

Immigration Law \approx Foodservice

New Naturalization Test as of October 1, 2009

by Becki L. Young

As of October 1, 2009, all applicants for U.S. citizenship must take the “new” naturalization test. The new test was introduced on October 1, 2008; between that date and October 1, 2009, applicants could choose which test they wanted to take.

According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “the revised naturalization test will help strengthen integration efforts by emphasizing fundamental concepts of American democracy, basic U.S. history, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.” The new test has two basic objectives: “to ensure a uniform test administration nationwide and to develop a civics test that can effectively assess an applicant’s knowledge of U.S. history and government.”

A naturalization applicant is required to answer correctly 6 out of 10 questions from the list of 100 questions (available on the USCIS website). The major difference between the old test and the new test is that the new questions focus on civics and history topics, rather than the general range of topics in the previous test. In addition, the reading and writing portions of the test contain more civics-based vocabulary. Here are some of the new questions:

- ❖ Can you name one state that borders Canada? (The correct answers are Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio,

Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington and Alaska.)

- ❖ Can you name one U.S. territory? (Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands and Guam.)
- ❖ Can you name one American Indian tribe in the U.S.? (There are a bunch of acceptable answers, among them the Cherokee, Iroquois and Seminole.)
- ❖ Before he was president, Eisenhower was a general. What war was he in? (World War II.)
- ❖ Under our Constitution, some powers belong to the states. What is one power of the states? (Provide schooling and education; provide protection (police); provide safety (fire departments); give a driver’s license; approve zoning and land use.)



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The basic requirements for all naturalization applicants are:

- ❖ Must be at least 18 years old at the time of filing.
- ❖ Must have been a legal permanent resident (green card holder) for at least five (5) years (or at least three (3) years if you became a permanent resident based on marriage to a U.S. citizen and are still married to that citizen).
- ❖ Must have maintained continuous residence (any trips outside the US of 6 months or longer can be problematic).
- ❖ Must have maintained physical presence for at least half of the required residence period (five or three years).
- ❖ Must have lived in the current state/ district for at least three months before filing.
- ❖ Must demonstrate good moral character (criminal convictions, tax evasion, adultery, failure to pay child support, failure to register with the Selective Service can be problematic).
- ❖ Must demonstrate an attachment to the principles and ideals of the U.S. Constitution.
- ❖ Must demonstrate an ability to read, write, speak, and understand basic English. This requirement can be waived for:
 - Those who are physically unable to comply due to disability or mental impairment
 - Those who are at least fifty years old at the time of filing and lived in the U.S. as a permanent resident for at least twenty years.
 - Those who are at least fifty-five years old and lived in the U.S. as a permanent resident for at least fifteen years.
 - Must demonstrate a basic knowledge of U.S. history, government, and civic principles.
 - Must be willing to take an oath of allegiance to the United States.

To learn more about U.S. citizenship and the naturalization test, logon to www.uscis.gov/citizenship. A comprehensive guide to the naturalization process is available at www.uscis.gov/natzguide.



Becki L. Young has been working in the field of immigration law since 1995. Ms. Young’s practice focuses on employment-based immigration law. She has represented employers in a variety of industries, including investment banking and securities, information technology, health care, and hospitality, providing advice on work permits and related immigration issues, and is the co-editor of *Immigration Options for Essential Workers* published by the American Immigration Lawyers Association. To learn more or to schedule a personal consultation, call 202-232-0983 or e-mail becki.young@blylaw.com.

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