officer dictates this sentence to the student who writes it with a stylus on the electronic tablet:

Memorial Day is in May.

To best prepare students for the Reading and Writing tests, teachers should sometimes teach the Reading and Writing sentences as a question and answer set, and sometimes teach them as unrelated sentences.

For more teaching tips, see pages 27-30.

Reading Sentences

Note: USCIS does not publish a list of Reading and Writing sentences. The sentences on this page and the next were developed by the ALRC and are sentences that applicants are likely to encounter during their USCIS interviews.

1. How many states are in the United States?
2. What is the capital of the United States?
3. What are the colors of the American flag?
4. When is Flag Day?
5. What was the first U.S. capital?
6. What state has the most people?
7. What country is north of the United States?
8. What is the largest state?
9. What country is south of the United States?
10. Who lived here first?
11. Why do people want to be citizens?
12. Why do people come to America?
13. When is Columbus Day?
14. When is Thanksgiving?
15. What was the first U.S. state?
16. Who was the Father of Our Country?
17. Who was the first President?
18. Who lives in the White House?
19. Who was Abraham Lincoln?
20. What President is on the dollar bill?
21. Who was the second President?
22. Who was George Washington?
23. When is President's Day?
24. When is Memorial Day?
25. Name one right in the Bill of Rights.
26. Who elects Congress?
27. How many senators do we have?
28. Where does Congress meet?
29. When do we vote for President?
30. Where does the President live?
31. Where is the White House?
32. When is Labor Day?
33. What do we have to pay to the government?
34. What does Congress do?
35. Who can vote?
36. Why do people want to be citizens?
37. When is Independence Day?
38. Who elects the President?

Writing Sentences

Note: USCIS does not publish a list of Reading and Writing sentences. The sentences on this page and the previous were developed by the ALRC and are sentences that applicants are likely to encounter during their USCIS interviews.

1. The United States has 50 states.
2. Washington, D.C. is the capital.
3. The flag is red, white and blue.
4. Flag Day is in June.
5. New York City was the first capital.
6. California has the most people.
7. Canada is north of the United States.
8. Alaska is the largest state.
9. Mexico is south of the United States.
10. American Indians lived here first.
11. They want to live in a free country.
12. People come here to be free.
13. Columbus Day is in October.
14. Thanksgiving is in November.
15. Delaware was the first state.
16. Washington is the Father of Our Country.
17. Washington was the first President.
18. The President lives in the White House.
19. Lincoln was President during the Civil War.
20. Washington is on the dollar bill.
21. Adams was the second President.
22. Washington was the first President.
23. President's Day is in February.
24. Memorial Day is in May.
25. Freedom of speech is a right.
26. The people elect Congress.
27. We have 100 Senators.
28. Congress meets in Washington, D.C.
29. We vote for President in November.
30. The President lives in the White House.
31. The White House is in Washington, D.C.
32. Labor Day is in September.
33. We have to pay taxes.
34. Congress makes laws.
35. Citizens can vote.
36. They want to vote.
37. Independence Day is in July.
38. The people elect the President.

Teaching Dictation for the Writing Test

For the writing portion of the citizenship test, students must write one sentence that is read aloud (dictated) by the adjudicator. To complete this task successfully, students need help in learning to hear and write both the *content* words and the *function* words in sentences.

Content Words

Content words convey the main meaning of the sentence and include people, places, actions, and dates. Parts of speech are usually nouns, adjectives, and main verbs. Content words are usually stressed when read aloud in a sentence.

Function Words

Function words do not convey the main meaning of the sentence but connect the content words. Parts of speech are usually articles, prepositions, auxiliary verbs, and pronouns. Students often have trouble hearing and writing function words when they are dictated in a sentence because they are not usually stressed when read aloud in a sentence.

Look at Example 1 below, and then try to do 2 -3 on your own. The answer is on the last page.

Example 1: The President lives in the White House.

Content Words: President, lives, White House

Functions Words: the, in

Example 2: Citizens have the right to vote.

Content Words: _____

Functions Words: _____

Example 3: We vote for the President in November.

Content Words: _____

Functions Words: _____

Students need ample practice learning to hear and write both content words and function words in dictated sentences. The following pages contain several strategies for helping students develop these listening and writing skills.

Note: The sentences that citizenship teachers use for dictation practice should contain ONLY words from the USCIS document “Writing Vocabulary for the Naturalization Test.” It can be found at the Citizenship Resource Center:

https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/PDFs/writing_vocab.pdf

Teaching Dictation for the USCIS Citizenship Test

Classroom Activities

Technique #1: How Many Missing Words?

This technique helps students learn to hear and write the function words in a dictated sentence.

Step One: The teacher writes a dehydrated sentence (a sentence containing only content words) on the board and asks students to copy them on a sheet of paper.

For example:

President lives White House

Step Two: The teacher then reads the complete sentence aloud and asks the students to write a caret on their papers in every place they hear a missing word. The teacher should read the sentence aloud three times. The students write on their papers:

^ President lives ^ ^ White House

Step Three: The teacher has one student come up to the board and write the carets in the correct places. When this is correct, another student is asked to write the complete sentence on the board below the dehydrated sentence. All the students can then copy the complete sentence on their papers.

^ President lives ^ ^ White House

The President lives in the White House.

Note: Instead of writing the dehydrated sentences on the board, the teacher can prepare a worksheet of several such sentences. After passing out the worksheet to the class, she proceeds with Step Two, above.

Technique #2: How Many Words?

This technique help students learn to hear and write all the words (both content and function words) in a dictated sentence.

Step One: The teacher reads a sentence aloud at a normal rate and asks the students how many words they hear. The teacher should read the sentence aloud three times.

