BECOMING A CITIZEN

**Citizenship** means to be a member of a nation or country, and to have full rights and responsibilities under the law. In the United States there are three ways to become a citizen: being born in the United States, having parents who are citizens of the United States, and going through a process called naturalization.

**Naturalization** is the process that allows immigrants to become citizens. Most people who apply for citizenship fall into this category: they are over 18 years old and have been permanent residents of the United States for 5 years. They must also have good character, speak English, and pass a civics test and an interview! The last step involves taking an Oath of Allegiance to the United States and our Constitution. There is one shortcut! People who serve in the U.S. military for at least one year can become citizens sooner, because they have demonstrated their commitment to the United States.

**The Oath of Allegiance**

I hereby declare, on oath,

that I absolutely and entirely renounce and **abjure** all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, **potentate**, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have **heretofore** been a subject or citizen;

that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic;

that I will **bear true faith** and allegiance to the same;

that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law;

that I will perform **noncombatant service** in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law;

that I will perform work of national importance under **civilian direction** when required by the law;

and that I take this obligation freely without any **mental reservation** or purpose of **evasion**, so help me God.
In 1791, ten amendments, or changes, were added to the Constitution. These are called the **Bill of Rights**. They explain some of the rights we enjoy here in the United States, including freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, protection under the law, access to the judicial system, and more! Along with all these freedoms come some responsibilities, too. As citizens, we are responsible for doing things like serving on juries, obeying laws, tolerating differences in those around us, and participating in our government (like VOTING)!

**Citizenship in History**

Now, 1791 was a long time ago and not everyone was considered a citizen at that time. When the Bill of Rights was added to our constitution only “free white persons” were considered citizens. In 1868, at the end of the Civil War, another amendment was added to the Constitution. This 14th Amendment granted citizenship to all people born in the United States. Over the next 100 years, citizenship was granted to Native Americans and children born to American parents outside the United States. In 1952, the U.S. Congress passed a law to say that citizenship could not be denied because of a persons’ race or gender.

**U.S. Citizenship Timeline**

- **1776**: You must be a white male and own property to vote!
- **1791**: All white males may vote even if they don’t own property!
- **1795**: “Free white persons” will become citizens after living in the U.S. for five years.
- **1848**: 80,000 Mexican residents of the Southwest are granted citizenship after the Mexican-American war.
- **1857**: In *Dred Scott v. Sandford* the U.S. Supreme Court rules that African Americans who were brought into this country as slaves could never be citizens.
- **1868**: The 14th Amendment overrules *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, giving citizenship to African Americans.
- **1870**: Laws changed to say that “white persons and persons of African descent” can be citizens; The 15th Amendment gives African Americans the right to vote!
- **1913**: California and other states enact Alien Land Laws prohibiting non-citizens from owning property.
- **1920**: The 19th Amendment allows women to vote!
- **1924**: All Native Americans are granted citizenship.
- **1940’s**: All laws banning Asians from becoming citizens are overturned.
- **1947**: Native Americans are given the right to vote!
- **1965**: Martin Luther King, Jr. leads a march to protest lack of voting rights, and the Voting Rights Act gets rid of all barriers to voting (literacy tests, taxes, etc.).
- **1971**: The voting age is changed to 18 by the 26th Amendment!
Naturalization
List 5 things a person must do or have to be qualified for naturalization:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

History
- In 1791, ten ___________________ were added to the Constitution and are called the ___________________. These stated the rights of citizens.
- In 1868, the ____________ ended and the ________ Amendment was added to the Constitution. It granted citizenship to ____________________________.
- Almost 100 years later, U.S. Congress passed a law that citizenship could not be denied because of __________________ or __________________.

Rights
List 5 rights a citizen of the U.S. has:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Responsibilities
List 5 responsibilities a citizen of the U.S. has:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Citizenship
Definition:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
First, put an X next to the lines that are required by the Oath of Allegiance.

Then put a ☆ next to the three lines that you would include if you were writing your own oath. These can be the same or different than things in the U.S. Oath.

2. Giving loyalty to vegetables. Vegetables are the best.
3. Protecting and supporting the Constitution and laws of the U.S. against any attack.
4. Promising to always take care of the environment.
5. Promising all these things without hesitation and without lying.
6. Fulfilling duties other than fighting to support the Armed Forces.
7. Serving both my new country and my old country.
8. Swearing to say the Pledge of Allegiance every day.
9. Doing things that are important to the nation when the law requires it.
10. Serving in the military to protect the United States when the law says I need to.
11. Promising to take care of my family and friends.
12. Completely rejecting all loyalty that I have to another country or ruler.

Fill in the blanks below with words from the word box.

- allegiance
- eighteen
- naturalization
- military
- oath
- five
- one
- three

1. There are ________ ways to become a citizen of the United States.
2. The process of becoming a U.S. citizen when you are not born in the United States or to parents who are U.S. citizens is called __________________________.
3. Most people who apply for citizenship are older than _________ and have lived in the United States for _________ years.
4. One way to become a citizen more quickly is to serve in the ______________________ for _________ year.
5. The last step in the process of becoming a U.S. citizen is taking the __________________________ of __________________________________.
Match each sentence with the correct ending.

1. Originally, the only people allowed to vote were __________.

2. The case that said that African-Americans brought into the country as slaves could never be citizens was __________.

3. “Free, white persons” that had lived in the US for five years were given citizenship in __________.

4. Dred Scott v. Sandford was overruled in __________.

5. The 15th Amendment to the Constitution gives African Americans __________.

6. Women were given the right to vote by the __________.

7. According to the 26th Amendment you can vote if you are over the __________.

8. Martin Luther King, Jr. led a protest against __________.

A. the year 1795.
B. 19th Amendment.
C. barriers to voting.
D. age of 18.
E. property owning, white males.
F. the year 1870.
G. Dred Scott v. Sandford.
H. the right to vote!

How long ago was it?

Do the subtraction problems below to find out how long each Amendment has been in effect!

African Americans can vote!

What year is it now? __________

What year did the Amendment pass? __________

How long ago was it? __________

Women can vote!

What year is it now? __________

What year did the Amendment pass? __________

How long ago was it? __________

People over 18 can vote!

What year is it now? __________

What year did the Amendment pass? __________

How long ago was it? __________

Determine if the following sentence is TRUE or FALSE then support your answer by giving TWO examples.

Citizenship in the United States has always had the same meaning.

TRUE or FALSE

1) ____________________________________________________________

2) ____________________________________________________________