

# What Should I Expect From the Naturalization Process?



## Preparing to Apply

- Read *A Guide to Naturalization*.
- Complete the Naturalization Eligibility Worksheet.
- Get an “Application for Naturalization” (Form N-400).
- Visit our website at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).



## Completing Your Application and Getting Photographed

- Complete your application.
- Get two passport-style photographs taken.
- Collect the necessary documents.
- Send your application, passport-style photographs, documents, and fee (DO NOT SEND CASH) to the appropriate Lockbox Facility or Service Center.
- Keep a copy of everything you send to USCIS.



## Getting Fingerprinted

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



## Being Interviewed

- Receive an appointment for your interview.
- Go to your local USCIS office at the specified time.
- Bring state-issued identification, Permanent Resident Card, and any additional documents specific to your case.
- Answer questions about your application and background.
- Take the English and civics tests.
- Receive case status.



## Taking the Oath

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

# Preparing to Apply



## 1. Read *A Guide to Naturalization*

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

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

## 2. Complete the Naturalization Eligibility Worksheet

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

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

- Calling Customer Service at **1-800-375-5283**;
- Reviewing the information on the USCIS website at **www.uscis.gov**;
- Going to a USCIS information counter;
- Contacting a community immigrant assistance organization; or
- Talking to an immigration attorney.

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

Once you have completed the eligibility worksheet and believe that you are eligible for naturalization, you should obtain an application. The application is called the “Application for Naturalization” (Form N-400). You may obtain Form N-400 by calling the USCIS Forms Line **(1-800-870-3676)** or by downloading it from the Internet at **www.uscis.gov**.

USCIS has developed educational materials, such as Civics Flash Cards and *Learn About the United States: Quick Civics Lessons*, to help you prepare for the naturalization interview. You can find these resources and other study materials for the naturalization test at **www.uscis.gov**.

# Completing Your Application and Getting Photographed



## 1. Complete your application

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

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

## 2. Get two photographs taken

You must include two standard, passport-style, color photographs with your application.

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

- Unmounted and printed on thin paper, on a white background with a full frontal view of your face; and
- Taken within 30 days of the date they are sent to USCIS.



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

You should print your name and “A-number” lightly in pencil on the back of each photograph. For more information on photograph requirements, see the single page titled “USCIS is Making Photos Simpler,” at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

For more information on photo standards, visit the Department of State’s website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) or contact Customer Service at **1-800-375-5283**.

## 3. Collect the necessary documents

Applicants who are lawful permanent residents of the United States must submit photocopies (front and back) of Form I-551 (Permanent Resident Card). Depending on the circumstances, some applicants must send certain documents with their application. For more information on the documents you must send with your application, see the Document Checklist located at the back of this *Guide*. If

you do not send the necessary documents with your application, the processing of your application may be delayed. In most cases, you should send a copy of a document, but you should be prepared to bring the originals with you to your interview. We may also ask you to send other documents to us before your interview, or to bring additional documents with you to your interview.

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

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



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

#### **4. Send your application, documents, and fee to the USCIS Lockbox Facility**

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

The current fee you must send with your application is on the one-page insert titled “Current Naturalization Fees” in the back of this *Guide*. Military applicants filing for citizenship under Sections 328 and 329 of the INA do not require a fee.

If you reside in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Territory of Guam, or Northern Mariana Islands, send your application to:

**USCIS Lockbox Facility**  
USCIS  
P.O. Box 21251  
Phoenix, AZ 85036

**Private Courier (non-USPS)**  
**Deliveries:**  
USCIS  
Attention: N-400  
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S.  
Floor 1  
Phoenix, AZ 85036

If you reside in Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, or U.S. Virgin Islands, send your application to:

**USCIS Lockbox Facility**  
USCIS  
P.O. Box 299026  
Lewisville, TX 75029

**Private Courier (non-USPS)**  
**Deliveries:**  
USCIS  
Attention: N-400  
2501 S. State Hwy 121, Bldg. 4  
Lewisville, TX 75067

**Military Members and Spouses:**  
If you are a veteran or an active member of the U.S. Armed Forces and are eligible to apply for naturalization under Section 328 or 329 of the INA, **or are the spouse of a current member of the U.S. Armed Forces**, send your application to:

**USCIS Service Center**  
**Nebraska Service Center**  
P.O. Box 87426  
Lincoln, NE 68501-7426

**Private Courier (non-USPS)**  
**Deliveries:**  
**Nebraska Service Center**  
850 S Street  
Lincoln, NE 68508

**What if I live overseas?** If you are overseas and filing Form N-400, you should send your application to the USCIS Lockbox Facility that serves the USCIS office where you want to be interviewed.

