



Office of the Citizenship and
Immigration Services Ombudsman

Working to improve the immigration benefits process



The CIS Ombudsman's Webinar Series: Naturalization Test Redesign Updates

July 19, 2023



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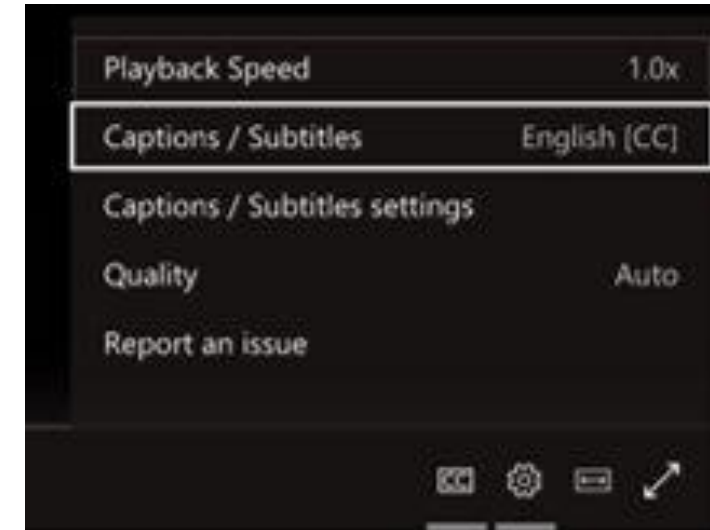
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- Live captions are available during the webinar.
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 - The languages available are English, Spanish, Chinese (Simplified), Filipino, Vietnamese, and Arabic.





Nathan Stiefel Acting CIS Ombudsman





Bertha Anderson

Deputy Chief, Office of Citizenship and Public
Engagement, USCIS





USCIS proposes to create a fair and transparent speaking test and to update the civics test.





Shawn Chakrabarti

Education Program Specialist, Citizenship Education and
Training Branch, Office of Citizenship and Public
Engagement, USCIS



Initial Timeline in December 2022 FRN



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June 2023 – 1st Round of Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Meetings

July – September 2023 – CBO Trial Tests

October 2023 – 2nd Round of TAG Meetings

December 2023 – TAG Report and Test Item Recommendations for Second Trial Test at USCIS Field Offices

Early 2024 - Federal Register Notice

March 2024 – Field Office Trial Tests



There will be two rounds of trial tests:

- First with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) - second half of 2023
- Second at USCIS Field Offices - 2024 (if we proceed with the trial test process)





- USCIS will trial test the following parts of the naturalization test with CBOs:
 - An image-based speaking trial test
 - A multiple-choice civics trial test
- The CBO trial test will have no effect on any N-400 filed by the trial participant.
- The external CBO trial test will not take place in field offices.

The Current Speaking Test



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Application for Naturalization
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS
Form N-400
OMB No. 1615-0052
Expires 11/30/2025

For USCIS Use Only	Date Stamp	Receipt	Action Block
Remarks			

► **START HERE - Type or print in black ink.** Type or print "N/A" if an item is not applicable or the answer is none, unless otherwise indicated. Failure to answer all of the questions may delay U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) processing your Form N-400. **NOTE: You must complete Parts 1 - 15.**

If your biological or legal adoptive mother or father is a U.S. citizen by birth, or was naturalized before you reached your 18th birthday, you may already be a U.S. citizen. Before you consider filing this application, please visit the USCIS Website at www.uscis.gov for more information on this topic and to review the instructions for Form N-600, Application for Certificate of Citizenship, and Form N-600K, Application for Citizenship and Issuance of Certificate Under Section 322.

NOTE: Are either of your parents a United States citizen? If you answer "Yes," then complete **Part 6. Information About Your Parents** as part of this application. If you answer "No," then skip **Part 6.** and go to **Part 7. Biographic Information.**

Part 1. Information About Your Eligibility (Select only one box or your Form N-400 may be delayed)

Enter Your 9 Digit A-Number:

► A-

1. You are at least 18 years of age **and**:
 - A. Have been a lawful permanent resident of the United States for at least 5 years.
 - B. Have been a lawful permanent resident of the United States for at least 3 years. In addition, you have been married to and living with the same U.S. citizen spouse for the last 3 years, **and** your spouse has been a U.S. citizen for the last 3 years at the time you filed your Form N-400.
 - C. Are a lawful permanent resident of the United States **and** you are the spouse of a U.S. citizen **and** your U.S. citizen spouse is regularly engaged in specified employment abroad. (See the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) section 319(b).) If your residential address is outside the United States and you are filing under Section 319(b), select the USCIS Field Office from the list below where you would like to have your naturalization interview:

The current speaking test is based on the review of the Form N-400, *Application for Naturalization.*



USCIS will conduct a trial test of a standardized speaking test that uses images to prompt test takers to describe the picture using simple words and phrases.



Images are used commonly in ESL assessments.
Some examples include:

- BEST Plus 2.0
- TOEIC Bridge





The images for the speaking trial test will come from everyday topics. Examples of some topics include:

- Daily Routines
- Weather
- Food
- Shopping
- School





The current speaking test is based on the review of the Form N-400 during the eligibility interview.





Sample draft trial speaking test item

- Teacher gives instructions to volunteer trial test taker.
- Sample prompt on screen: “Tell me about this picture.”





Scoring the trial speaking test

The speaking trial test will be scored based on responses containing:

- Relevant content vocabulary
- Simple words and phrases

This is only a trial test. There is no passing or failing score for the speaking trial test.



National Reporting System (NRS) ESL Level 3

The speaking trial test will align to the National Reporting System (NRS) English as a Second Language (ESL) Level 3 – High Beginner (in accordance with statutory requirement for ordinary usage - INA 312, 8 CFR 312).



