

Frequently Asked Questions

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

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

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

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

(1) If you were born in the United States:

Normally you were a U.S. citizen at birth.¹ (Including, in most cases, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the territories of Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and after November 4, 1986, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands),

(2) If you were born abroad to TWO U.S. citizens:

And at least one of your parents lived in the United States at some point in his or her life, **then in most cases you are a U.S. citizen.**

(3) If you were born abroad to ONE U.S. citizen:

In most cases, you are a U.S. citizen if **all** of the following are true:

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

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

¹The exception is persons who were born not subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, such as children of foreign diplomats.

²If you were born before November 14, 1986, you are a citizen if your U.S. citizen parent lived in the United States for at least 10 years and 5 of those years in the United States were after your citizen parent's 14th birthday.

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3. How do I become a naturalized citizen?

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If you are not a U.S. citizen by birth or did not acquire/derive U.S. citizenship automatically after birth, you may still be eligible to become a citizen through the naturalization process. Eligible persons use the “Application for Naturalization” (Form N-400) to apply for naturalization.

Persons who acquired citizenship from parent(s) while under 18 years of age use the “Application for Certificate of Citizenship” (Form N-600) to document their citizenship. Qualified children who reside abroad use the “Application for Citizenship and Issuance of Certificate under Section 322” (Form N-600K) to document their naturalization. You may call the USCIS Forms Line at **1-800-870-3676** to request a Form N-400, N-600, or N-600K; or you may download all of these forms at www.uscis.gov.

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4. What are the requirements for naturalization?

A

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

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

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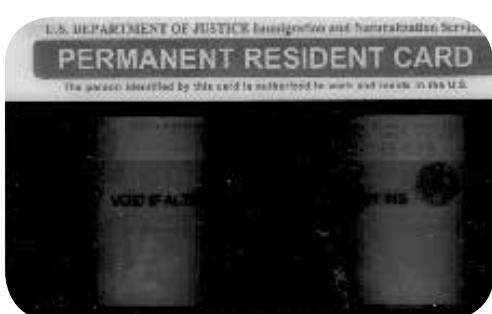
Your time as a Permanent Resident begins on the date you were granted permanent resident status. This date is on your Permanent Resident Card (formerly known as an Alien Registration Card or “Green Card”). The sample cards on this page show where you can find important information such as the date your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

Front



Date you became a
Permanent Resident
(January 1, 1980)

Back



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

“A-number”



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

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

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

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

“A-number”



NOTE: The “A-number” is the Alien Registration Number

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

A

You should use an “Application for Naturalization” (Form N-400). Call the USCIS Forms Line at **1-800-870-3676** to request Form N-400. You may also download the form at www.uscis.gov.

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

A

Yes. You should always be honest with USCIS about all:

- Arrests (even if you were not charged or convicted);
- Convictions (even if your record was cleared or expunged);
- Crimes you have committed for which you were not arrested or convicted; and
- Any countervailing evidence, or evidence in your favor concerning the circumstances of your arrests, and/or convictions or offenses that you would like USCIS to consider.



Even if you have committed a minor crime, USCIS may deny your application if you do not tell the USCIS officer about the incident. Note that unless a traffic incident was alcohol or drug related, you do not need to submit documentation for traffic fines and incidents that did not involve an actual arrest if the only penalty was a fine less than **\$500** and/or points on your driver’s license.

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8. Where do I file my naturalization application?

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You should send your completed “Application for Naturalization” (Form N-400) to the appropriate USCIS Lockbox Facility that serves your area, see page 34 for detailed instructions. Also see page 34 for separate filing instructions for members of the Armed Forces and the spouses of active members of the Armed Forces. Remember to make a copy of your application. **Do not** send original documents with your application unless the Document Checklist included with this *Guide* states that an original is required. **Always** make copies of documents that you send to USCIS.

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9. Will USCIS help me, or make accommodations for me, if I have a disability?

A

USCIS will make every effort to make reasonable accommodations for applicants with disabilities who need modifications to the naturalization process in order to demonstrate their eligibility. For example, if you use a wheelchair, we will make sure you can be fingerprinted, photographed, interviewed, and sworn in at a location that is wheelchair accessible. If you are hearing impaired, the officer conducting your interview will speak loudly and slowly, or we will work with you to arrange for an American sign language interpreter. If you require an American sign language interpreter at the oath ceremony, please indicate that in your Form N-400 in the section where you are asked if you need

an accommodation for a disability. If you use a service animal such as a guide dog, your animal may come with you to your interview and oath ceremony.

