

# United States Citizenship

## OBJECTIVES

- Identify who is a U.S. Citizen and describe the naturalization process to become a citizen.
  - Describe the “office of citizen” and explain the important powers citizens possess.
  - Identify and explain the rights guaranteed to American citizens.
  - Identify and explain the duties of American citizens.
  - Identify and explain the responsibilities of American citizens.
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- ***Citizen* – a person with certain rights and duties under a government.**
  - **What is *naturalization*?**
    - **You are legally an American citizen if:**
      1. You were born in the United States or its territories.
      2. At least one of your parents was a US citizen when you were born.
      3. You have been *naturalized* (you have gone through the process of becoming a citizen).
      4. You were under 18 when your parents were naturalized.

## U.S. Naturalization Process (see chart on p. 57):

**Step 1:** *Applicant submits application to U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS)*

**Step 2:** *Examination*

- Applicant must meet the following qualifications:
  - 18 years or older
  - Good moral character
  - Legal residence in the country for at least 5 years; in state for at least 3 months
  - Loyalty to principles of Constitution
- Applicant takes Naturalization Test.

**Step 3:** *Final hearing:*

- Applicant appears before court.
  - Applicant takes oath of loyalty to U.S.
  - Receives certificate of U.S. citizenship.
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- Naturalized citizens have all the rights of citizens by birth except the right to be President or Vice President

- **What are some of the rights of U.S. citizens?**
  - The right to vote and to hold elected office.
  - The right to say what you think in speech or in writing.
  - The right to practice your own religion.
  - The right to have a fair trial.
- **These rights are based on the fundamental beliefs and values we Americans share:**
  - Equal respect
  - Freedom
  - Equality
  - Justice
  - Service
  - The right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

### **Duties and Responsibilities of a Citizen**

- **Duties of a citizen:**
  1. Obeying the laws
  2. Defending the nation
  3. Serving on a jury or as a witness in court
  4. Paying taxes
  5. Attending school
- **Responsibilities of a citizen:**
  1. Working towards the “Common Good”
  2. Voting
  3. Holding Government Office
  4. Participating in Election Campaigns
  5. Influencing the Government
  6. Serving the Community

## Duties of a Citizen

### 1. Obeying the law

- Laws are designed to:
  - Provide a safe place to live
  - Stop us from hurting each other
  - Make traffic safe
  - Protect our rights
  - Cut down on crime
- The Rule of Law
  - Government of laws: No one is above the law
  - Officials make decisions based on law, not personal bias/opinion
  - Officials are held accountable under the same law
  - Laws are public knowledge
  - Citizens are taught the basic laws of the land

### 2. Defending the Nation

- Helping our country defend itself is another duty of citizens
- Peacetime/wartime forces are maintained to:
  - Defend our nation
  - Help other nations
- Military Service (Must be 18 yrs old or older)
  - Marine Corps
  - Navy
  - Army
  - Air Force
  - Coast Guard
- The Draft
  - In a national emergency, young men may be called to serve
  - 18 yr old males must register for the draft

### 3. Serving on a Jury or a witness

- **Serving on a Jury**
  - You could be called to serve Jury Duty
  - Jury must find person guilty “beyond a reasonable doubt”
  - Jury decides whether the accused is innocent or guilty after hearing all the evidence at the trial
- **Serving as a Witness**
  - People who have seen events related to the crime or have special information relevant to the case that can prove innocents or guilt for the accused.

### 4. Paying Taxes

- Taxes pay for services
  - Police, fire & rescue, libraries, road and bridge service, military, education

### 5. Education

- Attending school: You are being a citizen
  - Society depends on schools to prepare young citizens for the future
  - Schools give students knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to be a responsible citizen

## Responsibilities of Citizens

### 1. Work towards the “*Common Good*”

- The “*Common Good*” is the well-being of society
- What does this look like?

### 2. Voting

- Basic right and important responsibility
- Representatives, President of US, public issues
- Be informed: Read, ask questions, discuss candidates
  - Separate facts from opinion/base decisions on reasons

### **3. Hold Government Office**

- Elected city council members, school board members, mayors, governors, state and national representatives/senators, president

### **4. Participating in Election Campaigns**

- Help a candidate (person running for office)
- Carry a campaign sign
- Stuffing envelopes – voter information
- Making phone calls – encourage people to vote

### **5. Influencing Government**

- Write letters to representatives, newspapers
- Speak at city council & school board meetings
- Create an organization that influences government

### **6. Serving the Community**

- Make community a better place
  - Pick up trash and contribute to the “common good”
  - Be friendly, respect others even if you disagree
  - Volunteer