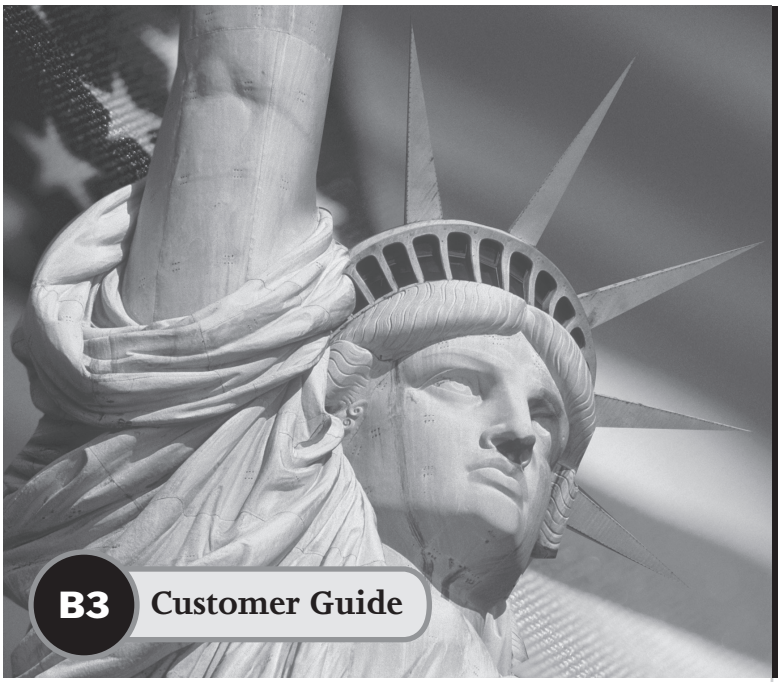

I Am a Permanent Resident

How Do I...
Apply for U.S. Citizenship?

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

M-565 (August 2008)

U.S. citizenship provides many rights, but also involves many responsibilities. Thus, the decision to become a U.S. citizen through naturalization is important. In most cases, a person who wants to naturalize must first be a permanent resident. By becoming a U.S. citizen, you gain many rights that permanent residents or others do not have, including the right to vote. To be eligible for naturalization, you must first meet certain requirements set by U.S. law.

What are the basic requirements to apply for naturalization?

Generally, to be eligible for naturalization you must:

- Be age 18 or older;
- Be a permanent resident for a certain amount of time (usually 5 years but less for some individuals);
- Be a person of good moral character;
- Have a basic knowledge of U.S. history and government;
- Have a period of continuous residence and physical presence in the United States; and
- Be able to read, write, and speak basic English. There are exceptions to this rule for someone who:
  - Is 55 years old and has been a permanent resident for at least 15 years; or
  - Is 50 years old and has been a permanent resident for at least 20 years; or
  - Has a permanent physical or mental impairment that makes the individual unable to fulfill these requirements.

When can I apply for naturalization?

You may be able to apply for naturalization if you are at least 18 years of age and have been a permanent resident of the United States:

- For at least 5 years; or
- For at least 3 years during which time you have been, and continue to be, married to and living in a marriage relationship with your U.S. citizen spouse; or
- While currently serving honorably in the U.S. military, with at least 1 year of service, and you apply for citizenship while in the military, or within 6 months of discharge.

Certain spouses of U.S. citizens, and those who served in the U.S. military during a past war or are serving currently in combat may be able to file for naturalization sooner than noted above.

How do I apply for naturalization?

To apply for naturalization, file a **Form N-400**, *Application for Naturalization*.

For more information on the naturalization process, please see our manual, **M-476**, *A Guide to Naturalization*.

If you are in the military and are interested in becoming a U.S. citizen, please see our manual, **M-599**, *Naturalization Information for Military Personnel*.

USCIS has educational materials and resources to help you prepare for the English and U.S. history and government (civics) tests. At **www.uscis.gov**, you can find information on how to find English classes in your area, and you can test yourself on the civics questions you may be asked.

For more information about the naturalization process and requirements, please visit our website, or call Customer Service at **1-800-375-5283**. The N-400, M-476, and M-599 forms are all available on our website.

Key Information

Key USCIS forms referenced in this guide	Form #
Application for Naturalization	N-400
A Guide to Naturalization	M-476
Naturalization Information for Military Personnel	M-599

USCIS

- **On the Internet at: www.uscis.gov**

For more copies of this guide, or information about other citizenship and immigration services, please visit our website. You can also download forms, e-file some applications, check the status of an application, and more. It's a great place to start!

If you don't have Internet access at home or work, try your local library. If you cannot find what you need, please call Customer Service.

- **Customer Service: 1-800-375-5283**
- Hearing Impaired TDD Customer Service: 1-800-767-1833

Other U.S. Government Services–Click or Call		
General Information	www.usagov.gov	1-800-333-4636
New Immigrants	www.welcometoUSA.gov	
U.S. Dept. of State	www.state.gov	1-202-647-6575

Disclaimer: This guide provides basic information to help you become generally familiar with our rules and procedures. For more information, or the law and regulations, please visit our website. Immigration law can be complex, and it is impossible to describe every aspect of every process. You may wish to be represented by a licensed attorney or by a nonprofit agency accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals.