

Effective Citizenship Education Programs: Quality Indicators & Best Practices

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U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) defines adult citizenship education as:

“Adult citizenship education provides the **content knowledge** and **English language skills** needed to prepare for naturalization.”

From:

Elements of Program Quality for Adult Citizenship Education

www.uscis.gov/citizenship

Polling Question #1

Does your agency or school currently offer citizenship preparation programming for adult immigrants?

1. Yes
2. No

Polling Question #2

What is your role in Citizenship Education?

1. Administrator
2. Classroom Instructor
3. Volunteer
4. Legal Advisor
5. Support Staff
6. I don't currently work in citizenship education

Polling Question #3

For those currently working in citizenship education, how many years of experience do you have in this field?

1. Less than one year
2. 1-5 years
3. 6-10 years
4. More than 10 years

Agenda

- The Need for Citizenship Education Programming
- The Path to Citizenship
- The USCIS Interview and Tests
- Best Practices: Focus on Curriculum & Assessment





The Need for Citizenship Education Programming



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U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Applications for Naturalization (Form N-400)

Quarter	Applications Received	Applications Pending
October - December 2016	238,062	636,164
January - March 2017	286,629 <i>20% increase</i>	744,106
April - June 2017	250,513	737,977 <i>16% increase over 2016</i>

Data retrieved from:

<https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-studies/immigration-forms-data>


The Path to Citizenship




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• Applicant files N-400 Application for Naturalization



• USCIS reviews N-400




• Biometrics appointment notice arrives and applicant has prints taken




• Waiting Period



• Notice arrives for USCIS Interview and tests



• Applicant reports for interview appointment and takes tests



• If applicant passes, notice of an Oath Ceremony is sent
• If applicant fails any parts, failed portion(s) are retested within 90 days

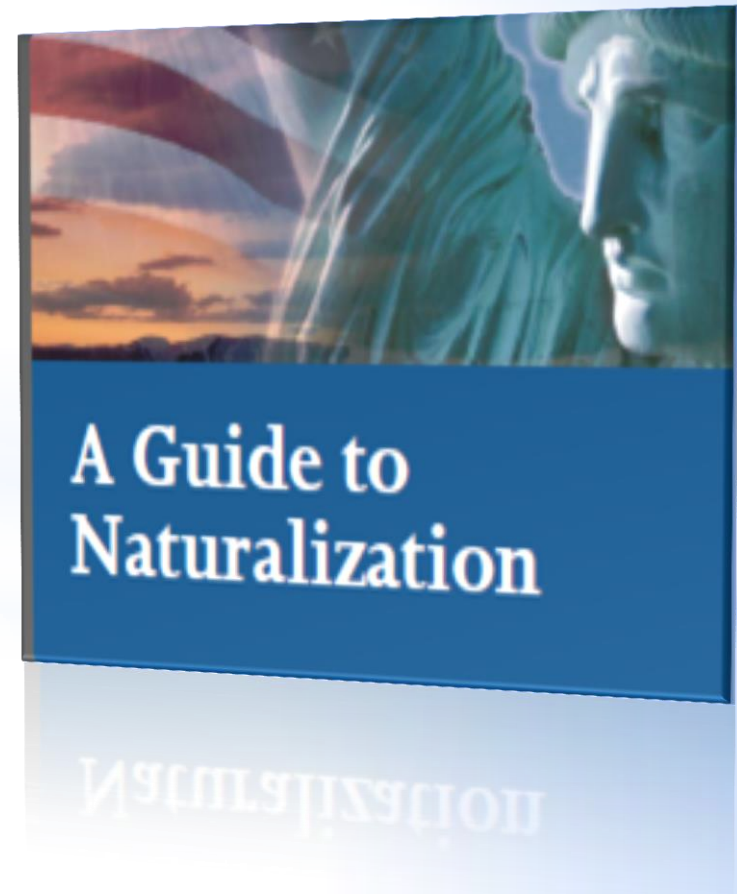


U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

For additional information
about eligibility and the path
to citizenship, see the USCIS
publication

A Guide to Naturalization

www.uscis.gov/citizenship



The USCIS Interview and Tests



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What happens at the USCIS Interview?

