

BECOMING
A CITIZEN**Essential Question**

What is a citizen?

Guiding Questions

1. How does a person become a citizen of the United States?
2. In what ways can a foreign person enter the United States?

Terms to Know**government**

the ruling authority for a group of people

citizen

a person who is loyal to a government and is protected by that government

civics

the study of the rights and duties of citizens

citizenship

the rights and duties of citizens

naturalization

a legal process to become a citizen

alien

a person who lives in a country in which he or she was not born

refugee

a person who flees his or her country to escape danger

It Matters Because*In the United States there are two ways to become a citizen.*

What does citizenship mean to you?

What Do You Know?

Directions: In the first column, circle "True" if you think the statement is true and "False" if you think it is false based on what you know before you read the lesson. After this lesson, complete the last column.

Before the Lesson			After the Lesson	
True	False		True	False
		Only people born in the United States are citizens.		
		The government establishes rules for citizenship.		
		A naturalized citizen has the same rights as other citizens.		
		A person can be a citizen of two countries.		
		You do not become a citizen until you are 18 years old.		

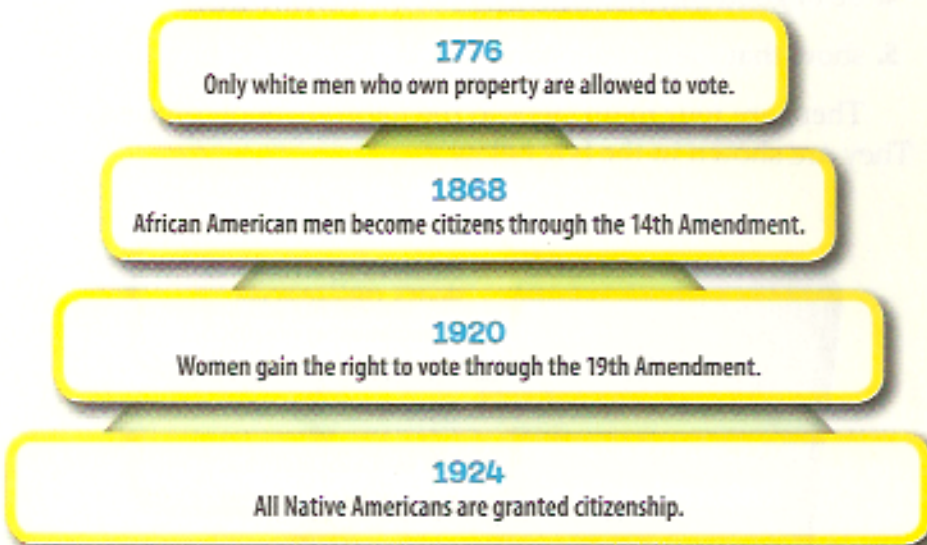
What Is Civics?

Government is the ruling power for a group of people. A **citizen** is a person who is loyal to a government and is protected by that government. The study of the rights and duties of citizens is called **civics**. For government to work well, citizens must understand their rights and duties.

The idea of citizenship is very old. **Citizenship** is the rights and duties of citizens. It began in ancient Greece and Rome. At that time, citizenship was only for men who owned property. Their duties included paying taxes and serving in the armed forces.

In the 1700s, new ideas arose about citizenship and government. Citizenship came to mean “belonging to a nation.” People came to believe that governments got their power from the people. This idea is known as “consent of the governed.”

The Growth of American Citizenship



Today citizenship in the United States is not based on how much land a person owns. It is also not based on gender, race, or religion. Instead it is based on birth. People who are citizens because they were born in the United States or have parents who were born in the United States are called natural-born citizens.

A person is an American citizen if he or she was born in any one of these places:

- in any of the 50 states or in the District of Columbia
- in an American territory
- on a U.S. military base in another country

Even if a person's parents are not citizens of the United States, he or she is still a citizen if born on American soil.

Show Your Skill

- 1. Interpret Diagrams** How did the concept of citizenship change in 1886?

Mark the Text

- 2.** Circle the phrase in the text that explains what citizenship is based on today.

Think Critically

- 3. Infer** Is every baby born in Florida an American citizen? Explain.

Think Critically

4. **Explain** What is dual citizenship?

Show Your Skill

5. **Interpret Information** What is an oath? How is it related to the naturalization process?

Take the Challenge

6. Research some of the practice questions on the citizenship exam. Choose three practice questions and see if other members of your class can answer the questions.

A person who is born in another country can be an American citizen if

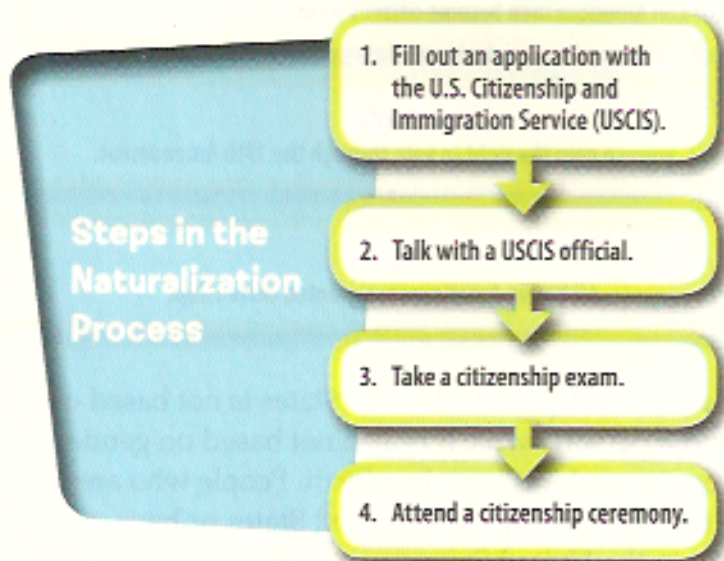
1. both parents are U.S. citizens, or if
2. one parent is a U.S. citizen who has lived in the United States.

