Who Is a Citizen?

Read how U.S. law determines citizenship.

USG.5.1 "Define the legal meaning of citizenship in the United States and identify the requirements for citizenship in the United States."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that defines citizenship, circle the ways a person can be a citizen at birth, and number the requirements an adult may need to meet for naturalization. Use your marks to distinguish citizenship from permission to live in the United States.

More Than a Place to Live

1. At a courthouse ceremony, a judge welcomes new United States citizens. Citizenship is a legal status: a person is recognized as a member of the United States under its laws. Citizens may apply for a U.S. passport and, if they meet voting rules, vote in federal elections. They also owe duties such as obeying laws. A permanent resident may live and work in the country without being a citizen. A visa or a driver's license does not grant citizenship either. The key question is not where someone feels at home, but whether the law recognizes that person as a citizen.

2. Some people are citizens at birth, without applying for naturalization. The Fourteenth Amendment makes a person born in the United States and subject to its jurisdiction a citizen. For example, a baby born in Ohio to parents who are not citizens is generally a citizen at birth. A child born outside the United States to a U.S. citizen parent may also be a citizen at birth if the legal conditions for transmitting citizenship are met. Those conditions can depend on the parent's time spent in the United States. Birthplace alone does not answer every case: a child born here to a foreign diplomat is generally not a citizen at birth.

3. Other people become citizens through naturalization. Most adult applicants must be at least 18 and have held lawful permanent resident status for five years. Some spouses of U.S. citizens can apply after three years if they meet additional conditions. Applicants generally must meet continuous residence and physical presence rules, show good moral character, and demonstrate basic English and knowledge of U.S. government and history, with some legal exceptions. To complete naturalization, they take an oath of allegiance. Submitting an application or receiving a green card alone does not make a person a citizen. Eligibility is a step toward citizenship, not the final legal status.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does having a driver's license and permission to live in the United States not necessarily make someone a citizen?

2. A baby is born in Nevada to parents visiting from another country. Neither parent is a diplomat. Is the baby generally a citizen at birth? Explain.

3. Does having one U.S. citizen parent always prove that a child born outside the United States is a citizen at birth? Explain.

4. An adult has been a lawful permanent resident for five years. Name two other naturalization requirements from the passage and the step that completes naturalization.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent two neighbors: one is a citizen at birth, and the other is an adult permanent resident who hopes to naturalize. In four or five sentences, explain how each person's citizenship status is determined, include at least two naturalization requirements, and identify the final step.

ANSWER KEY

Who Is a Citizen?

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.5.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that defines citizenship, circle the ways a person can be a citizen at birth, and number the requirements an adult may need to meet for naturalization. Use your marks to distinguish citizenship from permission to live in the United States. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does having a driver's license and permission to live in the United States not necessarily make someone a citizen?	**Citizenship means being legally recognized as a member of the United States. A driver's license and permission to live here do not grant that status.**
2	A baby is born in Nevada to parents visiting from another country. Neither parent is a diplomat. Is the baby generally a citizen at birth? Explain.	**Yes. A person born in the United States and subject to its jurisdiction is a citizen at birth.**
3	Does having one U.S. citizen parent always prove that a child born outside the United States is a citizen at birth? Explain.	**No. The legal conditions for passing citizenship to a child born abroad must be met. They can depend on the parent's time spent in the United States.**
4	An adult has been a lawful permanent resident for five years. Name two other naturalization requirements from the passage and the step that completes naturalization.	**For example, the applicant must generally show good moral character and demonstrate basic English. Taking the oath of allegiance completes naturalization.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Nia was born in the United States and is subject to its jurisdiction, so she is a citizen at birth. Her neighbor Luis is a permanent resident, but that status alone does not make him a citizen. To naturalize, he generally needs to meet residence rules and show good moral character. He must also demonstrate basic English and knowledge of U.S. government and history, unless an exception applies. He completes naturalization by taking the oath of allegiance.

For question 4, accept any two applicable requirements named in the passage, along with the oath. For the open task, accept legally sound invented situations that distinguish citizenship at birth from permanent residence and naturalization.