**What if I am currently serving in active duty status in the military?** If you are applying for naturalization based on qualifying military service, and are currently serving in an active duty status, you may go to your service’s personnel office for information on how to prepare your application. You should speak to your personnel office even if you are stationed overseas. For more information, see “Naturalization Information for Military Personnel” (Form M-599).

# Getting Fingerprinted



## 1. Receive an appointment letter from USCIS

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

In most cases, the letter will tell you to go to an Application Support Center. A van may be available in certain areas of Alaska and Hawaii to fingerprint applicants who are located far from the nearest fingerprinting location. Your notice from USCIS will tell you if a van serves your area.

## 2. Go to the fingerprinting location

Take your notice letter from USCIS, your Permanent Resident Card, and another form of identification (driver's license, passport, or State identification card) with you. Your second form of identification should have your photograph on it.

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

## 3. Get your fingerprints taken

Currently, all sites take fingerprints electronically. However, manual workstations are available for applicants whose prints cannot be taken electronically.

In order to do a criminal background check, USCIS will send your fingerprints to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In some cases, the FBI may reject your fingerprints because of the quality of the prints.

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

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

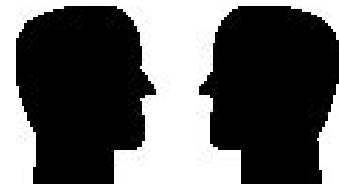
## 4. Mail additional documents if USCIS requests them

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

## 5. Wait for USCIS to schedule your interview

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

# Being Interviewed



## 1. Receive an appointment for your interview

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

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



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

## 2. Go to your local USCIS office at the specified time

You should go to the office where you are to be interviewed at least 30 minutes before the time of your interview. Many USCIS offices are crowded, so unless you need to, you may not want to bring other people with you to your interview.

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

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

## 3. Bring identification and provide additional documents if USCIS requests them

You should bring the following identification to your interview: (a) your Permanent Resident or Alien Registration Card, (b) your passport (even if it has expired), (c) State Identification Card, and (d) any Re-entry Permits you have.

In some cases, USCIS may ask you to bring additional documents to the interview. These documents will be listed on your appointment letter. If you don't bring the necessary documents, your case may be delayed or denied. USCIS strongly recommends that you also bring two additional passport-style photographs with you to the interview.

## 4. Answer questions about your application and background.

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

- Your background;
- Evidence supporting your case;
- Your place and length of residence;

- Your character;
- Your attachment to the Constitution; and
- Your willingness to take an Oath of Allegiance to the United States.

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



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

If you want a representative to accompany you to your interview, you must first send us a “Notice of Entry of Appearance as Attorney or Representative” (Form G-28) with your application. Also, if you are exempt from the English requirements, you may bring an interpreter to the interview or USCIS may select one for you. If you have any disabilities, you may bring a family member or legal guardian to be present with you during the interview at the discretion of the USCIS officer.

## 5. Take the English and civics tests

During your interview, a USCIS officer will also test your ability to read, write, and speak English (unless you are exempt from the English requirements). You will also be given a civics test in English (to test your knowledge and understanding of U.S. history and government) unless you are exempt. Even if exempt from the English test, you will need to take the civics test in the language of your choice or qualify for a waiver.

**English.** Study materials have been publicly released by USCIS and are available at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) under Education and Resources. Your English skills will be tested in the following ways:

- (1) **Reading.** To test your ability to read in English, you must read one sentence, out of three sentences, in a manner suggesting to the USCIS officer that you understand the meaning of the sentence.
- (2) **Writing.** To test your ability to write in English, you must write one sentence, out of three sentences, in a manner that would be understandable as written to the USCIS officer.
- (3) **Speaking.** Your ability to speak English is determined by your answers to questions normally asked by USCIS officers during the naturalization eligibility interview on Form N-400.