We are continuing to work on better ways to make the naturalization process easier for applicants with disabilities. If you know in advance that you will need some kind of accommodation, write a letter explaining what you will need and send it to the USCIS district office that will interview you after you receive your interview notice. If you have a physical or developmental disability or a mental impairment so severe that you cannot acquire or demonstrate the required knowledge of English and civics, you may be eligible for an exemption of those requirements. To request an exemption, you must file a “Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions” (Form N-648). See page 26 of this *Guide* for more information.

Q 10. Where is my local USCIS office?

A To find the local USCIS office that serves your area, please use the field office locator at www.uscis.gov.

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

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

Q 12. How can I pay my application fee?

A You must send the fee with your application. Pay the fee with a check or money order drawn on a U.S. bank payable to the **Department of Homeland Security**. Do not use the initials DHS or USDHS. **Do Not Send Cash**.

You may also pay using a credit card. There is no additional fee when you do so. The N-400 is the only form that you can pay for by credit card using the G-1450, Authorization for Credit Card Transaction. Check www.uscis.gov for more specific information.

Residents of Guam should make the fee payable to the “Treasurer, Guam,” and residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands should make the fee payable to the “Commissioner of Finance of the Virgin Islands.”

Fees for biometric services, which include your photograph and signature, are separate from your application fee. Remember that your application fee is not refundable even if you withdraw your application or if your case is denied.



* If you are applying for naturalization based on your own service in the Armed Forces of the United States, no filing fee is required. Please see “Naturalization Information for Military Personnel” (Form M-599) for more information.

** If you are 75 years or older, or if you are filing on the basis of your service in the Armed Forces of the United States, or if you are filing from abroad, **do not** send the biometric services fee for fingerprinting with your application.

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13. How long will it take to become naturalized?

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The time it takes to be naturalized varies by location. USCIS is continuing to modernize and improve the naturalization process and would like to decrease the time it takes to an average of 6 months after the Form N-400 is filed.

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14. Where can I be fingerprinted and photographed?

A

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

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

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You may check the status of your naturalization application by visiting www.uscis.gov or by calling Customer Service at **1-800-375-5283** (TTY: **1-800-767-1833**).

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

A

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

If you miss your scheduled interview without notifying USCIS, we will “administratively close” your case. If we close your case because you missed your interview, we will notify you at your last address of record. Unless you contact us to schedule a new interview within 1 year after we close your case, we will deny your application.

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

A

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

If you move after filing your “Application for Naturalization” (Form N-400), call Customer Service at **1-800-375-5283 (TTY: 1-800-767-1833)** to change your address on your pending Form N-400. Every time you move, you are required by law to inform USCIS of your new address. To meet this legal requirement, you must file an “Alien’s Change of Address Card” (Form AR-11), in addition to calling Customer Service. You must file the Form AR-11 within 10 days of your move. There is no fee to file this form. You should also notify the U.S. Postal Service of your new address to help ensure that any mail already on its way may be forwarded to you.

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18. Can I change my name when I naturalize?

A

Congress did not give USCIS legal authority to change a person’s name when that person naturalizes. Therefore, there are only two ways that USCIS can issue your Certificate of Naturalization under a new name:

1. If you present proof that you have already changed your name according to the legal requirements that apply to persons living in your State, USCIS can issue the Certificate of Naturalization with your new name. Such proof might include a marriage certificate or divorce decree showing that you changed your name when you married or divorced. It might also include some other State court order establishing that you changed your name.
2. If you are going to take the Oath of Allegiance at a Naturalization Ceremony that is held in Court, you may ask the Court to change your name. If the Court grants your request, your new name will appear on your Certificate of Naturalization.

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

A

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

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

A

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

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21. What can I do if USCIS denies my application?

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

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

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

A

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

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

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

A You may get a new Certificate of Naturalization by submitting an “Application for Replacement Naturalization/Citizenship Document” (Form N-565) to USCIS. You may request Form N-565 by calling the USCIS Forms Line **(1-800-870-3676)**, or by downloading the form at www.uscis.gov. Submit this form with the appropriate fee to the Nebraska or Texas Service Center, depending on which Service Center has jurisdiction over your residence.

If you have one, you may use your U.S. passport as evidence of citizenship while you wait for a replacement certificate. It is strongly recommended that you apply for a passport as soon as you become a citizen.

Q 24. If I am a U.S. citizen, is my child a U.S. citizen?

A A child who is born in the United States, or born abroad to a U.S. citizen(s) who lived in (or came to) the United States for the required period of time prior to the child’s birth, is generally considered a U.S. citizen at birth.

