

COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE
N-400 NATURALIZATION FORM

Application for Naturalization | U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

20 Parts
Form Sections

~18 Months
Average Processing

\$725 Fee
Filing Cost (2024)

1. What Is the N-400?

Form N-400 is the Application for Naturalization, the official USCIS form used by eligible permanent residents (green card holders) to apply for U.S. citizenship. Filing this form is the final step in the naturalization process and grants you the right to become a U.S. citizen through the legal naturalization process.

The N-400 was most recently revised in 2021 and contains 20 parts covering every aspect of your background, residency history, and eligibility for citizenship.

Official USCIS Resource

Always download the most current version of Form N-400 directly from uscis.gov/n-400. Using an outdated version can result in rejection of your application.

1.1 Who Can Apply?

You may be eligible to apply for naturalization if you meet one of the following criteria:

Eligibility Path	Requirements
5-Year LPR Rule	Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) for at least 5 years, physically present in the U.S. for at least 30 months of those 5 years
3-Year Marriage Rule	Married to and living with a U.S. citizen spouse for 3 years, LPR for 3 years, physically present 18+ months of those 3 years
Military Service	Served honorably in U.S. Armed Forces; different residency rules may apply
Children of Citizens	Born abroad to U.S. citizen parent(s) or acquired citizenship automatically; may use Form N-600 instead

1.2 Key Eligibility Requirements

Regardless of your eligibility path, you must generally meet all of these requirements:

- Be at least 18 years old at the time of filing
- Have been a lawful permanent resident for the required period
- Have continuous residence in the U.S. (no single trip abroad of 6+ months)
- Have been physically present in the U.S. for the required number of days
- Have lived in the same state or USCIS district for at least 3 months before filing
- Be a person of good moral character
- Demonstrate attachment to the principles of the U.S. Constitution
- Able to read, write, and speak basic English (with some exceptions)

- Pass a civics test covering U.S. history and government

Age Exceptions for English & Civics Tests

If you are 50+ years old and have been a green card holder for 20+ years, or 55+ with 15+ years, you may be exempt from the English requirement (but still take the civics test in your own language). If you are 65+ with 20+ years as an LPR, you only need to study a shorter list of 20 civics questions.

2. N-400 Form Structure — All 20 Parts

The N-400 is organized into 20 numbered parts. Here is an overview of every part and what it covers:

Part	Description	Key Notes
Part 1	Eligibility — Basis for Application	Select one eligibility basis; most common: 5-year or 3-year paths
Part 2	Information About You	Full legal name, home address, date of birth, place of birth
Part 3	Biographic Information	Ethnicity, race, height, weight, eye color, hair color
Part 4	Addresses & Phone Numbers	Current and mailing address, email, phone numbers
Part 5	Information for Criminal Records Search	Previously used names, physical description for FBI background check
Part 6	Residence & Employment (Last 5 Yrs)	Every address and employer for the past 5 years; no gaps allowed
Part 7	Time Outside the U.S. (Last 5 Yrs)	Every trip lasting 24+ hours outside the U.S. in the past 5 years
Part 8	Marital History	All marriages, divorces, and current spouse's citizenship status
Part 9	Information About Children	All biological, step, and legally adopted children worldwide
Part 10	Additional Questions Part A	Membership in organizations, groups, or parties; Communist Party
Part 11	Additional Questions Part B	Military service history (U.S. or foreign)
Part 12	Additional Questions Part C	Selective Service registration (males born after 1959 who are age 26-31)
Part 13	Continuous Residence	Trips abroad; claims of abandoning LPR status; tax filing outside U.S.
Part 14	Good Moral Character (Part D)	Criminal history, arrests, citations, DUIs, tax issues, fraud
Part 15	Good Moral Character (Part E)	Terrorism-related activities, persecution, or genocide
Part 16	Good Moral Character (Part F)	Additional character questions: weapons, drug trafficking, etc.

Part 17	Oath Requirements	Willingness to take the Oath of Allegiance; conscientious objector status
Part 18	Signature of Applicant	Applicant signs and dates under penalty of perjury
Part 19	Interpreter's Information	If you used an interpreter, their name and certification
Part 20	Preparer's Information	If someone helped you fill out the form, their details here

3. Detailed Part-by-Part Guidance

Part 1 — Eligibility Basis

This is one of the most important parts. You must check the box that accurately describes why you believe you are eligible. The most common selections are:

- 5-year rule: You have been an LPR for 5 years, lived in the same state for 3 months, and have been continuously resident in the U.S.
- 3-year rule with U.S. citizen spouse: You must currently be married to a U.S. citizen and have lived together for the entire 3 years.
- Military service: Consult an immigration attorney as special rules and forms may apply.

