

U.S. Citizenship Naturalization Interview & Exam

Complete Preparation Guide: what to expect, what to bring, and exactly how to study so the answers become automatic.

- Which civics test you take: 100 or 128 questions
- Interview day, step by step
- N-400 questions to practice out loud
- The complete what-to-bring checklist
- The study method and a 90-day plan
- Exceptions, red flags, and every official USCIS link

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Step 1: Check your filing date first

There are two different civics tests right now. Which one you take depends on the date you **filed** your Form N-400, not your interview date. Find your receipt notice (Form I-797C) and look at the filing date.

	Filed BEFORE Oct. 20, 2025	Filed ON or AFTER Oct. 20, 2025
Test version	2008 Civics Test	2025 Civics Test
Question bank	100 questions	128 questions
Questions asked	Up to 10	Up to 20
Needed to pass	6 correct	12 correct
Officer stops	At 6 correct, or once passing is impossible	At 12 correct, or at 9 incorrect

WRITE IT DOWN

My N-400 filing date: _____ My test version: ☐ 2008 (100 questions) ☐ 2025 (128 questions)

My interview date: _____ Field office: _____

The five things the officer is judging

The interview is a formal legal proceeding. You are under oath, and the officer can grant, continue, or deny your application. They evaluate five things at the same time:

1. **Eligibility.** Green card status; five years as a permanent resident (three if married to and living with the same U.S. citizen spouse); continuous residence; physical presence for at least half the period; at least three months in your state or district.
2. **Good moral character.** Judged over the statutory period, but earlier conduct can count. Since August 2025, USCIS weighs positive and negative factors together: community involvement, employment, tax compliance, and family support all matter. Neighborhood investigations (contacting neighbors, employers, or coworkers) may be done case by case.
3. **English:** reading, writing, and speaking, unless you qualify for an exception.
4. **Civics:** U.S. history and government.
5. **Attachment to the Constitution** and willingness to take the Oath of Allegiance.

The officer has your entire file: your N-400, green card application, prior petitions, travel records, and biometrics. If something was answered incorrectly, even by accident, correct it at the interview. Correcting an error is normal. Concealing one is a serious problem.

Interview day, step by step

Step	What happens and what to do
Arrive	30 minutes early. Late arrivals can be rescheduled, which can add months.
Security	Airport-style screening. Leave anything questionable in your car.
Check-in	Appointment notice and green card. You need both.
Wait	One to three hours is normal. Quietly review your N-400 copy and civics list.
Oath	You raise your right hand and swear to tell the truth. This is already the English test. Answer clearly. Everything after this is sworn testimony.
N-400 review	Section by section. This is the speaking test.
Reading	Up to 3 sentences; read 1 correctly out loud.
Writing	Up to 3 dictated sentences; write 1 correctly. No abbreviations.
Civics	Oral questions, oral answers. The officer stops once you pass.
Decision	Form N-652: Granted, Continued, or Denied.

The N-400 review: practice these out loud

Two rules: answer only the question asked, then stop. And remember, this is the speaking test; you need to understand and respond in ordinary English, not perfect grammar. It's fine to say "approximately" for dates, or "Could you please repeat that?"

Be ready to say in your own words

- ☐ Your full name, date of birth, and address
- ☐ Every address for the last 5 years (3 if marriage-based)
- ☐ Your employers or schools, with dates
- ☐ Your marital history and your spouse's details
- ☐ Your children's names and birth dates
- ☐ Every trip outside the U.S., with dates
- ☐ How you became a permanent resident

"Have you ever" questions to understand

- ☐ Claimed to be a U.S. citizen, or registered to vote or voted
- ☐ Been arrested, cited, or detained, anywhere
- ☐ Failed to file taxes or owed overdue taxes
- ☐ Failed to pay child support or alimony
- ☐ Registered for Selective Service (men 18 to 26)
- ☐ Willing to bear arms or do noncombatant service
- ☐ Support the Constitution; take the full Oath. Know what "oath," "allegiance," and "Constitution" mean.