A child who is:

- Born to a U.S. citizen who did not live in (or come to) the United States for the required period of time prior to the child’s birth, or
- Born to one U.S. citizen parent and one alien parent or two alien parents who naturalize after the child’s birth, or
- Adopted (stepchildren cannot derive or acquire citizenship through their stepparents) and is permanently residing in the United States can become a U.S. citizen by action of law on the date on which all of the following requirements have been met:
 - The child was lawfully admitted for permanent residence*; and
 - Either parent was a United States citizen by birth or naturalization**; and
 - The child was still under 18 years of age; and
 - The child was not married; and

- The child was the parent's legitimate child or was legitimated by the parent before the child's 16th birthday (children born out of wedlock who were not legitimated before their 16th birthday do **not** derive United States citizenship through their father); and
- If adopted, the child met the requirements of section 101(b)(1)(E) or (F) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) and has had a full and final adoption; and
- The child was residing in the United States in the legal custody of the U.S. citizen parent (this includes joint custody); and
- The child was residing in the United States in the physical custody of the U.S. citizen parent.

If you and your child meet all of these requirements, you may obtain a U.S. passport for the child as evidence of citizenship. If the child needs further evidence of citizenship, you may submit an “Application for Certificate of Citizenship” (Form N-600) to USCIS to obtain a Certificate of Citizenship. (**NOTE:** A child who meets these requirements before his or her 18th birthday may obtain a passport or Certificate of Citizenship at any time, even after he or she turns 18.)

***NOTE** – Children who immigrated under the “IR-3” or “IR-4” categories must have had an immigrant petition filed on their behalf before their 16th birthday; see answers to Question 26. All adoptions for any other type of immigration benefit, including naturalization, must be completed by the child’s 16th birthday, with one exception: A child adopted while under the age of 18 years by the same parents who adopted a natural sibling who met the usual requirements.

****NOTE** – The “one U.S. citizen parent” rule applies only to children who first fulfilled the requirements for automatic citizenship (other than at birth abroad) on or after February 27, 2001. In order to qualify for automatic citizenship (other than at birth abroad) on or before February 26, 2001, both of the child’s parents must have been United States citizens either at birth or through naturalization—both parents if the child had two parents; the surviving parent if a parent had died; the parent with legal custody if the parents were divorced or legally separated; or the mother only, if the child had been born out of wedlock and the child’s paternity had not been established by legitimation.

Q 25. If I am a U.S. citizen, but my child does not meet the requirements listed above, can I still apply for citizenship for my child?

A A child who is regularly residing **in** the United States can become a citizen of the United States **only** by meeting the requirements listed in the answer to Question 25. If a child regularly resides **in** the United States and is not a lawful permanent resident, he or she cannot acquire citizenship automatically until he or she is granted lawful permanent residence. If a child who has been lawfully admitted for permanent residence fails to qualify for citizenship under the

provisions of law, he or she may apply for naturalization after reaching 18 years of age by filing Form N-400, provided that he or she has the required 5 years of lawful permanent residence.

U.S. citizens with children by birth or adoption (stepchildren do not qualify) who do **not** regularly reside in the United States, may apply for citizenship for such a child if all of the following conditions are met:

- The child is under 18 years of age; and
- The child is not married; and
- The child regularly resides outside the United States; and
- The child is temporarily present in the United States pursuant to a lawful admission and is maintaining such lawful status; and
- The child is in legal and physical custody of a parent who is a U.S. citizen; and
- The child is the U.S. citizen's legitimate child, or was legitimated before the child's 16th birthday (children born out of wedlock who were not legitimated before their 16th birthday may be eligible for this procedure through his or her mother); and
- If adopted, the child meets the requirements of section 101(b)(1)(E) or (F) of the INA and had a full and final adoption; and
- Either of the following is true:
 - The citizen parent has lived at least 5 years in the United States, and at least 2 of which were after the citizen parent's 14th birthday; or
 - If the child's citizen parent has not lived in the United States for at least 5 years, 2 of which were after that parent's 14th birthday, the citizen parent currently has a parent (the child's grandparent) who:
 - Is also a U.S. citizen; and
 - Lived in the United States for 5 years, at least 2 of which were after the citizen grandparent's 14th birthday; and
 - Is living or deceased at the time of the adjudication of the application and the taking of the oath.

If the foregoing conditions are met, the citizen parent can apply for citizenship and a Certificate of Citizenship on behalf of the child using an "Application for Citizenship and Issuance of a Certificate under Section 322" (Form N-600K). Both the citizen parent and the child must appear at an interview with a USCIS officer in the United States. The child must meet **all** of the required conditions at the time he or she takes the Oath of Allegiance. (**NOTE:** The oath may be waived if the child is too young to understand it.)