

Idea Board: Choosing a Textbook for Your Citizenship Class



It is important to use a textbook in your citizenship class. A textbook sets the scope and sequence needed to build your curriculum to fit the class schedule and number of class hours in each semester, quarter, or session. Scope is the breadth and depth of content you are going to cover in your curriculum at any given period of time (a semester or a 10-week cycle). Sequence is the order in which you present the content during that period of time. Not only should the teacher use a textbook, but if at all possible, every student should have a book. This allows students to take notes in the margin, highlight words and phrases, and, in general, feel more invested in the learning process.

However, choosing the wrong textbook is as bad as not having one at all. Here are some general tips when choosing a citizenship textbook.

Make sure that:

1. It was written for adults in a citizenship class as opposed to a book written for children or teens.
2. It is the most recent edition of the text. Your students need the most up-to-date information.
3. It was written at the right English level for the class you are teaching. (See below.)
4. It aligns with the **USCIS Adult Citizenship Standards** (also found at www.uscis.gov/citizenship under Organizations/Program Development).

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Choosing the Right Textbook for a Class Level

It is crucial that the textbook you choose is at the correct English level for the students you plan to teach with that book. Ideally, the textbook you choose is part of a series that includes more than one level. If not, you may need to choose another book that aligns as closely as possible with the curriculum but just at a different English level.

Here are a few tips about choosing a textbook at the right level:

1. Familiarize yourself with the U.S. Department of Education’s National Reporting System (NRS) ESL Level Descriptors. They can be found at **NRS Educational Functioning Levels**. Refer to the section titled “Outcome Measures Definitions: Educational Functioning Level Descriptors for English as a Second Language.”

2. Align your citizenship classes to one of these NRS levels. For example:

Days	Level
M, W	High Beginning
T, TH	High Beginning

Days	Level
M, W	Low Intermediate
T, TH	Low Intermediate

3. Choose a textbook that is written at the class levels you offer. Using the example above, the textbook you choose for the High Beginning class should be written at the High Beginning level. The textbook you choose for the Low Intermediate level should be written at the Low Intermediate level.

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