



How to Become a U.S. Citizen (Naturalize)

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This guide explores the eligibility to become a U.S. citizen. Please consult an attorney for your particular situation.

1

Who is qualified to become a citizen?

If you became a permanent resident (green-card holder) through marriage to a U.S. citizen you may be eligible for citizenship as soon as three years after receiving your residency. If you did not become a permanent resident through a U.S. citizen spouse, you may be eligible to become a citizen as soon as five years.

2

What is the eligibility to become a U.S. citizen?

In either case, to be eligible to become a U.S. citizen, you must: (1) Be 18 or older at the time of filing; (2) Have lived within the state, or USCIS district with jurisdiction over the applicant's place of residence, for at least 3 months prior to the date of filing the application; (3) Be physically present in the United States for at least 30 months out of the 5 years immediately preceding the date of filing the application (or at least 18 months if applying under 3 year rule); (4) Reside continuously within the United States from the date of application for naturalization up to the time of naturalization (never leaving for more than 6 months at a time); (5) Be able to read, write, and speak English and have knowledge and an understanding of U.S. history and government (civics). There are some exceptions, but speak to a lawyer to see if you qualify; and (6) Be a person of good moral character (especially within past 5 years).

3

More information

A permanent resident applies for citizenship with Form N-400, which requires substantial amounts of biographic information for you and your relatives. A common issue among our clients is how their crimes affect their application. Certain crimes can completely prevent you from being eligible for citizenship while other crimes can make it difficult to establish that you're a person of good moral character but not altogether bar you from citizenship. It is important to obtain all the court documentation for your criminal history. Depending on the crime, we may recommend that you wait until five years after your last criminal case was closed (not committed). If you have any criminal history it is especially important to consult with an immigration attorney to evaluate its impact on your application for citizenship.

Additional Resources

[Immigration Law Blog - How to become a U.S. Citizen \(Naturalize\)](#)

<http://www.immigrationlawseattle.com/blog/2014/5/2/how-to-become-a-us-citizen-naturalize>

[Immigration Law Blog - Cómo Convertirse en un Ciudadano de los EE.UU.](#)

<http://www.immigrationlawseattle.com/blog/2014/5/2/cmo-convertirse-en-un-ciudadano-de-los-eeuu>