Warning: Choosing the Wrong Eligibility Basis

If you select the 3-year marriage path but your spouse is not a U.S. citizen, or if you separated/divorced, USCIS will deny your application. Triple-check your eligibility before filing.

Part 6 — Residence & Employment History

This part requires a complete, uninterrupted chronology for the past 5 years. Common mistakes include:

- Leaving gaps between addresses — USCIS wants continuous coverage with no missing months
- Forgetting short-term residences (e.g., staying with family while between apartments)
- Not listing all employers, including part-time jobs, self-employment, or periods of unemployment

Tip: Create a Timeline First

Before filling out Part 6, write out a month-by-month timeline of where you lived and worked. This prevents gaps and inconsistencies that can trigger a Request for Evidence (RFE).

Part 7 — Travel Outside the United States

List every trip lasting 24 hours or more. For each trip, provide:

- Date of departure from the U.S.
- Date of return to the U.S.
- Country or countries visited
- Purpose of travel (vacation, business, family emergency, etc.)

Continuous residence is broken if you were outside the U.S. for more than 6 months on a single trip. If you had a trip of 6-12 months, you may still be eligible but must provide evidence that you did not abandon LPR status (e.g., U.S. tax returns, employment records, property ownership).

Part 14 — Good Moral Character

This section contains sensitive questions about your past. You must answer every question truthfully, even if you believe the incident is minor or old. USCIS will conduct a background check. Good moral character bars include:

- Crimes involving moral turpitude (theft, fraud, assault)
- Drug offenses (even marijuana-related, which remains a federal offense)
- Multiple criminal convictions
- Habitual drunkenness
- Illegal gambling
- Willful failure to pay court-ordered child support or alimony
- Making false statements to obtain immigration benefits

Always Disclose — Even Expunged Records

USCIS requires you to disclose ALL arrests and citations, even if charges were dropped, dismissed, or expunged. Failure to disclose can be considered fraud and may permanently bar you from citizenship. If you have any criminal history, consult an immigration attorney before filing.

4. Required Documents Checklist

Gather all the following documents before filing your N-400:

4.1 Always Required

- Completed and signed Form N-400 (latest version from uscis.gov)
- A copy of both sides of your Permanent Resident Card (green card)
- Filing fee of \$725 (check or money order payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security", or pay online)
- Two identical passport-style photos (if applicable — check instructions)

4.2 Depending on Your Situation

Your Situation	Additional Documents Needed
Married to U.S. citizen (3-year path)	Marriage certificate, proof of joint residence, evidence of ongoing marriage, U.S. citizen spouse's passport or naturalization certificate
Name changed (not through marriage)	Court order for name change
Previous marriage(s)	Divorce decree(s) or death certificate(s) for each prior marriage
Military service	Form N-426 (Certification of Military or Naval Service) and DD-214
Criminal record	Court dispositions for each arrest/charge, even if dismissed or expunged
Tax issues	IRS tax transcripts, evidence of payment plans or compliance
Long trips abroad	Evidence maintaining LPR status (tax returns, employment records, bank statements)
Disability accommodations	Form N-648 (Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions) from licensed medical professional

5. Step-by-Step Filing Process

1. Download and complete Form N-400 from uscis.gov/n-400. Read all instructions carefully.
2. Gather all required supporting documents (see Section 4 checklist).
3. Prepare your filing fee — \$725 by check, money order, or online payment.

4. File online at my.uscis.gov (preferred) OR mail to the correct USCIS Lockbox address for your state.
5. USCIS will mail you a receipt notice (Form I-797C) confirming they received your application within 1-3 weeks.
6. You may be scheduled for a biometrics appointment at an Application Support Center (ASC). Bring your appointment notice and photo ID.
7. USCIS will schedule your naturalization interview. You will be tested on English and civics at this appointment.
8. If approved, you will take the Oath of Allegiance at a naturalization ceremony — either the same day or at a later ceremony.
9. Receive your Certificate of Naturalization. You are now a U.S. citizen!