Step Two: The students respond nonverbally. They can either hold up their fingers to show the total number of words they hear or hold up a number fan to show the total number of words they hear.

Step Three: The teacher asks one student to write the sentence on the board. The class corrects any mistakes and determines together how many words are in the sentence.

Technique #3: Scrambled Sentences

This tactile technique helps students review sentences that the adjudicator might read aloud for the writing test.

Step One: On the board, the teacher writes a sentence likely to be read aloud (dictated) at the citizenship test.

Step Two: The teacher gives the students several blank index cards and asks them to copy the sentence on the board onto the cards, one word per card. The teacher circulates to make sure that spelling and capitalization are correct. It is a good practice to put a period on one of the cards. The students then put the cards into a ziplock baggie or envelope.

Step Three: The teacher repeats Steps One and Two until each student has a collection of three to five sentences in bags or envelopes.

Step Four: The teacher reads one of the sentences aloud, and the students locate and assemble the correct sentence. The teacher may need to repeat the sentence several times.

Note: Students can use their scrambled sentences for individual practice at home or in class when they have a few minutes of free time.

Technique #4: Living Sentences

This kinesthetic technique is a variation on the Scrambled Sentence, above. It helps students review sentences that the adjudicator might read aloud (dictate) for the writing test. It also gets students up and moving during long classes.

Step One: Before class, the teacher selects several sentences likely to be read aloud (dictated) at the citizenship test. She writes one word from each sentence onto a piece of 8 ½ x 11" cardstock. The word cards from each sentence are clipped together with a paperclip or put into a large envelope.

Step Two: During class, the teacher divides the class into groups of 6-10 students. She gives each group one sentence and asks them to assemble the sentence in the correct order.

Step Three: Working together, the students arrange their sentence in order. Then groups take turns coming to the front of the class to make a "living sentence" by facing the class, each student holding a word card so that the sentence is formed correctly. If there are more students than words in the sentence, 2 or 3 students can hold one card.

Note: The teacher can have the class make additional sets of word cards for sentences they are studying. The cards can be used for 5-10 minutes of review at every class meeting (Steps Two and Three above).

Technique #5: Sentence Dictation for Multi-level Groups

This technique is ideal for classes with students of varied language proficiency levels. Using the same sentences for dictation, the teacher prepares worksheets at different proficiency levels and the students select worksheets that match their ability levels.

Step One: The teacher selects several sentences likely to be read aloud (dictated) at the citizenship test. Before class, she prepares up to four different worksheets, one for each ability level in the class:

Worksheet A (easiest):	Students circle what they hear.
Worksheet B (easy):	Students write one missing word.
Worksheet C (more difficult):	Students write two missing words.
Worksheet D (most difficult):	Students write the whole sentence.

See example below.

Step Two: During class, the teacher gives each student the worksheet that best matches his or her level of language proficiency. Alternatively, students can self-select the worksheets that best match their levels.

Step Three: The teacher reads the first sentence aloud at a normal rate three times. The students complete their worksheets while they listen. The class can then correct the sentences together.

Worksheet Examples for dictated sentence *Washington was the first President:*

Worksheet A: Circle the correct word

1. Washington was the first

government.
President.
Senator.

 ← Students using Worksheet A just circle which word they hear.

Worksheet B: Write the missing word.

1. Washington was the first President. ← Students using Worksheet B fill in one word.

Worksheet C: Write the missing words.

1. Washington was the first President. ← Students using Worksheet C fill in two words.

Worksheet D: Write the sentence.

1. Washington was the first President. ← Students using Worksheet D write the whole sentence.

N-400 Application for Naturalization

The majority of the citizenship interview is based on the student's Form N-400, Application for Naturalization. This document can be found at: www.uscis.gov/n-400

Purpose: USCIS Officers question students about the information contained on their N-400 applications for many reasons, including ascertaining eligibility, truthfulness, moral character, attachment to the Constitution, agreement with the Oath of Allegiance. Furthermore, it is also a way to determine the students' ability to communicate in English and functions in part as the Speaking Test.

Procedure: The USCIS Officer may ask students any of the questions on N-400, any of the students' written information on the N-400, and any follow-up questions. Students answer orally and in most cases do not have their applications in front of them while answering. If students do not understand a question and ask for repetition or clarification, the USCIS Officer will often rephrase the question in simpler English.

To Pass: USCIS Officers do not follow a script during the interview. There is no uniform manner in which the USCIS Officer discusses or reviews the N-400 application with the student. However, students must demonstrate that they generally understand and can respond meaningfully to questions relevant to the determination of eligibility. USCIS Officers repeat and rephrase questions until 1) they are satisfied that the student either fully understands the question or 2) does not understand English. They are not expecting 100% grammatical accuracy or perfect pronunciation. For more information about the passing criteria for the Speaking Test, view *Scoring Guidelines for the English Portion of the Naturalization Test* at https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/PDFs/Test_Scoring_Guidelines.pdf

The N-400, Application for Naturalization is a multi-page legal document with many complex concepts. In class, the N-400 is used as a way to practice questions that the USCIS Officer might ask at the interview.

Reminder: The N-400 Application is to be completed outside of the classroom, either at a local agency that helps students fill it out (often with bilingual and/or legal assistance) or in some cases by the student with the help of a family member who speaks English well.

Special Features of the N-400

The N-400 includes questions about the student's personal history and moral character. The following pages show an example of a section dealing with personal history and one dealing with moral character (Part 12).

A. Personal History. Parts 1-11 deal with personal information such as legal name, address, work, spouse, children, residence, trips out of the country, and more. Part 9 shows an example of the kind of personal information students discuss at the interview.

