

Teaching to the Test: A Practical Guide to Preparation for the Citizenship Interview

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Agenda

1. About The ILC and Background
2. Goals of the Presentation
3. Citizenship Interview Basics
4. General and Specific Methodologies
5. Five Keys to Success

The Immigrant Learning Center (The ILC)

1992

The ILC is started through the vision of Founder and CEO Diane Portnoy (right) to provide free English classes for foreign-born adults – more than 11,500 to date.



2003

The ILC Public Education Institute is established to counter anti-immigrant sentiment.

The Institute for Immigration Research at George Mason University

2012

Launched the [Institute for Immigration Research](#) at George Mason University



Background

- Citizenship instructor at The ILC for 5 1/2 years
- Teach full classes, small groups, and individual students
- Work onsite and remotely
- Create targeted materials
- Conduct professional workshops

My Goals for the Presentation

- Demystify the **entire** process
- Explain what I mean by the “entire process” and “teaching to the test”
- Explore techniques and materials to facilitate that approach

Attendee Goals for the Presentation

- Suggestions for teaching **test-taking strategies**
- **Prioritizing** most important information to master
- How to make the lessons **engaging** and not repetitive, especially in an **online** class
- Level of **fluency** needed to pass interview
- Major **barriers**, best study strategies
- Teaching to the test
- How to better prepare beginners and intermediate English speakers for the test
- Learn more about new updates about the citizenship exams and interview
- Focus on the interview, dictation
- Handling **vocabulary** in the interview questions and **concepts** in beginner speaker
- Create a program with **relevant materials** for citizenship interview preparation
- Building **vocab** for written and speaking test. Games and activities. (We use Susan Weintraub's book) (**Lynne?**)
- Effective study skills/tools for students
- **Best practices** for working with students
- Status and disclosure of circumstances (eg. **talking about illegality?**)

Citizenship Interview Basics

The Citizenship Interview consists of the following four components:

1. **Civics:** Must answer six questions correctly from a maximum of 10
2. **Reading:** Must read one sentence correctly from a maximum of three
3. **Writing:** Must write one sentence correctly from a maximum of three
4. **Application:** Must answer questions from the Personal and Part 12 Sections of the N-400 Citizenship Application

General Program Methodology

- Confirm the student's immigration status (green card date, application)
- Assess students for their English fluency and relevant knowledge
- Provide instruction in the key interview areas based on that assessment
- Teach students to apply what they have learned in practice interviews

Specific Program Methodology: Five Keys to Success

1. Simulate and practice the entire interview
2. Engage in "Necessary Overkill"
3. Tailor the Interview to the student
4. Conduct a series of mock interviews
5. Follow-up

1. Simulate and practice the entire interview

- ✓ **Before:** Logistics, documents, masks, virtual walk-through, lawyer

Required Documents

Appointment letter

Green card

Passport

ID (if available)

Optional Documents

Marriage certificate

Divorce and/or death certificate(s)

Children's birth certificate(s)

Spouse's citizenship certificate

1. Simulate and practice the entire interview

- ✓ **During:** Oath, green card, passport, photo, fingerprints, civics, reading, writing, application info

Techniques

Don't lie, don't guess

Left/right + index finger

Pronouns (he/she)

History lessons

Question words (when vs. where vs. how long)

Listen-Think-Speak

Scramble civics, practice all 100

Reading and writing: most frequent sentences

Engagement: maps, photos, multiples (states, holidays), Jeopardy-style, humor

1. Simulate and practice the entire interview

- ✓ **After:** Review personal info, results form, swearing-in

1. Simulate and practice the entire interview
- 2. Engage in "Necessary Overkill"**

2. Engage in "Necessary Overkill"

- ✓ Ask more questions and meanings than the officer will
- ✓ Part 12 questions: "No" and "Yes"

1. Simulate and practice the entire interview
2. Engage in "Necessary Overkill"
- 3. Tailor the interview to the student**

3. Tailor the interview to the student

- ✓ Review the application
- ✓ Identify vulnerable points
- ✓ Prepare the student to answer relevant personal questions

3. Tailor the interview to the student

Key Application Areas: Personal

Basis: 5 vs. 3 years

Exemption: N-648

Dates and names

Work and school

Travel history: cumulative, long trips (documentation)

$$365 \times 5 = 1,825 / 2 = 912.5$$

$$365 \times 3 = 1,095 / 2 = 547.5$$

180 Days

Marriage(s) for both applicant and spouse

Children

3. Tailor the interview to the student

Key Application Areas: Part 12

“Yes” to “No” questions

“No” to “Yes” Questions

Taxes

Organizations

Military background

Arrested/Cited/Detained: definitions

Meanings

It is important to at least hear and recognize the questions

1. Simulate and practice the entire interview
2. Engage in "Necessary Overkill"
3. Tailor the Interview to the student
- 4. Conduct a series of mock interviews**

4. Conduct a series of mock interviews

- ✓ Teaching mode
- ✓ Interview mode
- ✓ Interview mode (with masks?)

1. Simulate and practice the entire interview
2. Engage in "Necessary Overkill"
3. Tailor the Interview to the Student
4. Conduct a series of mock interviews

5. Follow-up

5. Follow-up

- ✓ Debrief student
- ✓ Write comprehensive summary
- ✓ Invite student to return to class to describe the interview
- ✓ Modify script, if necessary
- ✓ “Easy” vs “Hard”

6. Practice Interview

Saloua from Morocco:

- Passed June 1
- Certificate September 8

More Resources

USCIS Citizenship Practice Test, Interview and Application Resources
on The ILC's Educator Resource Hub: <https://www.ilctr.org/uscis-citizenship-application-practice-test-and-interview/>

- Applying for Citizenship videos
- Preparing for the Civics Exam videos
- Study Table for the Civics Portion of the U.S. Naturalization Test
- And more!

More Resources and Forms

Web Sites

- ILC (ilctr.org)
- Project Citizenship (projectcitizenship.org)
- MIRA (miracoalition.org)
- USCIS (uscis.gov)

Forms

- N-400: Citizenship Application
- N-648: Request for Medical Waiver
- N-600: Citizenship Application for Minor Children

**Thank
you!**

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