National Reporting System (NRS) ESL Level 3

- Level 1 Beginner ESL Literacy
- Level 2 Low Beginner ESL
- Level 3 High Beginner ESL ←
- Level 4 Low Intermediate ESL
- Level 5 High Intermediate ESL
- Level 6 Advanced ESL



National Reporting System (NRS) ESL Level 3

“Individual can understand common words, simple phrases, and sentences containing familiar vocabulary, spoken slowly with some repetition. Individual can respond to simple questions about personal everyday activities, and can express immediate needs, using simple learned phrases or short sentences. Shows limited control of grammar.”

Source: Center for Applied Linguistics



USCIS will conduct a trial test of a written multiple-choice civics test.





Current Oral Question #48 and Answer

There are four amendments to the Constitution about who can vote. Describe one of them.

- Citizens eighteen (18) and older (can vote).
- You don't have to pay (a poll tax) to vote.
- Any citizen can vote. (Women and men can vote.)
- A male citizen of any race (can vote).



Multiple-choice tests are used commonly in civics assessments.
Some examples include:

- CASAS Government and History for Citizenship Test
- Citizenship tests in Australia, U.K., Canada, Norway, and Denmark





Multiple-Choice Civics Trial Test Structure and Administration

- The civics trial test questions will use a multiple-choice format.
- USCIS is creating a bank of multiple-choice trial test questions.
- Trial test takers will answer 10 randomly selected from the test bank of multiple-choice civics test trial test questions.
- The multiple-choice civics trial test ends when the test taker answers all 10 randomly selected questions.



Multiple-Choice Civics Trial Test Structure and Administration

- One trial test question will appear on the screen at a time.
- Trial test takers will select their answer choice on the screen and click a button that will move the screen to the next question.
- This is only a trial test. There is no passing or failing score on the multiple-choice civics trial test and the trial test will have no impact on any N-400 filed by the trial participant.



Example of current oral civics test item

Current Question #48

There are four amendments to the Constitution about who can vote. Describe one of them.

- Citizens eighteen (18) and older (can vote).
- You don't have to pay (a poll tax) to vote.
- Any citizen can vote. (Women and men can vote).
- A male citizen of any race (can vote).



Each trial test question has one correct answer choice.

The correct answer choice will be clearly identifiable from the incorrect answer choices.

Sample Draft Civics Test Item:

How old do citizens have to be to vote in federal elections?

- ***Eighteen (18) and older***
- *Thirteen (13)*
- *Twenty-seven (27)*



- The correct and incorrect answer choices assigned to each trial test question will be the same for every trial test taker.
- The order of the answer choices will be randomly sequenced for each administration of the trial test.

What is the supreme law of the land?

• **The Constitution**

- ↑
↓
- o The Emancipation Proclamation
 - o The Judicial Branch

What is the supreme law of the land?

↑
↓

- o The Emancipation Proclamation

• **The Constitution**

- o The Judicial Branch



- There will be **NO** answer choices that include options like “All of the above,” “None of the above,” “Answer A and C,” etc.
- There will be **NO** answer choices that will require trial test takers to choose between multiple answer choices that could be correct.
- The answer choices assigned to each trial test question will not be released to the CBOs as part of the trial test.



The contract to facilitate the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) has been awarded to TESOL.

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) will consist of 10 external subject matter experts (SMEs) selected by the contractor.

- 5 SMEs from the field of Adult English as a Second Language (ESL), second language acquisition, and assessment design.
- 5 SMEs from the field of U.S. government and civics, American history, and assessment design.



The TAG will review and provide recommendations on the:

- Content, structure, and language level of the speaking and multiple-choice trial tests.
- Scoring rubrics and materials for the CBOs and trial test administrators.
- Educational resources for both the speaking and multiple-choice civics trial test.



- Community-based organizations will receive speaking trial test educational resources to use in their classes with volunteer trial test takers.
- Educational resources for the speaking trial test include:
 - Practice speaking test prompts.
 - Practice speaking test images on each topic.



- Educational resources for the multiple-choice civics trial test include:
 - The full bank of multiple-choice civics trial test questions and correct answer choices.
 - Civics and history handouts that outline all of the content on the multiple-choice civics trial test.





Questions and Comments



- Naturalization Test Redesign Development 2022
<https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship-resource-center/find-study-materials-and-resources/naturalization-test-redesign-development-2022-0>
- Federal Register Notice
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/12/15/2022-27178/trial-testing-of-redesigned-naturalization-test-for-naturalization-applications>



USCIS welcomes feedback throughout the process at a dedicated mailbox: natzredesign22@uscis.dhs.gov

- After the TAG report is published
- From educators participating in the CBO trial test
- On Federal Register Notices with any decisions the agency makes
- After the Field Office trial tests





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Contact Us

Website: www.dhs.gov/cisombudsman

Phone: 1-855-882-8100 (toll free) or 1-202-357-8100

Email: cisombudsman@hq.dhs.gov or cisombudsman.publicaffairs@hq.dhs.gov

Social Media: www.facebook.com/cisombudsman

<https://twitter.com/cisombudsman>

www.linkedin.com/company/cisombudsman

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Survey Questions

- Do you provide citizenship education and test preparation? If so, for how many students per year?
- What do you think are the biggest barriers to meeting the educational requirements for naturalization?
- Do you think it would be beneficial to applicants to be able to take the naturalization test in a neutral setting before the interview?
- Do you believe that it would be appropriate to test English speaking ability with a standardized test, where applicants know exactly what to study and how to prepare, rather than during an interview without standard questions?
- What other ways have you seen speaking and civics knowledge being assessed?
- Do you believe USCIS should permit applicants to bring interpreters to their interview for naturalization?
- Send responses to: natzredesign22@uscis.dhs.gov

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