Civics Test

100 Civics Questions



Reading & Writing Tests

Reading & Writing Vocab.

Speaking Test

Discussion of Applicant's N-400

The Civics Test

- The test is oral.
- Applicants are asked up to 10 of the **100 Civics Questions**.
- When applicants answer **6** questions correctly, they pass the civics test.

Content of **100 Civics Questions**:

- ✓ U.S History
- ✓ U.S. Government
- ✓ Integrated Civics
 - Geography
 - Symbols
 - Holidays

The **100 Civics Questions** and multiple resources for classroom instruction and student self-study can be found at the USCIS Citizenship Resource Center.



Citizenship Resource Center

Educational Tools and Information for Citizenship Preparation

Providing learners, teachers, and organizations with a one-stop resource for locating citizenship preparation materials and activities.

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www.uscis.gov/citizenship

Reading and Writing Tests

Reading Test

1. Officer shows a sentence (a question).
2. Applicant reads it aloud.

Writing Test

3. Officer dictates a sentence.
4. Applicant writes it down.

Examples

Reading Test

When is Memorial Day?

= Question

Writing Test

Memorial Day is in May.

= Answer

USCIS Officer: Please read this sentence.

Reading Test

What President is on the dollar bill?



USCIS Officer: Write this sentence.

Writing Test

Washington is on the dollar bill.



Reading Vocabulary for the Redesigned Naturalization Test

PEOPLE	CIVICS	PLACES	HOLIDAYS	QUESTION WORDS	VERBS	OTHER (FUNCTION)	OTHER (CONTENT)
Abraham Lincoln	American flag	America	Presidents' Day	how many	can	for	colors
George Washington	Bill of Rights	United States	Memorial Day	what	come	here	dollar bill
	capital	U.S.	Flag Day	when	do/does	in	first
	citizen		Independence Day	where	elects	of	largest
	Congress		Labor Day	who	have/has	on	many
	country		Columbus Day	why	is/are/was/be	the	most
	Father of Our Country		Thanksgiving		lives	to	north
	flag				meet	we	one
	government				name		our
	President				pay		people
	right/rights				vote		second
	Senators				want		south
	state/states						
	White House						

Who was Abraham Lincoln?



Writing Vocabulary for the Redesigned Naturalization Test

PEOPLE	CIVICS	PLACES	MONTHS	HOLIDAYS	VERBS	OTHER (FUNCTION)	OTHER (CONTENT)
Adams	American Indians	Alaska	February	Presidents' Day	can	a	blue
Lincoln	capital	California	May	Memorial Day	come	and	dollar bill
Washington	citizens	Canada	June	Flag Day	do/does	during	fifty/50
	Civil War	country	July	Independence Day	elect	for	first
	Congress	Delaware	September	Labor Day	have/has	here	largest
	Father of Our Country	Mexico	October	Columbus Day	is/are/was/be	in	most
	flag	New York City	November	Thanksgiving	lives/lived	of	north
	free	Washington, D.C.			makes	on	one hundred/100
	freedom of speech	United States			meets	our	people
	laws				pay	the	red
	President				vote	they	second
	right/rights				want	to	south
	Senators					we	stripes
							taxes
							white

Lincoln was President during the Civil War.

Possible Question and Answer Sets for the Reading & Writing Tests

- ★ When is Memorial Day?
Memorial Day is in May.
- ★ What President is on the dollar bill?
Washington is on the dollar bill.
- ★ What country is north of the U.S.?
Canada is north of the United States.
- ★ Who was Abraham Lincoln?
Lincoln was President during the Civil War.

The Speaking Test

- Applicants are asked questions related to their N-400 Application for Naturalization.
- Officers can ask applicants any questions they wish, verifying and clarifying information.
- Officers typically repeat/rephrase questions until they are satisfied that the applicant:
 - understands the question, or
 - does not understand English
- Officers can ask applicants to **define terms** on the N-400.

