

Scoring Guidelines for the U.S. Naturalization Test

Section 312 of the [Immigration and Nationality Act \(INA\)](#) provides that most applicants for naturalization demonstrate an understanding of the English language, including an ability to read, write, and speak words in ordinary usage in the English language, as well as a knowledge of U.S. government and history (civics).¹ This document provides a general description of how the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Naturalization Test is evaluated and scored by USCIS officers (officers).

The naturalization test consists of two components:

- English language proficiency, which is determined by the applicant’s ability to read, write, speak, and understand English; and
- Knowledge of U.S. government and history, which is determined by a civics test.

ENGLISH

- **SPEAKING:** An applicant’s verbal skills are determined by the applicant’s answers to questions normally asked by an officer during the naturalization eligibility interview. During the naturalization eligibility interview, the officer will review the Form N-400, Application for Naturalization (Form N-400) for accuracy. Officers are required to repeat and rephrase questions until the officer is satisfied that the applicant either fully understands the question or does not understand English. The applicant may demonstrate the ability to speak English by generally understanding and responding to questions relevant to the determination of eligibility.
- **UNDERSTANDING:** The applicant may demonstrate the ability to understand English by being responsive to questions, directions, or prompts during the naturalization interview. USCIS officers will repeat and rephrase questions until the officer is satisfied that the applicant either fully understands the question or does not understand English. The ability to understand English will not be based on being asked to provide a definition of a word or phrase found in the Form N-400.

¹ For information on exemptions and special consideration, visit uscis.gov/policy-manual/volume-12-part-e-chapter-2.



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- **READING:** To sufficiently demonstrate the ability to read in English, applicants must correctly read out loud one sentence, out of three sentences. The three reading sentences are interrogatives. Once the applicant reads one of three sentences correctly, the officer will stop administering the reading test. Applicants will not be failed because of their accent when speaking English. The applicant also does not need to provide a response to the interrogative sentence that they read out loud.
- **WRITING:** To sufficiently demonstrate the ability to write in English, the applicant must write one dictated sentence, out of three sentences, in a manner that is legible as written to the officer. An applicant must not abbreviate any dictated word in the written sentence. Once the applicant writes one of three sentences correctly, the officer will stop administering the writing test. An applicant will not fail because of spelling, capitalization, or punctuation errors unless the errors would prevent understanding the meaning of the sentence.
- **CIVICS:** To sufficiently demonstrate knowledge of U.S. government and history (civics), the applicant must answer 12 out of 20 questions correctly. The civics test will be an oral examination. Once the applicant answers 12 questions correctly, the officer will stop administering the civics test.

If an applicant fails any portion of the English test, the civics test, or all tests during the initial naturalization examination, USCIS reschedules the applicant to appear for a second examination between 60 and 90 days after the initial examination. The officer will only retest the applicant in those areas that the applicant previously failed.²

² [8CFR § 312.5 Failure to meet educational and literacy requirements](#). (a) An applicant for naturalization who fails the English literacy or history and government test at the first examination will be afforded a second opportunity to pass the test(s) within 90 days after the first examination during the pendency of the application.

