

# A Timeline of US Naturalization

For more resources: [www.icwelcome.org](http://www.icwelcome.org)

1. **Naturalization Act of 1790** – First naturalization law for the United States
  - a. Those who resided in the country for 2 years and had kept their current state of residence for a year to apply for citizenship
  - b. Restricted naturalization to “free white persons” of “good moral character”
2. **Naturalization Act of 1795**
  - a. Increased residency requirement to 5 years and added a requirement to give 3 years notice of intention to apply for citizenship
3. **Notable revisions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century**
  - a. In 1855, citizenship was automatically granted to alien wives of U.S. citizens
  - b. In 1870, the naturalization process was opened "to persons of African descent".
  - c. Before 1906, all municipal courts, county courts, state courts, and federal courts in the U.S. had the authority to grant U.S. citizenship to an individual.
4. **Naturalization Act of 1906**
  - a. Required immigrants to learn English in order to become naturalized citizens
    - i. No formalized way to test this requirement  
“Read or write simple words and phrases.”
  - b. Naturalization involved taking an oath of allegiance and could be done in any court having a seal and a clerk
5. **Immigration Act of 1917**
  - a. Added a Literacy Test to requirements
  - b. Literacy was defined as the ability to read 30–40 words of their own language from an ordinary text.
6. **Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952**
  - a. The applicant for naturalization is requested to read and write a simple sentence. For example, the applicant may be asked to write “The horse jumped over the fence.”
  - b. The INS examiner had substantial discretion in how he or she administered the examination, which led to inconsistencies in test administration
7. **1990s - Present**
  - a. The Immigration Act of 1990 established an administrative procedure for naturalization and ended judicial naturalization.
  - b. In 1997, INS recruited an outside firm that found no standard naturalization test content, testing instruments, test protocols, or scoring system. With this finding, INS started an initiative to standardize the exam.
  - c. On October 1, 2008, USCIS made the current iteration of the exam required everywhere in the US. This is now a fully standardized 4-part exam.
8. **Current naturalization process**
  - a. Be at least 18 years of age at the time of filing
  - b. Had a status of Legal Permanent Resident and had “continuous residence” for 5 years before they applied (reduced to 3 years if married and living with a US citizen spouse)
  - c. Been physically present for at least 30 months of 60 months prior to the date of filing
  - d. Be a person of good moral character
  - e. Pass the citizenship test: the citizenship test has four components: a speaking/comprehension test, a reading test, a writing test and a civics test.

## Wonder if you could pass the current citizenship test?

The civics portion of the test is made up of 100 possible questions. Each applicant is asked a set of 10 questions (chosen at random from the 100) and must get 6 correct. Below are 3 sets of 10 questions (see if you can get 6 out of 10 correct).

1. What is the supreme law of the land?
  2. The House of Representatives has how many voting members?
  3. Name your U.S. Representative.
  4. What is one responsibility that is only for United States citizens?
  5. There are four amendments to the Constitution about who can vote. Describe one of them.
  6. What is one reason colonists came to America?
  7. What territory did the United States buy from France in 1802.
  8. Name one war fought by the United States in the 1900s.
  9. Name one of the two longest rivers in the United States.
  10. What is the name of the Vice President of the United States now?
- 
1. The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are these words?
  2. What stops one branch of government from becoming too powerful?
  3. What are two rights of everyone living in the United States?
  4. What is the political party of the President now?
  5. What is the capital of the United States?
  6. What group of people was taken to America and sold as slaves?
  7. Name the U.S. war between the North and the South.
  8. Who was the President during the Great Depression and World War II?
  9. What is the name of the national anthem?
  10. We elect a U.S. Representative for how many years.
- 
1. What do we call the first 10 amendments to the Constitution?
  2. Name one branch or part of the government.
  3. What ocean is on the West Coast of the United States?
  4. Name one U.S. territory.
  5. Who makes federal laws?
  6. How many amendments does the Constitution have?
  7. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
  8. When was the Constitution written?
  9. How old do citizens have to be to vote for President?
  10. Who is one of your state's U.S. Senators now?

Braun (different for each state)

1 - the Constitution, 2 - 435, 3 - James Baird (different for each district in each state), 4 - Serve on a jury OR vote in a federal election, 5 - Citizens 18 and older can vote OR You don't have to pay to vote OR Any citizen can vote (regardless of gender) OR a male citizen of any race can vote, 6 - Religious freedom OR political liberty OR economic opportunity OR escape persecution, 7 - Louisiana Territory, 8 - World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, OR Gulf War, 9 - Missouri OR Mississippi, 10. Mike Pence  
1 - "We the People", 2 - checks and balances OR separation of powers, 3 - Right to bear arms, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom to worship, right to petition the government, 4 - Republican, 5 - Washington DC, 6 - people from Africa, 7 - Civil War or War between the States, 8 - Franklin Roosevelt, 9 - The Star-Spangled Banner, 10 - 2  
1 - The Bill of Rights, 2 - Legislative, Executive, or Judicial, 3 - Pacific Ocean, 4 - Puerto Rico, Guam, US Virgin Islands, American Samoa, OR Northern Mariana Islands, 5 - Congress or the Legislative branch, 6 - 27, 7 - (Thomas) Jefferson, 8 - 1787, 9 - 18, 10 - Todd Young OR Mike