

7th Grade Civics Study Guide – Topic 1 – Citizenship

SS.7.C.2.1: Define the term "citizen," and identify legal means of becoming a United States citizen.

Citizen: a native or naturalized member of a state or nation who owes allegiance to its government and is entitled to its protection. A citizen is a legally recognized and protected member of a country. In the United States, citizens have both obligations and responsibilities. Which Amendment defined citizenship? The 14th Amendment

You can become an U.S. citizen **by birth**, OR through a process called "**naturalization**".

Two ways to become a **natural born** citizen: **Law of Soil** – born on US soil - **Law of Blood** – born to US citizens

Naturalization: A process where you show Immigration – the government agency that regulates questions of citizenship -- that you meet certain legal requirements for becoming a U.S. citizen is called "naturalization."

Five "qualifications" for becoming a naturalized citizen:

- Must be 18 years old
- Be a lawful permanent resident
- Have lived in the US for five years
- Be of "good moral character."
- Know basic English / pass a civics test

Six steps to becoming a naturalized citizen:

1. Live in the US for five years
2. Fill out an application
3. Fingerprint / background check
4. Interview
5. pass the Civics & English test
6. Take the Oath of Allegiance

If a person meets all the naturalization requirements, they can apply for naturalization. Immigration will send out an interview notice several months after the naturalization application is filed. During the interview, Immigration will go over the application to make sure the citizenship answers are correct. English skills and an understanding of U.S. history and government are tested. If either the English or U.S. history or government tests are failed, a second interview will be scheduled 3 months later to allow more time to study. If the second interview is failed, citizenship will be denied. Filing again is acceptable, but fees will need to be paid once again. If the tests are passed during the first or second interview, Immigration will set an appointment to be "sworn in" as a U.S. citizen. This appointment might take several months, but once a person is sworn in, they are a citizen of the United States.

SS.7.C.2.2: Evaluate the obligations citizens have to obey laws, pay taxes, defend the nation, and serve on juries

The United States government recognizes a citizen as a legal member of the nation who is either born or naturalized in the United States. Being a U.S. citizen means that there are both obligations and responsibilities that must be met, in order to maintain representative democracy and the proper role of government. In a democracy, the people actively participate in government and make decisions to promote the common good. If citizens did not fulfill their obligations and responsibilities, the United States would be a very different place.

An **obligation** is an action that a citizen is required to fulfill by law.

A **responsibility** is an action that a citizen should take for the sake of the common good.

Each citizen in the United States has certain obligations and responsibilities. Each citizen has certain basic obligations and responsibilities. These relate to active participation in society and government.

Both the government and citizens are responsible for protecting the rights of individuals and for promoting the common good (benefits to the community/people). Below are examples of obligations and responsibilities:

Obligations of Citizens

An action that is required by law

- Obeying laws
- Paying taxes
- Defending the nation
- Registering for selective service
- Serving on juries

Responsibilities of Citizens

An action that benefits the community/people

- Voting
- Attending civic meetings
- Petitioning the government
- Running for office
- Performing community service

When citizens fulfill their obligations to the government they are making the United States a safer and better place to live. By following the law and not committing crimes, communities are less dangerous places. By paying taxes, citizens are ensuring that the government can afford to provide services that benefit the general public. By choosing to defend the nation, citizens are making sure that those who live in the United States are protected against enemies. And finally, by serving on juries, citizens are making sure that the right to a trial by jury is protected. All of these examples demonstrate how citizens, by fulfilling their obligations, can protect and promote the common good. See the chart below for more examples:

Citizen Obligation

- Obeying the laws • Paying taxes • Jury duty • Defending the nation

How the Obligation Relates to the Common Good

- Obeying laws, keeps order so that people are safe
- Taxes pay for large programs that benefit everyone (roads, schools and libraries, among others)
- By participating in jury duty, one is protecting the Constitutional right to be tried by one's peers.
- Defending the nation benefits the entire country and protects the nation.

Responsibilities of a Citizen

- Voting • Attending civic meetings • Petitioning the Government • Community service

Registering to vote, attending civic meetings, joining interest groups, joining a political party, running for office, and petitioning the government are all responsibilities.

How the Responsibility Relates to the Common Good

- Voting relates to the common good because voting is one way for citizen views to be heard by representatives of the people.
- By attending civic meetings, one is able to have one's voice heard by public officials.
- Petitioning the government allows one to voice one's opinion to the government.
- Community service helps the common good. It benefits everyone when a citizen sees a need in their community and takes an extra step to find the solution.

Active participation happens when a citizen is actively participating to help maintain or promote the common good.