Part 9. Time Outside the United States

A-

1. How many **total days (24 hours or longer)** did you spend outside the United States during the last 5 years? days
2. How many trips of **24 hours or longer** have you taken outside the United States during the last 5 years? trips
3. List below all the trips of **24 hours or longer** that you have taken outside the United States during the last 5 years. Start with your most recent trip and work backwards. If you need extra space, use additional sheets of paper.

Date You Left the United States (mm/dd/yyyy)	Date You Returned to the United States (mm/dd/yyyy)	Did Trip Last 6 Months or More?	Countries to Which You Traveled	Total Days Outside the United States
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

B. Moral Character: Having “good moral character” is one of the requirements for U.S. citizenship. Part 12 is six pages long and full of difficult questions and concepts that students need a lot of help understanding and learning how to discuss.

For example, these are the first questions in Part 12:

1. Have you **ever** claimed to be a U.S. citizen (*in writing or any other way*)?
2. Have you **ever** registered to vote in any Federal, State, or local election in the United States?
3. Have you **ever** voted in any Federal, State, or local election in the United States?
4. A. Do you now have, or did you **ever** have, a hereditary title or an order of nobility in any foreign country?
 B. If you answered “Yes”, are you willing to give up any inherited titles or orders of nobility that you have in a foreign country at your naturalization ceremony?
5. Have you **ever** been declared legally incompetent, or been confined to a mental institution?
6. Do you owe any overdue Federal, state, or local taxes?

Note: Part 13 is the applicant’s signature. Part 14 is a statement by the interpreter, if used. Part 15 provides contact information about the person preparing the application, if not the applicant. Part 16 is the applicant’s signature at the interview. Part 17 is the Renunciation of Foreign Titles and Part 18 is related to the Oath of Allegiance.

Discussing the N-400 During the Interview

Adjudicating Officers can ask questions about any of the information on the N-400 application as well as any follow-up questions. Students must be prepared to answer all of the questions on the application and be able to discuss their personal information with the Officer. Below are some issues to keep in mind when preparing students to do this.

1. Adjudicator Questioning Styles

Adjudicators use a variety of ways to ask questions during the USCIS interview. Students are likely to encounter questions that are posed in nonstandard ways. Here are some examples of tag questions and other question forms that should be incorporated into oral practice exercises:

- “You have been working there for two years, haven’t you?”
- “You are Peruvian, right?”
- “And you’ve been in the U. S. how long?”
- “Your husband is a naturalized citizen, isn’t he?”
- “You have four children, yes?”
- “Date of birth?”
- “Married?”

2. Challenging Areas on the N-400

There are several questions on the N-400 that are very difficult for students to understand and answer correctly. Pay attention to these notes when teaching these parts to your students:

Part 9

- Applicant must state total number of days that they have been out of the country during the past five years.
- Applicant must list all trips of 24 hours or longer taken out of the U.S. since becoming a legal permanent resident.

Part 12

- Applicants are asked if they have ever **claimed** to be a citizen of the United States. This is a very difficult language structure and will need explanation.
- Applicants are asked if they have **ever failed to file** a tax return. It is very difficult to know how to answer this question and must be explained to the students and practiced with the students.
- Applicants may be asked to explain one or more terms, such as *communist, totalitarian, terrorist organization, discriminate, drunkard, polygamist, prostitute, narcotics, gambler, prison, deportation* or others.
- Adjudicators may ask applicants to put their initials next to particular questions on the N-400 form to record that they have been asked and answered specific questions.
- Applicants are usually asked to define the concept of "oath" and/or "truth."

Part 16

Applicants are asked to sign and swear that the information given in the application is true.

Part 18

Applicants are often asked to look over the *Oath of Allegiance* and tell the adjudicator what it means in their own words.

Line Up: Oral Practice Activity

Goal: This activity provides students with oral English practice through cooperative learning. It also practices personal information questions such as those found in the Form N-400 Application for Naturalization.

This activity works well in a multilevel class. Students with stronger language skills carry more of the language load while everyone is able to participate. It is important to teach the questions students will be asking each other before beginning the activity, especially when working with beginning-level students.

Process: Tell the class that only English can be used during this activity. The teacher should not direct the line-up, except to keep it in English.

- Explain that students will be lining up according to selected criteria such as:
 - Closest birth place to class
 - Distance from current home to class
 - Birth date
 - Family size
 - Number of years in the U.S.
 - Number of years (or months) at current address
- Ask students what question(s) they will need to ask each other to find their place in the line. Write the questions on the board and do some choral repetitions before lining up.
- Have the students stand up and ask each other questions to find their place in the line. After the students have found their place in line, ask them to tell the whole class why they occupy that place with respect to the people on either side of them. *Example: "I have been here 6 years and she has been here 7 years."*

Variation

This activity can be used for alphabet and spelling practice. During the naturalization interview, applicants are often asked to spell their names, the names of family members, their place of employment, etc. To practice these oral spelling skills, ask students to put themselves in alphabetical order according to their first or last names. Have them use questions like, "What is your first/last name?" and "How do you spell it?"

Helping Students with the Oath of Allegiance

At the interview, the USCIS Officer might ask applicants to read through the oath and say what it means in their own words. Therefore, citizenship teachers must help students:

- A. Understand the ideas in the Oath (not the individual words)
- B. Be able to restate what the Oath means

Note: Question #53 of the 100 Civics Questions addresses the promises that applicants make when they become a United States citizen. It states several promises that are contained in the Oath of Allegiance. Therefore, it is a good idea to teach Question #53 in conjunction with the Oath of Allegiance as shown in the Student Activity on the next page.

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 the laws of the United States 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 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.

Putting the Oath of Allegiance in Simple Words

Two of the following are good restatements of the Oath. Two are not very good. Decide which two are best. Say why the other ones aren't.

