

How to Become a Naturalized American Citizen

There are various ways that you can become an American citizen. Some people are American citizens because they were born in the U.S. or because one of their parents is a U.S. citizen. If you aren't an American citizen by birth, you must go through the naturalization process to become a U.S. citizen.

Eligibility for Naturalization

You may be eligible for naturalization if you meet the following conditions:

- You have had a valid Permanent Resident Card for at least five years, or at least three years if you are the spouse of a U.S. citizen. You will have to get a new Permanent Resident Card if your card is expired or will expire within six months of applying for citizenship.
- You have had a continuous residence in the U.S. for three or five years, as applicable.
- You have been physically present in the U.S. for half of your continuous residence (at least 30 months or 913 days during the five years). Please note that the requirements of “continuous residence” and “physical presence” are interrelated, but they have separate and different requirements.
- You have lived in the state or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) District for at least three months before filing for naturalization.
- You are at least 18 years old.
- You can read, write, speak, and understand basic English.
- You have a good moral character.
- You can demonstrate that you support the principles and ideals of the U.S. Constitution.
- You have a basic knowledge of U.S. history, government, and civil principles.

During the Trump administration, USCIS had announced a policy change that would have restricted a person’s ability to adjust to certain statuses if he or she had received any kind of

public or government assistance while in the U.S., or certain benefits for 12 out of 36 months. To comply with this requirement, green card and some visa applicants had to complete a declaration of self-sufficiency to prove that they would not become dependent on the government for assistance, otherwise known as a “public charge.”

Fortunately, the Biden administration reversed this policy change in March 2021. Green card applicants and some visa applicants no longer have to comply with the public charge rule as they did during the Trump administration. Furthermore, the public charge rule never applied to naturalization requirements, so it has no effect on naturalization applicants.

Filing to Become a Naturalized U.S. Citizen

You must file [Form N-400, Application for Naturalization](#), to apply to become a naturalized U.S. citizen. In addition, you may need to submit [Form N-648, Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions](#), if you are asking for an exception to the English and/or U.S. civics test for naturalization. You can make this request if you have a physical or developmental disability or a mental impairment. You can also submit this form at your initial interview appointment if you don't submit it when you apply for naturalization.

All applicants for naturalization must have their biometrics completed, which includes getting fingerprinted and taking your picture. If you haven't already submitted biometrics to USCIS in the past, you must pay a biometrics fee with your application. You then will receive an appointment date and time to complete this step of the naturalization process. At your appointment, you will take an English and U.S. civics test.

Finally, if you are submitting your naturalization application while you are outside the U.S., you must submit two passport-style pictures along with your Form N-400.

Next Steps to Becoming a Naturalized U.S. Citizen

After submitting your application, you will receive an appointment for a personal interview with USCIS. After your interview is complete, USCIS will decide whether your application has been approved, denied, or continued. For instance, USCIS may continue your application if it needs more evidence or documents from you, you submitted the wrong documents with your application, or you failed the English and/or U.S. civics test for the first time.

If USCIS continues your application because you failed the English and/or U.S. civics test for the first time, you must return to USCIS within 60 to 90 days to retake the portions of the test that you failed. If you fail a part of the test a second time, USCIS will deny your naturalization application.

If USCIS approves your application for naturalization, you will become eligible to participate in a naturalization ceremony. In some cases, that ceremony may be the same day as your interview. In other cases, you will receive Form N-445, Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony, by mail. You must complete the questionnaire on Form N-445, report for your scheduled ceremony, turn in your Permanent Resident card to USCIS, and take the Oath of Allegiance to become a U.S. citizen. You then will receive your Certificate of Naturalization.