

GOAL: Pass the Citizenship Test

Contributed by
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Introduction

Passing the Citizenship test can be an important milestone for living in the United States. Once you are sworn in as an American Citizen you will enjoy the rights of Americans. You will be able to vote and to have a voice in all of the elections. You will be able to help decide important measures that affect all of our lives, and help choose the people who govern your city, county, state, and nation.

It is absolutely possible to pass the test on the first try. The questions that may be asked are available to study beforehand. The written and reading vocabulary that you are expected to know are also made available to you in advance. This helps you to know exactly what to study so that you will be prepared when you go to your appointment. The books that are recommended are clear and present the material in a gradual systematic manner. The information is interesting and enjoyable. Simply follow the steps, take the time to understand as you go, and you will be one of our next citizens of the United States!

Getting Started

In order to begin, determine that you meet the qualifications for becoming a citizen. Start to gather the materials (e.g. birth certificate etc.) for your application, the N400. This information is on the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website: www.uscis.gov. The website has helpful videos and lots of easy-to-understand information that will prepare you for the test and answer any question that you may have. Be sure to print out the list of 100 questions and answers. These are available in English, Spanish, and several other languages. Also print out the list of reading and writing vocabulary to study.

Unless you are over the age of 55, you will be expected to speak to your interviewer in English. Some interviewers are very patient, and will explain a word if you ask for help. They know this is not your first language. Practice your English whenever you get the chance; in the store, in the

Post Office, at school, at the library and with friends. This may be difficult, but remember: nobody's perfect. We all learn from our mistakes. They can actually be helpful!

Some suggested supplies for your tutoring session are:

- A large world map
- A U.S. map showing the 50 states
- A U.S. flag
- Pictures of presidents, your congressmen, Supreme Court Justices
- A calendar to search for holidays

Books and Materials

Books & CD's

New Readers Press (www.newreaderspress.com) has an excellent series called Citizenship: Passing the Test by Lynne Weintraub. (Lynne offers a free online newsletter with information, resources, and the latest news concerning citizenship education, www.citizenshipnews.us/.) The series includes:

- Civics and Literacy Student Book
- Civics and Literacy Audio CD
- Literacy Skills Workbook
- Literacy Skills Workbook Audio CD
- Ready for the Interview Student Book
- Ready for the Interview Audio CD
- Teacher's Guide for all components

Check your library shelves for these materials before purchasing them or ask your literacy coordinator about buying this series for the literacy collection. If you are not able to get all of these materials, the most important in the list above is the Civics and Literacy student book. It has great information about American history and government.

Website

Also, go to www.uscis.gov for FREE study materials. From the home page go to [Education & Resources](#) and then click on [Civics and Citizenship Study Materials](#). Scroll down to the bottom of the page for:

- Civics Flash Cards for the New Naturalization Test
- Citizenship Multimedia Presentations, including "A Promise of Freedom" and "Becoming a U.S. Citizen"
- Practice tests
- And much more...

Key Vocabulary

- ◆ Flag
- ◆ Taxes
- ◆ Citizen
- ◆ Vote
- ◆ Senator
- ◆ Country
- ◆ Elect
- ◆ California
- ◆ Congress
- ◆ People
- ◆ Washington
- ◆ Freedom
- ◆ Right
- ◆ Lincoln
- ◆ Thanksgiving

Reading Practice

1. **Syllable Cards.** Make syllable cards for extra practice with multi-syllabic words such as “Washington.” Put each syllable of a word on an index card. Lay the cards on the table with the syllables in mixed order. E.g.

ing

Wash

ton

Rearrange the cards to spell the word. If possible, have a picture to represent the word. To learn the word, say it and copy it several times.
2. **Use the Newspaper.** Find the section in the local paper that tells the names and contact information of the local elected officials. In some papers it is a section entitled “GUIDE TO GOVERNMENT.”
3. **Pledge of Allegiance.** Read the Pledge of Allegiance and talk about the vocabulary and the meaning of each sentence.