- I promise to give up any other country. I promise to support the U.S. Constitution. I will fight for America. I will help the U.S.
- I want to be a U.S. Citizen. I like the U.S. It is a very good country. I want to vote when I become a citizen. I will be a good U.S. Citizen.
- I will be an American. I will help the United States of America. I will fight or do work for America. I will follow the Constitution. I will sign the oath.
- I no longer claim allegiance to my former country. I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States. I will be loyal to the United States. If necessary, I will defend the United States with weapons or by other means. I make this pledge of my own free will, with no reservations whatsoever.

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 the laws of the United States 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 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.

You will take the Oath of Allegiance at your Naturalization Ceremony when you become a U.S. citizen, but don't worry! You don't have to understand every word in the Oath of Allegiance. You just have to understand the **ideas** in it. The Oath of Allegiance contains several **promises** that you make when you become a U.S. citizen. These promises are listed in Question #53 of the 100 Civics Questions. If you understand these promises, then you understand the Oath of Allegiance!

I promise to:

- give up loyalty to other _____
- defend the _____ and laws of the United States
- _____ the laws of the United States
- serve in the U.S. _____ if needed
- do important _____ for the nation if needed
- be _____ to the United States

Write the words below in the sentences above. If you need help, see Question #53 of the 100 Civics Questions

military
Constitution

loyal
countries

obey
work

Other Components of Citizenship Preparation

One purpose of the naturalization interview is for USCIS Officers to ascertain that the student speaks English. If a student does not say anything when asked a question, the USCIS Officer will likely assume that the student does not understand English. Therefore, teachers need to provide students with communication strategies for what to do if they do not understand, how to make small talk, and how to follow oral directions. All of these skills should be presented early on in a citizenship course and then reviewed and reinforced throughout the entire course.

1. Asking for Repetition or Clarification during the Interview

At any point in the interview, students may ask the USCIS Officer to repeat or to clarify. Often, especially with the difficult questions on the Application for Naturalization, Form N-400, USCIS Officers will respond to these requests by rephrasing the question using simpler wording.

From the very first citizenship class, students should be taught and encouraged to use polite phrases such as the following:

To request repetition:

- Could you please repeat that?
- Could you say that again, please?

To request clarification:

- I'm sorry, I don't understand. Could you explain that?
- I'm sorry, I don't know what you mean. Could you explain that?
- Do you mean _____? (*students say what they think the Officer means*)

After teaching these phrases to students, teachers should provide ample opportunity for students to use them. These phrases should be reviewed before speaking and listening practice so that students can use them authentically as they would at the interview.

2. Making Small Talk

Some USCIS Officers will make small talk before the interview begins. They might do this to set students at ease and/or to gauge their English conversation ability. Small talk can prove difficult for students both because they are likely to be nervous and also because small talk can address many different subjects.

It is therefore important for teachers to include small talk practice in their classes. At the beginning of class or after returning from a break, teachers can engage students in conversations about typical topics for small talk. Teachers should create opportunities for students to discuss the topics USCIS Officers might ask on the day of the interview such as:

- How did you get here today?
- Did you drive? Was the traffic bad?
- Who came with you today?
- Where are you from?
- How do you like the weather today?

Students should be taught to either answer the question or request repetition or clarification. Students should also be reminded that one of the best ways to improve their ability to comprehend and make small talk is to speak English as much as possible outside of class.

3. Additional Questions before the Interview

The citizenship pre-interview assessment may include questions like the following:

- Do you know what you are here for today?"
- Do you know why you are here?"
- Tell me what you are here for today.

Familiarize your students with the questions above and help them generate answers. Possible answers include:

- I got a letter in the mail to come for a test to be a citizen.
- I am here to have an interview to be a U.S. citizen.
- I must take a test to be a citizen.
- I have an appointment to take a test to be a citizen.

Practice these questions and answers in mini-dialogues. Allow students to choose the answer they feel most comfortable with.

4. Following Oral Instructions at the Interview

At the beginning of the interview, USCIS Officers might give oral instructions such as where to walk, where to sit, or what to do with any bags and folders. Again, these kinds of directions should be practiced in class as often as possible.

One specific direction that should be explicitly practiced in class is being placed under oath. At the beginning of the interview, the USCIS Officer will instruct the student to stand or remain standing and raise his or her right hand. The USCIS Officer will ask the student to swear to tell the truth, much like witnesses are sworn to tell the truth in a court room. It is extremely important to make students aware of this because if they do not understand this directive, the USCIS Officer will be unable to review the naturalization application and the student will fail to demonstrate that he can speak and understand English.

Conducting Mock Interviews

The USCIS citizenship interview and tests consist of several distinct sections. USCIS Officers can present these sections in any order they want. This can be difficult for applicants because their anxiety is at a very high level. During these interviews, applicants try very hard to understand what the USCIS Officers are saying and figure out what is expected of them.

Citizenship instructors must prepare applicants for many possible scenarios so that they stand a good chance of comprehending what the USCIS Officer is asking. Repeated practice of the various steps of the interview in many different orders may give applicants the reassurance needed to orient themselves during the process.