Online Filing Strongly Recommended

Filing online at my.uscis.gov allows you to track your case status in real time, receive electronic notifications, and avoid delays from mailing. Paper filing is still accepted but may result in longer processing times.

6. The Naturalization Interview

6.1 What to Expect

The interview is conducted by a USCIS officer at your local field office. It typically lasts 20-30 minutes and includes:

- Review of your N-400 application — the officer will go through your answers with you
- English language test (reading, writing, and speaking)
- Civics test (10 questions asked verbally from a pool of 100)

6.2 English Language Test

The English test has three components:

Component	What You Must Do
Speaking	Demonstrate ability to speak and understand English throughout the interview (your answers to questions are evaluated)
Reading	Read one sentence correctly out of up to three attempts
Writing	Write one sentence correctly out of up to three attempts

6.3 Civics Test

The USCIS officer will ask you up to 10 questions from the official list of 100 civics questions. You must answer at least 6 correctly to pass. The questions cover:

- American Government (Principles of Democracy, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights)
- System of Government (Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches)
- Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens
- American History (Colonial period, the founding, Civil War, 20th century)
- Integrated Civics (Geography, symbols, holidays)

Study Resource

Download the full 100 civics questions and answers from uscis.gov/citizenship/find-study-materials-and-resources. Flashcard apps and the USCIS "Civics Practice Test" are also available in the app stores.

6.4 What to Bring to Your Interview

- Your interview appointment notice
- Your green card (permanent resident card)
- A valid government-issued photo ID

- Your passport(s) — all current and expired passports
- Original documents that support your application (marriage certificate, divorce decrees, etc.)
- Any documents USCIS specifically requested

7. Common Problems & How to Avoid Them

Issue	How to Avoid It
Application returned as incomplete	Answer every question; if a question does not apply, write 'N/A'
Gaps in residence/employment history	Create a detailed timeline and review for completeness before filing
Wrong fee amount	Check uscis.gov for the current fee; do not use old instructions or guides
Outdated form version	Always download directly from uscis.gov ; do not use saved copies
Undisclosed criminal history	Disclose EVERYTHING — consult an attorney if you have any concerns
Travel record inconsistencies	Check your passport stamps and travel receipts to build an accurate record
Missing signature	Both you and your preparer (if applicable) must sign in all required places
Failure to register for Selective Service	Men between 26 and 31 who did not register must file for a waiver first
Request for Evidence (RFE) not answered in time	Respond promptly to all USCIS correspondence; check your mail regularly

8. After You Become a Citizen

8.1 What Changes Immediately

- You can apply for a U.S. passport (valid 10 years for adults)
- You can vote in federal, state, and local elections
- You can sponsor more immediate relatives for green cards (parents, spouse, unmarried/married children)
- You no longer need to renew your green card
- You are protected from deportation (with very limited exceptions)
- You may be eligible for federal jobs that require U.S. citizenship
- Your children under 18 who are permanent residents may automatically become citizens

8.2 Applying for a U.S. Passport

Bring your Certificate of Naturalization to any passport acceptance facility (post offices, government offices). You will need:

- Completed Form DS-11 (Application for a U.S. Passport)
- Your original Certificate of Naturalization (plus a photocopy)
- One passport photo
- Proof of identity (driver's license or state ID)
- Passport application fee

8.3 Protect Your Certificate of Naturalization

Keep Your Certificate Safe

Your Certificate of Naturalization is a critical legal document. Store the original in a fireproof safe or safe deposit box. Make certified copies for regular use. If your certificate is lost or damaged, you can apply for a replacement using Form N-565, but it is a time-consuming process.

9. Official Resources & Help

Resource	Where to Find It
Form N-400 (current version)	uscis.gov/n-400
Filing instructions	uscis.gov/n-400 (Instructions for Form N-400)
Case status tracking	egov.uscis.gov or my.uscis.gov
100 Civics Questions	uscis.gov/citizenship/find-study-materials-and-resources

USCIS Contact Center	1-800-375-5283 (Monday-Friday, 8am-8pm ET)
Emma (USCIS Virtual Assistant)	uscis.gov — click the chat icon
Immigration Legal Help	immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory/
Disability Accommodation (N-648)	uscis.gov/n-648

Legal Disclaimer

This guide is provided for informational and educational purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice. Immigration law is complex and individual circumstances vary significantly. Always consult a qualified immigration attorney or accredited representative before making decisions about your naturalization application.

Good luck on your path to U.S. citizenship! ★★★