The Form N-400 is a complex, 20-page legal document and applicants should be prepared to discuss all questions on the form. Therefore the **N-400 vocabulary and concepts** should comprise a significant part of an effective citizenship curriculum.

Section 12 contains particularly difficult vocabulary focusing on moral character.

A small sampling:

insurgent
organization

totalitarian
party

habitual
drunkard

illegal
gambling

alimony

prostitution

vigilante
unit



For additional information about teaching the N-400, see the USCIS publication

Understanding Key Concepts Found in the Form N-400

www.uscis.gov/citizenship



How are the tests scored?

Officers follow rubrics found in the document

Scoring Guidelines for the U.S. Naturalization Test.

It can be found at the USCIS Citizenship Resource Center.



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Best Practices



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The Adult Learning Resource Center (ALRC) has developed a user-friendly tool, the **Citizenship Program Quality Profile***, that can be used for internal program self-evaluation or for external evaluation of citizenship education programs.

Quality Indicators for 4 program elements are included:

- Curriculum
- Instruction & Instructional Materials
- Instructional Staff & Professional Development
- Learner Assessment

* Adapted in part from *Elements of Program Quality for Adult Citizenship Education*
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Curriculum

Why is a strong citizenship curriculum important?

- The **content knowledge** and **English language skills** needed to pass the USCIS naturalization interview and tests are very different from the skills typically taught in adult ESL programs.
- Provides a “roadmap” to instruction for teachers and tutors
- Ensures **stability** in the program despite staff turnover or interrupted funding cycles
- Ensures that immigrants are as prepared as possible for the USCIS naturalization interview & tests

Curriculum Best Practices

An effective citizenship curriculum:

- ✓ Has a **scope and sequence** that defines what is to be taught and in what order.
- ✓ Is **organized into topics** based on appropriate U.S. history, government, civics, and Form N-400 Application content.
- ✓ Includes vocabulary and questions from the **N-400 Application throughout the curriculum** and divides the N-400 into manageable sections.

- ✓ Includes **oral interview skills** such as asking for clarification and engaging in small talk; includes **mock interviews**.
- ✓ Includes the 100 Civics Questions throughout the curriculum and **divides the 100 Questions into manageable** and meaningful sections.
- ✓ Includes practice with **Reading and Writing sentences** throughout the curriculum and divides the Reading and Writing sentences into meaningful sections.
- ✓ Indicates what **classroom materials** should be used for each topic.

Learner Assessment

Why Assess?

- To determine if an applicant is **ready to file** their form N-400 Application for Naturalization.

- Applicant files N-400 Application for Naturalization

- USCIS reviews N-400

- Biometrics appointment notice arrives and applicant has prints taken

- Waiting Period

- Notice arrives for USCIS Interview and tests

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Learner Assessment

Why Assess?

- To determine if an applicant is **ready to file** the form N-400 Application for Naturalization.
- To **place** learners in appropriate levels of instruction.
- To **assess learner progress** toward mastering the citizenship content and related English language skills needed for the naturalization interview and tests.

Note: USCIS states that its Reading Test is targeted to National Reporting System (NRS) Educational Functioning Level 3, **High Beginning ESL**.

However, standardized assessment instruments used in WIOA Title 2 English language acquisition programs do not provide adequate information to determine learner readiness for the USCIS interview and tests. A **citizenship-specific** instrument is needed.

Assessment Best Practices

An effective citizenship assessment:

- ✓ Assesses **listening and speaking skills** by asking the student questions related to the N-400 Application.
- ✓ Assesses **listening and speaking skills** and **civics knowledge** by asking the student questions from the USCIS 100 Civics Questions.
- ✓ Assesses **listening and speaking skills** by asking the student small talk questions.

- ✓ Assesses **oral reading skills** by asking the student to read one or more questions aloud.
(Questions use vocabulary from the USCIS document *Reading Vocabulary for the Naturalization Test.*)

- ✓ Assesses **writing skills** by asking the student to write one or more sentences from dictation.
(Sentences use vocabulary from the USCIS document *Writing Vocabulary for the Naturalization Test.*)