Components of the Interview

- **Introductions and Small Talk:** The USCIS Officer tells the applicant his/her name and explains what will happen during the interview. Depending on the personality of the Officer, this segment may vary from a few seconds to 3-4 minutes or more. The USCIS Officer may also make small talk with the applicant. This small talk helps the USCIS Officer judge the applicant's English ability.
- **Verification of identity:** The USCIS Officer asks the applicant to show documents that prove his/her identity such as: alien registration card, driver's license, state ID card, and/or passport.
- **Place Applicant Under Oath:** The USCIS Officer asks the applicant to raise his/her right hand and swear to tell the truth during the interview. The USCIS Officer may also give commands such as "Please remain standing" or "Please put your things on the chair."
- **Civics Test:** The USCIS Officer asks up to ten questions from the list of *USCIS 100 Civics Questions*. Once 6 questions are answered correctly, the Officer stops asking questions.
- **Reading Test:** The USCIS Officer asks the applicant to read one sentence from an electronic tablet. The applicant will be given up to three different sentences.
- **Writing Test:** The USCIS Officer dictates a sentence that the student must write on an electronic tablet with a stylus. The applicant will receive up to three different sentences.
- **Form N-400/ Speaking Test:** The USCIS Officer asks questions about the information on the applicant's N-400. The USCIS Officer could ask about any part of the N-400, so it is essential that applicants are prepared to discuss it. The USCIS Officer might ask the applicant to sign or initial parts of the N-400. The applicant also needs to be prepared to update or change any information on the N-400 as necessary.

Possible Sequencing of Interview Components

Below are examples of ways the interview might be organized. There are many possibilities.

A <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductions and Small Talk 2. Verification of identity 3. Civics & Reading & Writing Tests 4. Place Under Oath 5. N-400 	B <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Verification of identity 2. Introductions and Small Talk 3. Place Under Oath 4. Civics & Reading & Writing Tests 5. N-400
C <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Small Talk 2. Verification of identity 3. Place Under Oath 4. Introductions 5. N-400 6. Civics & Reading & Writing Tests 	D <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductions and Small Talk 2. Verification of identity 3. Place Under Oath 4. N-400 Parts 1-11 5. Civics & Reading & Writing Tests 6. N-400 Parts 12-18

Sample Naturalization Interview

The following sample shows how a typical USCIS interview and tests might be conducted. The purpose of this sample is to give citizenship applicants an idea of the general steps they will follow. These are not the exact questions that will be asked.

Recommended Process: Conduct this mock interview in a manner closely resembling the actual USCIS interview experience. Be formal with your student and act like an USCIS Officer. Also, vary the order of the sections of this sample interview each time you conduct it because USCIS Officers can present the sections in any order (see previous page). If you have the applicant's actual N-400, incorporate his/her information into the interview by saying things like *Do you still work at _____? Do you still live at _____?*

Meeting and small talk	<p>Hi. I am Officer Smith and I am going to go through your N-400 Citizenship Application with you to check the information on it. I will also be asking you some U.S. Civics questions and test your reading and writing. Do you understand what we will be going through today?</p> <p>Do you have any questions before we begin?</p> <p>Have you studied for the citizenship test?</p> <p>How did you study? What did you do?</p>
Oath	<p>O.K. Let's begin. Please stand and raise your right hand. Do you promise to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?</p>
ID Check	<p>You can sit down. At this point I have to check your identity. I'd like to see your passport and alien registration card. Please show them to me.</p>
Civics Test	<p>I'm going to ask you some questions about U.S. history, government, and geography. Are you ready?</p> <p><i>(At this point, ask up to ten questions from the USCIS 100 Civics Questions list. Applicants only need to get six right, so stop asking if the applicant has answered six correctly. Use a different ten questions every time you conduct a mock interview with the applicant. Ask up to ten questions randomly from the USCIS list or flashcards.)</i></p>
Reading Test	<p>Read this sentence aloud.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When is Memorial Day? • Who was Abraham Lincoln? • What country is south of the United States? <p><i>(Show the applicant one of the above questions or others consisting of words from the USCIS Reading Vocabulary for the Naturalization Test. If the applicant cannot read the first sentence correctly, give up to two more.)</i></p>

Writing
Test

Write this sentence exactly as I say it.

Examples:

- Memorial Day is in May.
- Lincoln was President during the Civil War.
- Mexico is south of the United States.

(Take away the reading question and give the applicant a paper with blank lines on it. Dictate one of the above sentences or another consisting of words from the USCIS Writing Vocabulary for the Naturalization Test. If the applicant cannot write the first dictated sentence correctly, give up to two more.)

N-400
Part 1

Now let's go over your Application for Naturalization.

How are you eligible for citizenship?

Part 2

What is your full name?

Spell your last name.

Have you ever used any other names?

Do you want to change your name?

What is your Social Security number?

When were you born?

Where were you born?

Date you became a permanent resident.

Part 4

What is your daytime phone number? And your evening phone?

Part 5

How long have you lived at your current address?

What country do you live in?

Part 6

Were your parents married before your 18th birthday?

Are either of your parents a U.S. citizen?

Part 7

How tall are you?

And your eye color?

Part 8

Who is your current employer?

What do you do?

Part 9

How many days were you out of the U.S. during the last five years?

How many trips of 24 hours or more have you taken out of the U.S. in the last five years?

- Part 10 | How many times have you been married?
What is your spouse's full name?
Is your current spouse a U.S. citizen?
When did you marry your current spouse?
How many times has your current spouse been married?
How did your marriage end?
- Part 11 | How many children have you had?
What are their names, birthplaces and current addresses?
Do you have any children not listed here?
- Part 12 | Have you ever claimed to be a U.S. citizen in writing or any other way?
Have you ever registered to vote in any Federal, state, or local election in the United States?
Have you ever voted in any Federal, state, or local election in the United States?
Since becoming a Lawful Permanent Resident, have you ever failed to file a required Federal, state, or local tax return?
Do you owe any Federal, state, or local taxes that are overdue?
Do you have any title of nobility in any foreign country?
Have you ever been declared legally incompetent or been confined to a mental institution within the last five years?
Have you ever been a member of, or associated with, any organization, fund, club or group in the U.S.?
Have you ever been a member of or in any way associated with: the Communist Party? Any other totalitarian party? A terrorist organization?
What is a "terrorist organization?"
Have you ever advocated the overthrow of any government by force or by violence?
Have you ever persecuted any person because of race, religion, national origin, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion?
Have you ever been involved in genocide, torture, or killing someone?
Have you ever been a member or involved in a military unit, paramilitary unit, vigilante unit, guerrilla group?

