

USCIS Essentials FAQs

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USCIS Essentials – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Some of these questions have been answered already somewhere in the book. Others have not, because the topic didn't come up. At this point in this book, we feel it may be necessary to include further questions you might be wondering about. Here are a few of them.

Will they ask me questions in the Civics test that are not on the list?

No. USCIS provides a list of 128 questions that we have included here, with their answers. There could be other right answers for some questions, but USCIS recommends (and we do too!) that you only use those answers. The only questions where answers weren't provided are those that depend on elections. In those cases, we have included the link where you can check out the most up-to-date information.

Should I bring original documents to my naturalization interview?

Yes. We know that, when you filed your application, you already submitted copies of every document that they required and/or that you thought was important. Still, it doesn't hurt bringing the originals with you. Remember to have them translated when necessary. Certified copies are also a good option. And don't worry, they'll give you back all the originals.

Some examples of these documents are: original birth, marriage, divorce, final adoption and naturalization certificates; court orders/decrees; evidence of child support payments; court-certified arrest reports; and probation/parole records. Whatever piece of paper that makes it easier for the USCIS officer to review your request is worth bringing along.

What happens if I fail the tests?

If you have followed all our tips, we seriously doubt you'll fail. But we'll tell you what happens in that case anyway. USCIS will reschedule you for a second test between 60 and 90 days after the first tests. You will only be tested in the areas where you failed.

If you fail a second time, your application will be denied because you haven't met the educational requirements for naturalization.

How do I start the process?

The first thing is downloading and filling out your N-400 application form.

How long does the process take?

It's an average of 7-8 months from the moment you file your application to the day you take the Oath of Allegiance. It can take more or less time depending on your personal case.

What is the hardest question they ask you?

This, again, is a very personal thing. It could be a question about a past situation of yours, or a civics / history question that you happen to forget. Questions about less "popular" names such as Susan B. Anthony or President Wilson could be your weak spot.

How much will the process cost me?

The current naturalization fee for a US citizenship application is \$760. However, the cost may be reduced or totally waived depending on your financial situation.

How do I know if I am eligible to become a U.S. citizen?

Check our section Criteria: Who is Allowed to Apply for U.S. Citizenship?

Will it look bad if I am unemployed or in debt when I apply for U.S. citizenship?

Remember the "good moral character" you need to show? Everything that you've done to contribute to society will be an advantage. So, if you are not at the right moment in your life to apply for citizenship, you might want to do it once you have a job and at least in the process of paying up your debts.

Can I ever lose my U.S. citizenship?

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) Section 349 gives a list of reasons why a person born in the U.S. or a naturalized citizen might lose their U.S. citizenship. Some examples of these cases are serving in an army in a foreign state or committing an act of treason (betraying your country by selling classified, sensitive information about the U.S. government, for example).

What happens if I owe taxes?

Residents and citizens must pay taxes. So, not having your U.S. citizenship at this point is not an excuse for not filing your taxes or owing taxes. Having a tax debt will not look good if you want the USCIS to grant you U.S. citizenship, so our recommendation here is to be up to date with your taxes.

What if I can't prove my "good moral character"?

In the past, "good moral character" could just be no proof of wrongdoing. Lately, more precisely as of an August 15, 2025 memorandum¹, "becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen means being an active and responsible member of society instead of just having a right to live and work in the United States." Later in that memo, some positive factors are listed: "Sustained community involvement and contributions in the United States; Family caregiving, responsibility, and ties in the United States; Educational attainment; Stable and lawful employment history and achievements; Length of lawful residence in the United States; Compliance with tax obligations and financial responsibility in the United States."

What if I can't attend the naturalization interview?

First of all, we strongly recommend that you attend all USCIS interviews and that you show up

on time. However, emergencies can occur, and particularly after Covid19, people in general will appreciate it if you stay at home when you are suffering from a contagious disease. In that case, contact the USCIS office by phone and write a letter explaining your situation. You will probably not get a hold of a real person when you call, but you can leave your phone number and someone will call you back to reschedule.

If things go wrong and my naturalization application is denied, or if I fail the interview and/or tests, can I also lose my Green Card?

Your fear is understandable. However, you may be denied U.S. citizenship and still keep your permanent resident status. But bear in mind that when you apply for citizenship, your whole immigration history is under intense scrutiny. That is to say, USCIS will examine very carefully what you have done in the past five years. If you have lied or committed green card fraud (for example, marriage fraud: you married just to get your green card) or any serious crime, you might run the risk of losing your permanent residence and even of being deported.

What are the possible outcomes of the interview?

Approval, denial, or a continued case. In the first case, you'll proceed to take the Oath of Allegiance. If you don't get a definite answer about your case, you might need to reschedule your test(s) or submit more documentation. If your case is denied, you may ask for an appeal.

What is administrative review?

When someone's application is denied, a second officer goes over their case. This new officer will administer tests if necessary, or will review new documentation.

When does my time as a Permanent Resident begin?

Take a look at your green card. There, you have the date when your permanent residence started (It's the date below the words "Resident since...").

What if I was arrested but my case was later dismissed?

The day of the interview, bring all relevant documentation of the case with you. Even if you already explained this information in your application, even if you've already submitted those documents.

How do I know what USCIS office to go to?

Check the following website: [**https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/find-a-uscis-office/field-offices**](https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/find-a-uscis-office/field-offices)

How do I find out the status of my naturalization application?

You may check the status of your naturalization application by **visiting www.uscis.gov** or by calling Customer Service at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY: 1-800-767-1833).