

**QUESTION:** How much English must I know before I can apply for naturalization?

**ANSWER:** To become a U.S. citizen, you must be able to read, write, speak, and understand simple English. Until the new exam becomes mandatory on October 1, 2009, you can probably pass the English-language test if you can answer the questions on the naturalization application and write a simple sentence, such as “I like my job.”

You are exempt from the English-language requirement if you are at least 50, with 20 or more years permanent residence, or you are at least 55, with 15 or more years permanent residence.

Also exempt are applicants with a mental or physical disability that prevents them from learning or reading, writing or speaking English.

LEGAL NOTICE: Information on this page was provided by **Allan Wernick**, lawyer and Chairman of the City of New York’s Citizenship and Immigration Project. He is also the author of “U.S. Immigration and Citizenship – Your Complete Guide, Revised 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.”

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