More applicants run into trouble on the N-400 review than on civics. Read your own application out loud at least once a month.

Reading, writing, and civics: how they work

Reading

- Read 1 of up to 3 sentences correctly.
- Read slowly; pausing is fine.
- Minor pronunciation differences are OK if the meaning is clear.
- Words come from the official reading vocabulary list.

Writing

- Write 1 of up to 3 dictated sentences correctly.
- Small spelling and capitalization errors are generally OK.
- Write whole words; no abbreviations.
- Ask the officer to repeat if needed.

Civics

- **It is oral.** Not multiple choice; nothing written.
- **The officer stops** the moment you pass, or once passing is impossible.
- **Give the shortest complete answer.** "Name one" means name one, then stop.
- **Learn the published answers.** Alternate wording is generally accepted.

Answers that change: verify 2 weeks before

Write in the people serving on your interview day.

President

Vice President

Speaker of the House

Chief Justice

My Governor

My two U.S. Senators

My U.S. Representative

The decision and the oath ceremony

Outcome	What it means
Granted	Approved. You'll be scheduled for an oath ceremony; some offices hold it the same day.
Continued	Not a denial. You failed a part of the test, or the officer needs documents (often on Form N-14). Failed parts are retested only once more, generally 60 to 90 days later.
Denied	Written decision. You generally have 30 days to file Form N-336 for a hearing. Strict deadline; call an attorney immediately.

- ☐ I am **not a citizen until I take the Oath of Allegiance**. No passport application and no voter registration before then.
- ☐ Answer the Form N-445 questionnaire honestly (anything since the interview).
- ☐ Bring my green card to surrender at the ceremony.
- ☐ Check every detail on my Certificate of Naturalization before leaving.

What to bring: checklist

Bring **originals plus one clean set of copies** in a labeled folder.

Every applicant

- ☐ Interview appointment notice
- ☐ Green card (even if expired)
- ☐ State-issued photo ID
- ☐ All passports and travel documents, current and expired, plus re-entry permits
- ☐ Complete copy of my filed N-400
- ☐ All USCIS notices received

Three-year marriage case

- ☐ Proof of spouse's U.S. citizenship
- ☐ Marriage certificate
- ☐ Documents ending all prior marriages (both spouses)
- ☐ Proof we still live together (lease or deed, joint accounts, joint tax returns)

If it applies to me

- ☐ IRS tax transcripts for the statutory period
- ☐ Tax payment plan and proof of payments, if I owe
- ☐ Certified court disposition for **every** arrest, citation, or charge, anywhere, even if dismissed, sealed, expunged, or not guilty
- ☐ Selective Service confirmation (men who lived here at 18 to 26)
- ☐ Name change documents
- ☐ Certified English translations of non-English documents
- ☐ Qualified interpreter (only if I have a language exception)

Do NOT bring

- Weapons, including pocket knives, scissors, pepper spray
- Food, drinks, large bags
- Friends or family not required to attend
- Children
- An interpreter without a language exception
- Notes or study materials into the room

The study method we give every client

The civics test is **oral**, so your studying should be too. People fail not because the material is hard, but because they read the questions and then froze when a real person asked them out loud.

1. **Search YouTube** for "citizenship exam 2026" or "naturalization civics test 128 questions" (or "100 civics questions 2008" if you filed before October 20, 2025).
2. **Put on headphones and let it play:** at work, driving, cooking, walking, at the gym.
3. **Repeat until the answers are automatic.** Twenty minutes a day for three months beats eight hours the weekend before.

Use YouTube for repetition. Use USCIS for accuracy. Some videos are outdated, cover only the 100-question test, or name officials who have left office. Read the official list once and check the Test Updates page before your interview.

