

Immigration and Naturalization Reading

Key terms:

Immigrants: people who come from other lands to live in a new country

Citizens: a legally recognized member of a country with certain privileges that non-citizens don't have.

Civics: the study of the duties and rights of citizens

Resident Aliens: people who live in the U.S. but are not citizens (can be a legal resident or illegal)

Naturalization: a legal process to obtain citizenship

Natural-Born Citizen: people who are citizens because their parents are citizens (**Law of Blood**) or because they were born in the United States. (**Law of Soil**)

Naturalization is a legal process to obtain citizenship. More than 40 percent of the foreign-born people who live in the United States are naturalized citizens. Immigrants who want to become United States citizens must meet certain requirements.

- be age 18 or older.
- have been a lawful permanent resident for 5 years.
- be able to read, write, and speak English.
- be of good moral character.
- show an understanding of U.S. civics.

Once an immigrant meets the 5 requirements above, the next step in the process is to complete an application and send it to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). Next, a USCIS official talks to the applicant to make sure that the person meets all five requirements.

The next step is to take a citizenship exam. The exam tests the applicant's ability to read, write, and speak English. It also asks the applicant about the history and government of the United States. Many people take classes to prepare for this test.

The last step is a special citizenship ceremony. At this event, applicants take an oath in which they swear to be loyal to the United States above all other countries. They make other promises, too. For instance, they swear to obey the Constitution and the country's laws. After taking this oath and signing a document, they are citizens. If they have children under 18, the children automatically become citizens too.