Writing Practice

1. **Flags.** Draw your home country’s flag. Now draw the US flag. Write about the similarities and differences. What do the colors represent? What do the symbols represent? How is the current U.S. flag different from the first flag?
2. **Write a Letter.** Write a letter to a politician describing why you want to be a citizen (what you like about your country, state, county or city). It’s not necessary to mail it, but if you do, usually you will get a letter back. That’s pretty special!
3. **Spelling Test.** Study how the words in the “Key Vocabulary,” above are spelled. Talk about syllables and unusual letter combinations. Copy the words several times for practice. Then your tutor can dictate them so you can write them from memory. Start with just a few at a time, easy ones first.
4. **Writing Sentences.** Create sentences that include vocabulary words from the list above. Talk about how to make sentences in English – remember, a sentence must contain a complete thought. Now underline the nouns or circle the adjectives (the describing words) or highlight the verbs (action words). You will soon recognize the patterns of a sentence in English (e.g. that the adjective precedes the noun e.g. White House, etc.).

Games and Activities

1. **Word Search.** Create a word search using the “Key Vocabulary” from the list above and other words related to citizenship, such as those found on the website www.uscis.org. Free word search creation tools are available on the internet. Go to www.google.com and type in “free word search.”
2. **Mock Interviews.** You and your tutor can conduct mock naturalization interviews with the tutor pretending to be the immigration agent. Tape record the interview and discuss the responses.
3. **Coins & Currency.** Look at our U.S. currency and coins. Identify the president/historical figure and the famous building/symbol on the other side. Be sure you understand the denominations. A nickel is bigger than a dime, but it does not have a greater value.

Real World Practice

- Attend a city council meeting. Hear the pledge of allegiance. See city government in action.
- Look into the voting process. Practice filling out a voter registration card. Look at the easy voter guide. Go together to the polling place on Election Day. (See the “Prepare to Vote/Vote” goal in this curriculum guide.)

Independent Practice/Homework Ideas

- Have a calendar at home. Find all the Holidays. Write your plans in the square for that date. For example, on July 4, highlight the words Independence Day and write “fireworks at 8:00.”
- Get a library card and check out a book about the United States. The librarian will be happy to help you. Share the information with your family, and look at the pictures together.
- Write the vocabulary words several times until you can spell them easily. Also, practice rewriting the sentences you created in Writing Practice #4, above.
- Get a puzzle of the United States. Assemble it at home with family and friends.

Milestones

- **Initial Effort** – This is a good time to begin to make an effort to speak in English as much as possible, especially when with your tutor. Don't worry about mistakes, that's how we learn. You should understand countries and flags. On a world map you should be able to identify your home country and the United States of America. You should know about the flag including the colors, how many stars and stripes and what they represent.
- **Making Progress** – The “teach back” method is very effective to see if you are making progress. Reverse your roles and you teach your tutor different parts of U.S. history and/or government. You should be able to tell about Columbus, the Pilgrims, some famous presidents and the three branches of government. You should be able to read and spell some of the vocabulary words, and you should know the correct answers to some of the 100 questions on the flash cards or USCIS list.
- **Accomplished** – There is no question here. When you pass the test you will be congratulated and sworn in as a United States Citizen!



Tips for Success

It can take up to 6 months to get an appointment to take the test. Do not wait until you are done studying to submit your application. Judge the speed of your progress and apply early. The test is expensive. The price has increased hundreds of dollars in the last few years, and is sure to increase again. Don't procrastinate!

Contributors' Biographies



Jane Zikratch. Jane is the Literacy Coordinator at the Tulare Public Library. She attended the University of California at Santa Barbara receiving a BA in Cultural Anthropology and a BA in General Psychology. Her literacy program has been helping people achieve their citizenship since 2002.

Heidi Clark. Heidi is the Librarian at the Tulare Public Library. She has a degree in bilingual education and a Master's in Library Science. She taught elementary school for 3 years before beginning her career as a Librarian in 1990. Working with diverse populations in California, she has great opportunity to use her bilingual skills and assist immigrants looking for information on Citizenship.