Have you ever worked as a volunteer soldier or been employed in a prison or jail, prison camp, detention facility or labor camp?

Have you ever used a weapon against a person or threatened to do so?

Did you ever sell or give weapons to any person?

Have you ever been trained for the military, paramilitary or in weapons training?

Did you ever ask, sign up or require or use any person under age 15 to serve or help an armed group?

Have you ever used any person under age 15 to do anything that helped or supported anyone in war?

Have you ever committed a crime or offense for which you were NOT arrested?

Have you ever been arrested, cited, or detained by any law enforcement officer including USCIS and military officers for any reason?

Have you ever been charged with committing any crime or offense?

Have you ever been convicted of a crime or offense?

Have you ever been placed in an alternative sentencing or a rehabilitative program, for example, diversion, deferred prosecution, withheld adjudication, deferred adjudication?

Have you ever received a suspended sentence, been placed on probation, or been paroled?

Have you ever been in jail or prison?

What is a prison?

Have you ever: *(choose several of the following to ask)*

- a. been a habitual drunkard?
- b. been a prostitute, or procured anyone for prostitution?
- c. sold or smuggled controlled substances, illegal drugs or narcotics?
- d. been married to more than one person at the same time?
- e. helped anyone enter or try to enter the United States illegally?
- f. gambled illegally or received income from illegal gambling?
- g. failed to support your dependents or to pay alimony?

Have you ever given false or misleading information to any U.S. government Officer while applying for any immigration benefit or to prevent deportation?

Have you ever lied to any U.S. government officer to gain entry or admission into the United States?

Are removal, exclusion, rescission or deportation proceedings pending against you?

Part 12, <i>continued</i>	<p>Have you ever been ordered to be removed, excluded, or deported from the United States?</p> <p>Have you ever applied for any kind of relief from removal, exclusion, or deportation?</p> <p>Have you ever served in the U.S. Armed Forces?</p> <p>Have you ever left the United States to avoid being drafted into the U.S. Armed Forces?</p> <p>Have you ever applied for any kind of exemption from military service in the U.S. Armed Forces?</p> <p>Have you ever deserted from the U.S. Armed Forces?</p> <p><i>(only ask to males)</i></p> <p>Are you a male who lived in the United States at any time between your 18th and 26th birthdays in any status except as a lawful nonimmigrant?</p> <p>If so, did you register with the Selective Service System?</p> <p>Do you support the Constitution and form of government of the United States?</p> <p>Do you understand the full Oath of Allegiance to the United States?</p> <p>Are you willing to take the full Oath of Allegiance to the United States?</p> <p>If the law requires it, are you willing to bear arms on behalf of the United States?</p> <p>If the law requires it, are you willing to perform noncombatant services in the U.S. Armed Forces?</p> <p>If the law requires it, are you willing to perform work of national importance under civilian direction?</p>
Part 13	Is this your signature?
Part 14	Who prepared your form?
Part 14	In what language did you complete your application?
Part 16	Please sign your N-400 here. Also sign your photos along this side.
Part 17	What title are you renouncing? Please sign here.
Part 18	Take a look at the Oath of Allegiance. In your own words, tell me what it means. Print your name here and sign here.
Ending	Congratulations, you have passed all parts of the citizenship test and interview. I am going to recommend you for citizenship. You will receive a notice of an Oath Ceremony where you will be issued a Certificate of Naturalization.

Note: This document was created through a collaboration with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; and Illinois citizenship educators working with the Adult Learning Resource Center.

Citizenship Education Resource Guide

This Resource Guide contains a wide variety of materials useful to citizenship educators including print, audio, and video resources. Many are web-based and available at no cost. The Resource Guide is organized into the following categories:

- USCIS Resources
- General Resources for Teaching U.S. Civics
- Specialized Resources for the Naturalization Interview and Tests
- Citizenship Textbooks

NOTE: Resources that are especially appropriate for virtual or remote instruction are indicated with the tag: **✓ Virtual Instruction**

USCIS Resources

Note: Many of the USCIS resources in this section can also be found by exploring the Citizenship Resource Center, www.uscis.gov/citizenship.

1. USCIS Website

This is the official USCIS website. It contains extensive information and resources including services and benefits, immigration forms, laws and regulations, educational resources, and more. There is a companion website in Spanish that contains some of the information in the English version.

English: www.uscis.gov

Spanish: www.uscis.gov/espanol

2. Citizenship Resource Center

This Resource Center has information, materials, and links for citizenship learners, teachers, and organizations. It contains links to many other USCIS products and materials.

www.uscis.gov/citizenship

3. **Becoming a U.S. Citizen: An Overview of the Naturalization Process (video)**

✓ Virtual Instruction

This 11-minute video provides a basic overview of naturalization including the requirements and steps involved. It can be played from the USCIS website.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDOXgWtCQxY>

4. Civics Flash Cards for the Naturalization Test

These flashcards are popular with teachers and students alike. The full-color cards show the question, answer, and a picture for each of the 100 civics questions. Educators and students can print the cards from the USCIS website and then cut and fold them to make their own set. Alternatively, they can purchase sets from the U.S. Government Bookstore.

