U.S. Citizenship and the Naturalization Process

Becoming a U.S. citizen is a very important decision. Permanent residents have most of the rights of U.S. citizens. However, there are many important reasons to consider U.S. citizenship. When you become a citizen, you will receive all the rights of citizenship. You also accept all of the responsibilities of being an American. As a citizen you can:

- **Vote.** Only citizens can vote in federal elections. Most states also restrict the right to vote, in most elections, to U.S. citizens.
- **Serve on a jury.** Only U.S. citizens can serve on a federal jury. Most states also restrict jury service to U.S. citizens. Serving on a jury is an important responsibility for U.S. citizens.
- **Travel with a U.S. passport.** A U.S. passport enables you to get assistance from the U.S. government when overseas, if necessary.
- **Bring family members to the United States.** U.S. citizens generally get priority when petitioning to bring family members permanently to this country.
- **Obtain citizenship for children under 18 years of age.** In most cases, a child born abroad to a U.S. citizen is automatically a U.S. citizen.
- **Apply for federal jobs.** Certain jobs with government agencies require U.S. citizenship.
- **Become an elected official.** Only citizens can run for federal office (U.S. Senate or House of Representatives) and for most state and local offices.
- **Keep your residency.** A U.S. citizen’s right to remain in the United States cannot be taken away.
- **Become eligible for federal grants and scholarships.** Many financial aid grants, including college scholarships and funds given by the government for specific purposes, are available only to U.S. citizens.
- **Obtain government benefits.** Some government benefits are available only to U.S. citizens.

Before you apply for naturalization, you must meet a few requirements. Depending on your situation, there are different requirements that may apply to you. However, generally, an applicant for naturalization must:

- Be at least 18 years old at the time of filing [Form N-400, Application for Naturalization](https://www.uscis.gov/I-485).
- Be a permanent resident (have a “Green Card”) for at least 5 years.
- Have lived within the state or USCIS district with jurisdiction over your place of residence for at least 3 months prior to the date of filing [Form N-400](https://www.uscis.gov/I-485).
- Have continuous residence in the United States as a lawful permanent resident for at least 5 years immediately preceding the date of filing [Form N-400](https://www.uscis.gov/I-485).
- Be physically present in the United States for at least 30 months out of the 5 years immediately preceding the date of filing [Form N-400](https://www.uscis.gov/I-485).
- Be able to read, write, and speak basic English.
- Have a basic understanding of U.S. history and government (civics).
- Be a person of good moral character.
- Demonstrate an attachment to the principles and ideals of the [U.S. Constitution](https://www.uscis.gov/us-citizenship/learn-english/citizenship- Civics/).
The links below will help you find information from USCIS about naturalization and the application process. For a list of available USCIS naturalization resources in Spanish, please see Recursos para la naturalización.

Learn About Naturalization
Understand the process of becoming a U.S. citizen.

Apply for Citizenship
Identify the steps needed to apply for citizenship.

Study for the Test
Prepare for the naturalization interview and test.

Understand Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities
Learn about important citizenship rights and responsibilities.

Finding Help in Your Community

- **English and Citizenship Classes**
  
  Find an English and/or Citizenship Class
  
  Search America’s Literacy Directory to find an English and/or citizenship class in your area.

- **Legal Assistance**
  
  Find Legal Advice
  
  Learn about immigration attorneys and accredited representatives of a recognized organization.
  
  Find Legal Representation
  
  Find recognized and accredited programs and free legal service providers.

There are a number of local organizations that offer citizenship classes and assistance with the naturalization process. See the NALÉO Educational Fund’s directory of Citizenship Centers or CitizenshipWorks to find service providers close to you.

Local USCIS Contact Information

[Insert local USCIS office information here.]

In order to visit USCIS or speak with an Immigration Information Officer, you must have an appointment scheduled by USCIS, or you must schedule an INFOPASS appointment, on the USCIS website.

You can also call USCIS toll-free at 1-800-375-5283 for automated information and live assistance concerning immigration services and benefits. Please see the USCIS website for additional details.