**Civics.** During your interview, the USCIS officer will ask you to orally answer a set of civics

questions. You must answer six (6) out of 10 civics questions correctly to achieve a passing score. All 100 civics questions have been publicly released by USCIS and are available at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) under Education and Resources.

## 6. Receive a decision

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

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

**Continued.** The USCIS officer may also “continue” your case. This means your case is put on hold. If your case is continued, it will add time to your naturalization process. The most common reasons for continuation are (a) failing the English and civics tests, and (b) failing to give USCIS the correct documents.

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

(1) **Come back for a second interview.** If you fail one or both of the tests, we will reschedule you

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

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

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

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

If, after an appeal hearing with USCIS, you still believe USCIS was wrong to deny you citizenship, you may file a petition for a new review of your application in U.S. District Court.

# Taking the Oath



## 1. Receive a ceremony date

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

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

If you arrange to take a “same-day” Oath, USCIS will ask you to come back to the office later that day. At this time, you will take the Oath and receive your Certificate of Naturalization.

## 2. Check in at the ceremony

When you arrive at the ceremony, you will be asked to check in with USCIS. You should arrive at least 30 minutes before your scheduled ceremony. Remember that there are often many other people being naturalized with you who must also be checked in with USCIS.

If you cannot attend the ceremony on the day you are scheduled, you should return the USCIS notice (Form N-445)

to your local USCIS office. You should include a letter explaining why you cannot be at the ceremony and asking USCIS to reschedule you.

The naturalization ceremony is a solemn and meaningful event. Please dress in proper attire to respect the dignity of this event (please no jeans, shorts, or flip flops).

## 3. Return your Permanent Resident Card

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

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

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

Some questions on the back of the N-445 include: “Have you traveled outside the United States?” and “Have you claimed exemption from military service?” You should read the

questions carefully and mark your answers before you arrive at the ceremony.



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

## 5. Take the Oath

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

**Request a Modified Oath.** If you provide enough evidence that your religious training and beliefs prevent you from bearing arms for the United States, you may take the Oath, without the words “to bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law...”

If you provide enough evidence to convince USCIS that your religious training and beliefs prevent you from performing any type of service in the U.S. Armed Forces, you will not be required to say the words “to

perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by law.”

If USCIS finds that you are unable to swear the Oath using the words “on oath,” you may replace these words with “and solemnly affirm.” Finally, if USCIS finds that you are unable to use the words “so help me God” because of your religious training or beliefs, you are not required to say these words.

If you believe you qualify for a modified Oath, you should write us a letter with your application, explaining your situation. USCIS will ask you to provide documentation from your religious organization explaining its beliefs and stating that you are a member in good standing. If you cannot communicate an understanding of the meaning of the Oath because of a physical or mental disability, USCIS may excuse you from this requirement.

**Hereditary Titles.** If you have any hereditary titles or positions of nobility, you must renounce at the oath ceremony.

## 6. Receive your Certificate of Naturalization

Once you have taken the Oath, you will receive your Certificate

of Naturalization. You may use this document as proof that you are a U.S. citizen.



*We strongly recommend that you go to your nearest Social Security Administration (SSA) office to update your Social Security record soon after your naturalization ceremony.*

This is important because your Social Security record will be used to establish eligibility for benefits and to demonstrate authorization to work. The nearest SSA office can be found by calling 1-800-772-1213 or at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

**To Update your Citizenship with SSA.** In order to update your citizenship status in your SSA record, you will need to present your Certificate of Naturalization or your U.S. passport to the SSA.

**To Change your Name in SSA's Records.** If at the oath ceremony you also changed your name from that shown in your SSA record, and your Certificate of Naturalization does not show your old and new names, you will also need to present:

- A State driver's license or other acceptable form of identification in your old name as shown in your SSA record. This identity document in your former name can be unexpired or expired. It must contain your photo and/or biographical information about you.
- If you changed your name more than two years ago, you will also need to present a recently issued identity document showing your new legal name as shown on your Certificate of Naturalization or U.S. passport.



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

A passport serves as evidence of citizenship and is easier to carry around than a Certificate of Naturalization. If you lose your Certificate of Naturalization, you may request a replacement by filing an “Application for Replacement Naturalization/ Citizenship Document” (Form N-565).

You can often get an application for a passport at your oath ceremony or at most United States Post Offices.

