



October 20, 2025

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Policy Alert

SUBJECT: Revising Guidance on Naturalization Civics Educational Requirement

Purpose

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is issuing policy guidance in the [USCIS Policy Manual](#) to implement the 2020 Naturalization Civics Test with some modifications (“2025 Naturalization Civics Test”), which helps ensure proper assimilation of lawful immigrants into the United States and promote a unified American identity and attachment to the Constitution, laws, and founding principles of the United States.¹ This update also provides clarification on the requirements an alien must demonstrate to sufficiently establish knowledge and understanding of civics as required under section 312 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

Background

The naturalization process provides aliens with the opportunity to become fully vested members of American society with important rights and responsibilities that all citizens should exercise and respect. Understanding their rights as new citizens, understanding and appreciating the principles and ideals of the U.S. Constitution, engaging with the government, and fully contributing to the democratic process and integrating into American society, all rely on a basic understanding of the English language and American system of government (civics).

Under [INA 312](#), most aliens seeking to naturalize must demonstrate an understanding of the English language including an ability to speak, read, and write words in ordinary usage (English language requirements)² and demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of U.S. history and of the principles and form of government in the United States (civics requirements).³ Aliens have two opportunities to pass the related English and civics tests prior to denial of their application for naturalization.⁴

The INA provides statutory authority for administering the civics test, including making rules and regulations necessary to carry out this provision as well as prescribing the scope and nature of the

¹ See Executive Order 14161, Protecting the United States From Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats, [90 FR 8451](#) (Jan. 30, 2025).

² See [INA 312\(a\)\(1\)](#). (The English language requirement does not apply to individuals who, on the date of filing their application for naturalization are over 50 years old and have lived in the United States subsequent to a lawful admission for permanent residence for at least 20 years; or are over 55 years old and have lived in the United States subsequent to a lawful admission for permanent residence for at least 15 years). See [INA 312\(b\)\(2\)](#).

³ See [INA 312\(a\)\(2\)](#).

⁴ This includes the initial examination and re-examination (if needed). See [8 CFR 312.5\(a\)](#) and [8 CFR 335.3\(b\)](#).

examination of applicants for naturalization.⁵ The Homeland Security Act⁶ allows the Secretary to issue regulations and delegate certain duties to any organizational unit, including USCIS, to administer the immigration and naturalization of aliens, and to develop, revise, and administer the naturalization test.⁷

Consistent with the Notice of Implementation of Modified 2020 Naturalization Civics Test, 90 FR 45047, USCIS is now reimplementing the 2020 Naturalization Civics Test,⁸ with limited modifications (“2025 Naturalization Civics Test”), which better fulfills the statutory requirement that an alien must demonstrate “a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of the history, and of the principles and form of government, of the United States” as required by [INA 312](#). Implementing the 2025 Naturalization Civics Test is part of an ongoing effort USCIS is taking to restore integrity to the naturalization process. In addition, this update affirms assimilation expectations through USCIS’ assessment of an alien’s knowledge of the civics requirements for naturalization.

This guidance, contained in Volume 12 of the Policy Manual, applies to applications for naturalization filed on or after October 20, 2025. The guidance contained in the Policy Manual is controlling and supersedes any related prior guidance.

Policy Highlights

- Provides that USCIS will administer the 2025 Naturalization Civics Test to aliens who file for naturalization on or after October 20, 2025.
- Increases the general bank of civics test questions to 128 (from 100), the number of test questions for the exam to 20 (from 10), and accordingly, the number of correct answers needed to pass the civics test to 12 (from six).
- Provides that officers stop the test when the alien correctly answers the minimum number of 12 questions required to pass the test, or answers nine questions incorrectly. This is the only

⁵ See [INA 312](#) and [INA 332\(a\)](#). See [8 CFR 312](#) and [8 CFR 332](#).

⁶ See Homeland Security Act of 2002 (HSA), [Pub. L. 107-296](#), (November 25, 2002). Section 102 of the HSA specifically authorizes the Secretary to delegate any of the Secretary’s functions to any officer, employee, or organizational unit of the Department.

⁷ USCIS, then Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, was established by Section 451 of the Homeland Security Act. The secretary delegated certain authorities to USCIS through [Delegation to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services](#), Delegation 0150.1, signed June 5, 2003 (effective March 1, 2003), including broad authority over naturalization and citizenship of aliens. (“I hereby delegate to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services . . . [a]uthority under the immigration laws, including but not limited to sections 310 and 341 of the INA (8 U.S.C. §1421 and §1452), to grant applications for naturalization and certificates of citizenship (and revoke such naturalization), including administration of oaths, issuance of certificates, provision of citizenship materials and services to public schools to prepare naturalization candidates, supervision of courts designated under section 310 of the INA to administer oaths, and any other rights and responsibilities relating to the naturalization or citizenship of aliens.”).

⁸ See Initial Recissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions, [90 FR 8237](#) (Jan. 28, 2025) (revoking Executive Order 14012). See also Section 3(f) of Executive Order 14161, Protecting the United States From Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats (ensuring the proper assimilation of lawful immigrants into the United States, that promotes a unified American identity and attachment to the Constitution, laws, and founding principles of the United States).

modification in the administration of the test as compared to the 2020 Naturalization Civics Test.

- Retains the 60 percent passing score (which also applies to the 2008 Naturalization Civics Test and applied to the 2020 Naturalization Civics Test).
- Confirms that USCIS continues to administer a test containing 10 questions (requiring six correct answers) out of a specially selected bank of 20 questions to aliens who qualify for special consideration because they are age 65 or older and have been lawful permanent residents for at least 20 years.

Summary of Changes

Affected Section: Volume 12 > Part E > Chapter 1, Purpose and Background

- Revises Chapter in its entirety.

Affected Section: Volume 12 > Part E > Chapter 2 > Section E, Civics Portion of the Test

- Revises Subsection 1 (Civics Test) and Subsection 2 (Special Consideration) in its entirety.

USCIS may also make other minor technical, stylistic, and conforming changes consistent with this update.

Citation

Volume 12: Citizenship and Naturalization, Part E, English and Civics Testing and Exceptions, Chapter 1, Purpose and Background [[12 USCIS-PM E.1](#)]; and Chapter 2, English and Civics Testing [[12 USCIS-PM E.2](#)].