Printable Flashcards: www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/PDFs/M-623_red_slides.pdf

U.S. Government Bookstore: <http://bookstore.gpo.gov/>

5. Expanding ESL, Civics, and Citizenship Education in Your Community

This publication contains information about starting and maintaining an ESL, civics, or citizenship class. Topics include designing, staffing, marketing a program; program content and instruction; and program development. There are also sample materials that programs can use or adapt.

<https://bit.ly/3RWALNT>

6. USCIS Guide to the Adult Citizenship Education Content Standards and Foundation Skills: A Framework for Developing a Comprehensive Curriculum

This guide is organized around the three phases of the naturalization process: 1) pre-Interview, 2) interview and test, and 3) post-interview. Content standards and relevant progress standards are indicated for each phase. This guide can be used to develop a citizenship curriculum, plan thematic lessons, and create learning activities.

<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/guides/M-1121.pdf>

7. USCIS Adult Citizenship Education Sample Curriculum for a High Beginning ESL Course

This sample curriculum was updated in 2022 and is designed to be a model for developing a program's own citizenship curriculum. The document has four components: the curriculum abstract, the scope and sequence, the syllabus, and unit assessments. The Sample Curriculum works in tandem with the Content Standards document (#6, above).

https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/curriculum-development/OoC_Sample-Curriculum-for-High-Beginning_V4.pdf

8. USCIS Lesson Plans and Activities

This section of the USCIS Citizenship Resource Center contains beginning and intermediate level lessons which are correlated with questions covered in the civics and the reading/writing portions of the test. The website provides downloadable lesson plans, instructions with suggested teaching strategies, handouts, and answer keys. Handouts provide communicative skills practice with listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in context.

[Beginning Level Lessons \(scroll down to find\)](#)

[Intermediate Level Lessons \(scroll down to find\)](#)

9. The Naturalization Interview and Test Video Series (2023)

✓ Virtual Instruction

This new USCIS video series consists of four separate video episodes:

[Episode 1](#): Preparing for the Naturalization interview and Test

[Episode 2](#) The Naturalization Interview

[Episode 3](#) The Civics Test

[Episode 4](#) The Reading and Writing Tests

USCIS Website: <https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learn-about-citizenship/the-naturalization-interview-and-test>

10. USCIS Themed Resources

This link offers thematic materials covered in the civics test. Themed resources include Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Constitution Day, Citizenship Day, and Bill of Rights Day.

<https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/teachers/martin-luther-king-jr-day>

11. USCIS Training and Professional Development

This webpage provides links to free on-line tools and materials to better prepare students for citizenship and the naturalization process. (training ,tip sheets, and podcasts)

<https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/resources-for-educational-programs/register-for-training>

12. USCIS Understanding Key Concepts Found in Form N-400, Application for Naturalization: A Guide for Adult Citizenship Teachers

This guide identifies the eight key concepts found in the Form N-400 (*Names, Addresses, Family Relationships, Employment and Schooling, Duration of Time Have you ever/Were you ever constructions, Memberships and Associations, and Promises and Oath*). Students must understand these concepts to complete the Form N-400 and also to respond to the adjudicator's questions during their naturalization interview. This guide assists teachers in creating thematic lessons around the eight key concepts using the four communicative skills and includes teaching activities for the classroom.

<https://bit.ly/3UAatl5>

13. Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants

This guide explains many features of living in the U.S. to new immigrants. It is available in 14 languages and can be downloaded and printed from the USCIS website.

www.uscis.gov/newimmigrants

14. USCIS: Civics Test Study Tools (downloadable app)

This is the official USCIS app designed to help applicants study for the civics test portion of the naturalization interview. It provides practice with the 100 civics questions and answers. The app is currently available in English and Spanish.

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.myuscismobileapp&hl=en_US&q=US

General Resources for Teaching U.S. Civics

While the resources in this section are not designed specifically for the U.S. naturalization interview or tests, they provide citizenship educators and students with additional materials for learning about U.S. history, government, and civics.

15. America's Historical Documents

This website from the National Archives provides information about the important historical documents that shaped the U.S. into the nation it is today. Many of the documents (such as the U.S. Constitution) have online resources that teachers can access to learn more or to use in their classes.

<http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/>

16. Archiving Early America

This site provides a unique array of primary source documents from 18th Century America. Scenes and portraits from original newspapers, magazines, maps, and writings come to life just as they appeared more than 250 years ago.

<http://www.varsitytutors.com/earlyamerica>

17. Ben's Guide to U. S. Government for Kids

✓ Virtual Instruction

This website is designed for children, but its excellent explanations of how the U.S. government works are appropriate for adults as well. Teachers choose an age level correlating to the level of difficulty (4-8, 9-13, 14+) and then access materials about the three branches of government, the election process, how laws are made, and more.

<http://bensguide.gpo.gov>

18. Center for Civic Education

This is a daily 60-Second Civics podcast that provides a quick and convenient way for students to learn about the US government, the Constitution, and US history. The podcast explores themes related to civics and government, the constitutional issues behind the headlines, and the people and ideas that formed our nation's history and government.

<http://www.civiced.org/60-second-civics>

19. EL/Civics for ESL Students

✓ Virtual Instruction

This site has pictures and basic facts about civics, government, and history as well as information and activities about holidays.

www.elcivics.com/

20. Harry S. Truman Library and Museum

The education section of this website has comprehensive information and activities about the three branches of government. Each branch has an overview, a worksheet, and an online activity to help students look up their representatives or senators. It is also a useful review for teachers who need to brush up on the three branches.

www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/teacher_lessons/3branches/front.htm

21. Presidents of the United States

This portion of the official White House website provides pictures, bibliographies, and timelines for each U.S. president.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/>

22. USA.gov

This site provides links to a variety of federal, state, and local government agencies. It also has links for all of the official websites of offices and agencies under each of the three branches.

www.usa.gov

23. Voice of America

This site has audio and radio broadcasts about a variety of topics. Two of the listening links feature American History and American Presidents. There are also English lessons for all levels.