A person can also be a citizen of both the United States and another country. This is known as dual citizenship.

A person can still become an American citizen even if he or she is not a natural-born citizen. To do so, he or she must complete the **naturalization** process. Naturalization is a legal process to become a citizen. Immigrants who want to become citizens must meet five requirements. They must

1. be at least 18 years old,
2. have been a legal permanent resident for five years,
3. be able to read, write, and speak English,
4. be of good moral character, and
5. show that they understand U.S. civics.

There are four main steps to the naturalization process. They are shown in the box below.



When the applicant meets with a USCIS official, the official makes sure the person meets all the requirements. The exam tests whether the applicant can read, write, and speak English. It also asks questions about U.S. history and government. At the citizenship ceremony, applicants swear their loyalty to the United States. They also promise to obey the Constitution and the laws. After taking this oath and signing a paper, they are citizens.

A person can lose his or her citizenship. This can happen in three ways.

- 1. Expatriation** If a person gives allegiance to another country, such as by becoming a naturalized citizen of another country.
- 2. Denaturalization** If a person is found to have lied on his or her citizenship application, he or she loses citizenship and can be deported. To be deported is to be sent out of the country.
- 3. Being convicted of certain crimes** If a person is convicted of treason, rebelling against the government, or using violence to try to overthrow the government, he or she can lose citizenship.

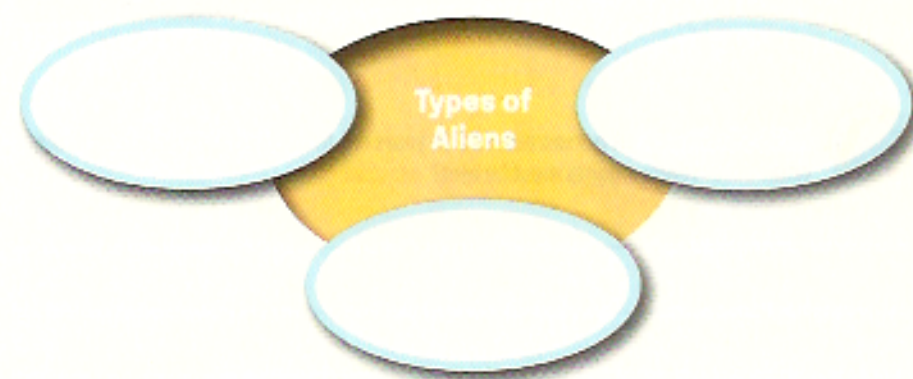
Only the federal government can grant citizenship or take it away. The states can deny some privileges of citizenship. They can prevent a person from voting, for example. But states cannot take away citizenship itself.

Foreign-Born Residents

Many people who live in the United States are not citizens. People who were born in another country and who have not been naturalized are called **aliens**. There are three kinds of aliens: legal aliens, refugees, and illegal aliens.

Legal aliens can be either resident aliens or nonresident aliens. A resident alien is a person who lives permanently in the United States. They may stay as long as they wish. A nonresident alien is a person who is planning to stay in this country for only a certain length of time. A reporter from Mexico who is covering a U.S. election would be a nonresident alien.

Legal aliens have some rights. They can hold jobs, own property, and attend public schools. They have some duties, such as paying taxes. But they do not have the right to vote or hold public office. They also cannot work in government jobs or serve on juries.



Think Critically

- 7. Conclude** Why do you think only the national government can take away someone's citizenship?

Show Your Skill

- 8. Compare and Contrast**

What is the difference between a resident alien and a nonresident alien? How are they related?

Mark the Text

- 9. Graphic Organizer** Complete the graphic organizer to show the types of aliens in the United States.

Show Your Skill

- 10. Predict Outcomes** Suppose an illegal alien feels that he or she needs a job that pays a higher wage. What can he or she do?

Think Critically

- 11. Contrast** How do the rights of legal aliens differ from those of U.S. citizens?

A **refugee** is a person who leaves his or her country to escape danger, such as an earthquake or a war. Our government protects some refugees.

The United States allows only about one million people to enter the country each year. Top priority goes to relatives of U.S. citizens and people with job skills that we need in the United States. About another million people enter or stay in the country illegally each year. Some come as visitors and then never leave. Others secretly cross the borders from Canada or Mexico.

Close to 12 million people live in the United States illegally today. Most came in search of a better life. But living as an illegal alien is hard. It is against the law to hire illegal aliens, so most end up working for low pay and without benefits. They live in fear that they will be discovered and sent out of the country.



These refugees are trying to escape a repressive government in Haiti. The Coast Guard interviews some of the refugees off the coast of Ft. Lauderdale.



NGSSS Check A person must be 18 years old to become a naturalized citizen. What other requirements must be met? **SS.7.C.2.1**
