



# I Am a Permanent Resident

## How Do I... Apply for U.S. Citizenship?



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

M-565 (February 2013) N

### B3 Customer Guide

U.S. citizenship provides many rights, but also involves many responsibilities. Thus, the decision to become a U.S. citizen through naturalization is important. In most cases, a person who wants to naturalize must first be a permanent resident. By becoming a U.S. citizen, you gain many rights that permanent residents or others do not have, including the right to vote. To be eligible for naturalization, you must first meet certain requirements set by U.S. law.

#### What are the basic requirements to apply for naturalization?

The process of applying for U.S. citizenship is known as *naturalization*. In order to be eligible for naturalization, you must first meet certain requirements required by the U.S. immigration law.

Generally, to be eligible for naturalization you must:

- Be age 18 or older; and
- Be a permanent resident for a certain amount of time (usually 5 years or 3 years, depending on how you obtained status); and
- Be a person of good moral character; and
- Have a basic knowledge of U.S. government (this, too, can be excepted due to permanent physical or mental impairment); and
- Have a period of continuous residence and physical presence in the United States; and
- Be able to read, write, and speak basic English. There are exceptions to this rule for someone who at the time of filing:
  - Is 55 years old and has been a permanent resident for at least 15 years; or
  - Is 50 years old and has been a permanent resident for at least 20 years; or
  - Has a permanent physical or mental impairment that makes the individual unable to fulfill these requirements.

#### When can I apply for naturalization?

You may be able to apply for naturalization if you are at least 18 years of age and have been a permanent resident of the United States:

- For at least 5 years; or
- For at least 3 years during which time you have been, and continue to be, married to and living in a marriage relationship with your U.S. citizen husband or wife; or
- Have honorable service in the U.S. military.

Certain spouses of U.S. citizens and/or members of the military may be able to file for naturalization sooner than noted above.

#### How do I apply for naturalization?

To apply for naturalization, file **Form N-400**, *Application for Naturalization*.

For more information on the naturalization process, please see our manual, **M-476**, *A Guide to Naturalization*.

If you are in the military and are interested in becoming a U.S. citizen, please see our brochure, **M-599**, *Naturalization Information for Military Personnel*.

#### Do I have to be in the United States when I file an N-400 application?

An applicant does not necessarily need to be in the United States when filling Form N-400. Please refer to **M-476** for more information about filing from overseas.

USCIS has educational materials and resources to help you prepare for the citizenship test (English and Civics portions). Visit the Citizenship and Resource Center at [www.USCIS.gov/citizenship](http://www.USCIS.gov/citizenship), to find information on how to find English and citizenship preparation classes in your area, learn about free citizenship information sessions offered by USCIS in your area, and download study materials for the English and Civics portions of the citizenship test.

For more information about the naturalization process and requirements, please visit our website, or call Customer Service at **1-800-375-5283**. The N-400, M-476, and M-599 forms are all available on our website.

## Key Information

Key USCIS forms referenced in this guide	Form #
Application for Naturalization	N-400
A Guide to Naturalization	M-476
Naturalization Information for Military Personnel	M-599

### USCIS

- **On the Internet at: [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)**

For more copies of this guide, or information about other citizenship and immigration services, please visit our website. You can also download forms, e-file some applications, check the status of an application, and more. It's a great place to start!

If you don't have Internet access at home or work, try your local library. If you cannot find what you need, please call Customer Service.

- **Customer Service: 1-800-375-5283**

- Hearing Impaired TDD Customer Service: 1-800-767-1833

### Other U.S. Government Services—Click or Call

General Information	<a href="http://www.usa.gov">www.usa.gov</a>	1-800-333-4636
New Immigrants	<a href="http://www.welcometoUSA.gov">www.welcometoUSA.gov</a>	
U.S. Dept. of State	<a href="http://www.state.gov">www.state.gov</a>	1-202-647-6575

**Disclaimer:** This guide provides basic information to help you become generally familiar with our rules and procedures. For more information, or the law and regulations, please visit our website. Immigration law can be complex, and it is impossible to describe every aspect of every process. You may wish to be represented by a licensed attorney or by a nonprofit agency accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals.