

Notes on Citizenship

1. Citizenship by Blood

- one of your parents must be an American citizen
- ex. – John McCain was born in Panama while his father was serving in the military

2. Citizenship by Soil

- A person who is born on United States soil is considered an American citizen
- American embassies are considered by law U.S. soil
- Military bases are considered “rented property” and not U.S. soil

3. Citizenship by Naturalization

- *Qualifications:*
 1. Lived in the United States legally for five years called “residency period” (exceptions – If non-citizen marries a citizen, the wait is three years. If a non-citizen marries an embassy worker, there is no wait citizenship is immediately granted.). Also, one must keep all documentation and forms up to date with INS (Immigration and Naturalization Services)
 2. Working legally with a “green card”
 3. Must not leave the country for more than six months at a time
 4. Working knowledge of the English language
- *Process:*
 1. Application – With a cost of \$250 and about 13 forms, a person can apply for citizenship 90 days prior to their residency anniversary
 2. Interview - The interview the an INS agent is to verify and confirm the information the applicant has supplied on the application especially in regard to their criminal record and living arrangements (a background check is performed before the interview).
 3. Test - Every applicant must pass (70%) a test on United States history, government, culture, and geography. The test is a computer generated batch of questions from 20 – 95.
 4. Hearing – In the hearing people are present to testify that the applicant has been a “good person” and will make a fine citizen.
 5. Swearing in Ceremony - A ceremony where new citizens will take an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution. Each will receive a copy of the Constitution as well as a small American flag.

4. Loosing Citizenship

- *Expatriation* - When a citizen gives up their American citizenship to become a citizen of another country. United States law requires anyone over the age of 18 to only hold one passport or citizenship.
- *High Crime including Treason* – According to the U.S. Constitution, the courts could strip a person of their citizenship for a “high crime.” In 1963, the United States Supreme Court ruled that this was unconstitutional under the Eighth Amendment (cruel and unusual punishment).
- *Denaturalization* – If a person is to have found to have lied during any step of the naturalization process, they are stripped of their citizenship. [ex. – An 86 year old man from Chicago lied on this application (from the 1950’s) and stated that he was an enlisted man in the German army during World War II. A woman who survived one of the concentration camps identified him as a guard stationed at her camp. His citizenship was revoked.]