



# The FindLaw Guide to How to Become a U.S. Citizen

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People born outside of the United States can become U.S. citizens through a specialized legal process called naturalization. In this guide, you will learn about the naturalization process, what to expect when taking the citizenship test, benefits of citizenship, and more.

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## Introduction

The patent application process can be very complicated. Not every invention receives a patent, and different types of inventions may qualify for different types of patents. You should work with an experienced patent attorney throughout the process, and FindLaw and its directory of attorneys are here to help.

## Requirements for Applying for Citizenship

There are some basic requirements you need to meet before you can apply for citizenship. The requirements can include:

- having a green card
- being at least 18 years old
- having lived in the U.S. lawfully as a permanent resident for at least five years unless you are a spouse of a U.S. citizen, refugee, or received your green card through political asylum
- during those five years, being physically present in the U.S. for at least half of the time
- not spending more than one year at a time outside the U.S.
- not establishing a primary home in another country
- living in the state or district where you are filing your application for at least three months
- having “good moral character”
- having the ability to read, write and speak English
- passing a test about U.S. history and government
- swearing that you believe in the principles of the U.S. Constitution and will be loyal to the United States

You can learn more about each of the [naturalization requirements here](#). If you believe you will have trouble meeting any of these requirements, you may want to talk to an immigration attorney.

## Benefits of Citizenship

So why go through the trouble of getting your citizenship, especially if you’re already in this country legally? Some of the benefits of becoming a U.S. citizen include having the right to vote and having the ability to hold public office.

If you don’t care about politics, other advantages of citizenship include the ability to hold a U.S. passport allowing freedom to leave and return to this country, as well as receiving government protection and assistance when traveling abroad. In addition, you can extend citizenship to your children. Permanent resident children under the age of 18, who are in the legal and physical custody of the naturalizing parents automatically become U.S. citizens when their parents become naturalized.



Find an Immigration Attorney Near You



Learn More: [U.S. Citizenship & Naturalization Overview](#), [Typical Citizenship Examination Questions](#), [Naturalization FAQ](#)

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## Naturalization Process

The process of becoming a U.S. citizen can be difficult and confusing. Applicants must complete a number of steps, while meeting various requirements and deadlines. The first step is completing your application. Generally, you must:

- Complete Form N-400, Application for Naturalization.
- Get two photographs of yourself that meet immigration service requirements (pose, size, lighting, etc.).
- Collect the necessary documents.
- Send your application, documents, and fee.
- Get fingerprinted.

After your application and fingerprints are processed, the next step is to interview with an immigration official and take the citizenship test. Generally, you will receive an appointment for your interview. At the interview, you will be asked questions about your application and background. You will then take an English and civics test, and if you pass, you will take an Oath of Allegiance to become a U.S. citizen.

Keep in mind this is a very high-level summary of the naturalization process. There are many pitfalls and you can learn more about the [naturalization process here](#).

## Citizenship Test

During the course of the naturalization process, you will be scheduled for an interview and tested on your ability to read, write, and speak English, as well as your understanding and knowledge of U.S. history and government.

For the language portion of the test, an applicant will be tested on reading and may be asked to read out loud certain parts of Form N-400. An applicant will also be tested on writing and may be asked to write one or two simple sentences. Finally, for the speaking portion of the test, an applicant is generally evaluated by his or her answers during the course of the interview.

For the civics portion of the test, an applicant will be tested on his or her knowledge of basic U.S. history and government. Some questions you may be asked include:

- What are the first 10 amendments to the Constitution called?
- In what month is the new President of the United States inaugurated?
- Who elects Congress?

Some of these questions are not obvious, and the USCIS provides online study materials. You can also learn more about the [citizenship test here](#). If you fail the test, you should not worry too much, as a second appointment is usually scheduled within 60-90 days of the first interview. If you fail the test for a second time, your application for naturalization will be denied.



### Should I Talk to an Attorney?

If you are thinking for applying for U.S. citizenship, but are unsure whether you are eligible, you may want to speak with an immigration attorney. Even if you meet the eligibility requirements, you may want to work with an experienced attorney as the naturalization process (and paperwork) can get complicated.

You can locate an experienced immigration attorney in your area by visiting [our directory of lawyers](#).

## For More Information

Regarding how to become a U.S. citizen and the immigration process please visit <http://immigration.findlaw.com/citizenship/>

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