<https://learningenglish.voanews.com/programs/radio>

Specialized Resources for the US Naturalization Interview and Tests

24. Citizenship News

This website helps keep citizenship educators updated on naturalization testing issues, including information from USCIS and important changes in policy and practice. Teachers can sign up to receive periodic information emails. www.citizenshipnews.us

25. Citizenship Study Guide

✓ Virtual Instruction

This website provides opportunities for students to practice the 100 questions, reading and writing activities, and the N-400 questions.

<http://www.citizenshipstudyguide.com/>

26. Civics Questions

✓ Virtual Instruction

This website provides opportunities for students to practice the 100 questions and allows the student to arrange the questions by topics (American Government, American History, Integrated Civics). There is an audio option to hear and read the 100 civics questions and answers.

Additionally, there is a link to practice the 100 questions in Spanish.

<https://civicsquestions.com/>

27. Preparing for the Oath: U.S. History and Civics for Citizenship

This website was developed through a collaboration of the Smithsonian National American History Museum and the USCIS. There is a collection of mini-videos, activities, and quizzes for the 100 civics questions. Also included are teacher guides and lesson plans.

www.americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship

28. USA Learns Citizenship Course

✓ Virtual Instruction

This online course offers 4 instructional units to help students prepare for the naturalization interview and tests: 1) Steps to Becoming a US Citizen, 2) N-400 Interview Practice, 3) Civics, Reading and Writing Practice, and 4) The Interview and Your New Citizenship. Each unit has numerous activities including mini-videos, listening practice, speaking practice, and quizzes. A unique feature allows students to record themselves and listen back to help develop pronunciation and oral fluency. Students must have a valid email address to use the site. Note: There are also courses for ESL instruction.

<https://www.usalearns.org/usa-learns-citizenship>

29. U.S. Citizenship Support

✓ Virtual Instruction

This website has activities for the English test and civics test and can be used on a computer, tablet, or smartphone. The English test practice includes N-400 quizzes, N-400 vocabulary, writing, reading, commands, and small talk. The civics test practice includes the 100 civics questions, civics and government quizzes, and flashcards.

<http://uscitizenshipsupport.com/>

30. U.S. Citizenship Podcast

This teacher-developed website contains many resources useful to both citizenship educators and students. Especially helpful are the audio files which include the 100 civics questions, questions from the N-400, and numerous sample interview segments featuring actual students. There are also a number of sample interview scripts at various English levels in PDF format that can be downloaded.

<http://uscitizenpod.com/>

31. Ventures Arcade Citizenship Activities

This free website from Cambridge University Press has online practice activities related to naturalization that can be used for student self-study or for in-class practice. Topics include the 100 questions, the reading and writing tests, N-400 questions, and additional history and government practice. Especially useful is the first topic, “100 Civics Questions,” which has an audio component.

<https://www.cambridge.org/us/esl/venturesadulted/venturesarcade/>

Citizenship Textbooks

32. Citizenship: Passing the Test, 3rd Edition (2009, 2016)

This textbook series is widely used for citizenship preparation. There are three separate books:

- *Civics and Literacy* (2009): student book that is widely used as a primary textbook
- *Ready for the Interview* (2016): student book that covers the information on the current N-400 application and prepares students to pass the speaking test
- *Literacy Skills* (2009): supplemental workbook for students with very low literacy skills

Each book has an audio CD sold separately. A teacher's guide is also sold separately.

<https://www.newreaderspress.com/esl-citizenship/citizenship/citizenship-passing-the-test>

33. Future U.S. Citizens with Active Book (2011)

✓ Virtual Instruction

This textbook combines print lessons with self-study digital lessons. It comes with an "Active Book," a DVD that contains a digital version of the textbook, interactive practice activities such as flashcards and dictation, model video interviews, and MP3 audio files. Civics, speaking test preparation, and reading/ writing test preparation are included.

<https://estore.pearsoneltusa.com/products/a101702964490>

34. US Citizenship Bootcamp, 3rd Edition (2021)

This textbook helps students prepare for the interview by completing a series of ten interviews based on the current N-400 Application for Naturalization. The first interview includes five basic questions in simple English from the N-400 and five USCIS Civics questions; the subsequent interviews expand on these questions and gradually introduce new vocabulary and grammar patterns. Also included is a special chapter titled "How to Study for Your Citizenship Interview."

<https://www.eslpublishing.com/bookpreviews/citizenship-bootcamp/>

35. Voices of Freedom: English and Civics, 5th Edition (2022)

✓ Virtual Instruction

This textbook focuses heavily on civics content through lessons and activities that prepare students for the U.S. naturalization interview and tests. Two audio CDs that contain the 100 questions and listening comprehension activities are included with the book. A workbook and an excellent teacher's guide with a wide variety of reproducible classroom activities are sold separately. Especially useful for virtual instruction in the digital edition of the book. A two-year subscription is reasonably priced and provides access to the digital book and audio files.

Print and Digital version:

<https://estore.pearsoneltusa.com/products/a103000269694?isbn=citizenship>

36. McGraw-Hill's U.S. Citizenship Test with DVD (2009)

This textbook prepares students for both the civics test and the N-400 interview. It includes a DVD with four sample interviews. This book is a re-publication of the 2009 textbook **Citizenship Now! A Complete Guide for Naturalization**, previously available from Cambridge University Press and now out of print.

<https://www.mhprofessional.com/mcgraw-hill-s-u-s-citizenship-test-with-dvd-9780071605168-usa>