Your 90-day study plan

When	Task	Done
Day one	Confirm filing date; download the correct official question list; find a YouTube video for my version.	☐
Every day	Listen 20 to 30 minutes minimum. No upper limit.	☐
3 to 4× a week	Say the answers out loud without looking.	☐
Weekly	Sort questions into "know instantly" and "hesitate"; study only the hesitation pile.	☐
Weekly	Have someone quiz me (they only need to read the question and check the answer).	☐
Weekly	Practice reading and writing sentences from the vocabulary lists.	☐
Monthly	Read my N-400 out loud and answer each question as if asked.	☐
2 weeks before	Check Test Updates; fill in current officials on page 4.	☐
1 week before	Full mock interview: sworn in, N-400 questions, reading, writing, civics. Standing up, dressed for the day.	☐

Two more techniques: teach it to someone else, and practice saying "Could you please repeat that?" until it feels natural.

My hesitation pile (questions I need to drill)

If you qualify for an exception

Exception	Who qualifies	What it means
65/20	65+ at filing and 20+ years as a permanent resident	No English test. Study only the 20 marked questions; asked 10, need 6. Test in your language with your own interpreter.
55/15	55+ at filing and 15+ years as a permanent resident	No English test. Full civics test in your language; bring a qualified interpreter.
50/20	50+ at filing and 20+ years as a permanent resident	No English test. Full civics test in your language; bring a qualified interpreter.
Form N-648	A physical, developmental, or mental impairment lasting 12+ months that prevents learning English or civics	Completed by a licensed medical doctor, osteopath, or clinical psychologist. Closely reviewed; talk to an attorney first.

USCIS does not provide interpreters for the interview. Your interpreter must be fluent in English and your language.

Red flags: call an attorney BEFORE your interview

- ☐ Any arrest or citation, even dismissed, sealed, expunged, decades old, or from another country
- ☐ Unfiled tax returns or unpaid taxes
- ☐ Any trip outside the U.S. of six months or longer
- ☐ Not registering for Selective Service (men who lived here between 18 and 26)
- ☐ Child support or alimony arrears
- ☐ Ever registering to vote or voting as a non-citizen, or ever claiming to be a U.S. citizen on any form
- ☐ Separation or divorce in a three-year marriage-based case
- ☐ Any inconsistency between my green card application and my N-400
- ☐ My name spelled differently across documents

None of these automatically disqualifies you. Each draws closer scrutiny and may require documents you can't get overnight. Call now, not the week of your interview.

Official USCIS study materials (all free)

Resource	Link
128 Civics Questions & Answers (2025 test)	uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/questions-and-answers/2025-Civics-Test-128-Questions-and-Answers.pdf
2025 Civics Test Study Guide	uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/brochures/USCIS-2025-Civics-Test-Study-Guide.pdf
100 Civics Questions & Answers (2008 test)	uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/questions-and-answers/00C_100_Questions_2008_Civics_Test_V1.pdf
Reading Vocabulary list	uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/guides/M-715_reading.pdf
Writing Vocabulary list	uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/guides/M-715_writing.pdf
Check for Test Updates (current officials)	uscis.gov/citizenship/find-study-materials-and-resources/check-for-test-updates
Study for the Test (flash cards, audio, practice)	uscis.gov/citizenship/find-study-materials-and-resources/study-for-the-test
USCIS Citizenship Resource Center	uscis.gov/citizenship
Find your U.S. Senators / Representative / Governor	senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm · house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative · usa.gov/state-governor
Botelho Immigration Law on YouTube	youtube.com/@BotelhoImmigrationLaw

KNOW YOUR FILING DATE · STUDY THE RIGHT LIST · LISTEN EVERY DAY · TELL THE TRUTH · SPEAK CLEARLY

Questions about your own case? Call Botelho Law Group for a free consultation: **508-500-1551**. 901 Eastern Ave, Suite 2, Fall River, MA 02723 · botelholawgroup.com

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