



What Every Citizen Should Know

Part of becoming a *Sworn-Again American* is recognizing that citizenship isn't a thing you get; it's a life you live. What does it mean to live like a citizen?

What follows is a Who/What/When/Where/Why/How framework for the content of great citizenship. Some of these questions are for you and your family to figure out. Some you can answer by looking at the sample questions and answers for the **US Citizenship Exam** given to naturalizing immigrants. Some might require that you search through great resource books like *The American Bible* (a collection of classic civic texts, edited by Stephen Prothero), *The Patriot's Handbook* (Caroline Kennedy, editor) and *What So Proudly We Hail*, (Leon and Amy Kass, editors). Still other questions may require that you simply step out, participate, and see what happens.

Try. Show up. And show what it means to be a citizen.

Who

- Who are your neighbors?
- Who represents you in local, state, and national government?
- Who do you consider a civic contributor?
- Who formed your own sense of being American?

What

- What are the core texts of civic scripture we Americans have inherited? (Read *The American Bible*, a collection of classic civic texts, edited by Stephen Prothero)
- What are the basic elements of our system of self-government? (Read the **US Citizenship Exam** for naturalizing immigrant)
- What does the Preamble to the Constitution say?

When

- When were the major events that shaped American history, from the Revolution and the Civil War to the New Deal and Civil Rights Movement?
- When did your or your ancestors arrive in America?
- When did (or will) your family attain citizenship?

Where

- Where can you find sources of news, information, and opinion that you might disagree with?
- Where in your community can a person serve and volunteer?
- Where is your family from?

Why

- Why do we vote for representatives in Congress, rather than vote directly on national issues?
- Why do we have two major political parties?
- Why are the first ten amendments to the Constitution called the Bill of Rights?
- Why is there no Bill of Responsibilities?

How

- How to read, write, and speak on public issues—in public settings
- How to petition your government
- How to influence the making of laws
- How to assemble and organize others effectively
- How to listen
- How to debate civilly
- How to find something in common with someone you don't appear to have anything in common with