



Citizenship Interview Test

Scoring Guidelines

July 2021 version

This oral assessment measures communication of meaning in a citizenship interview context. The scoring focuses on an examinee’s ability to comprehend questions, and the clarity and completeness of an examinee’s response. It does not address other features of an examinee’s speaking ability. Rely on the rubric, scoring guidelines and anchors, not on personal criteria for scoring.

SCORING GUIDELINES	
I. CLARITY	
1. CLARITY OF ENTIRE RESPONSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive a score of 2, the entire message must be clear. It should be easily understandable, requiring no effort or time to construe meaning. There should be no possibility for debate about meaning.
2. ACCORDING TO THE “AVERAGE AMERICAN”, NOT A TRAINED ESL PROFESSIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examiners should judge clarity as an “average, un-trained American” would, not as a teacher.
3. UNNECESSARY ELABORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The entire response should be scored for clarity, not just the pertinent parts. It’s acceptable for a 2 if the examinee elaborates beyond the original question.
4. USE OF NATIVE LANGUAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the examinee uses even one word of the native language, the response cannot receive a score of 2. Americanized foreign words are acceptable (e.g., taco, Los Angeles, pierogi, dim sum) for a score of 2 even if pronounced as in the foreign language.
5. WRONG PRONOUN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the examinee uses the wrong pronoun, the response cannot receive a score of 2, unless the examinee immediately makes a correction.
6. UNCLEAR PHRASES, INCORRECT WORD CHOICE, OR GRAMMAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the meaning of even part of the examinee’s response is unclear, it cannot receive a score of 2. Unclear phrases might be caused by repetition of words, awkward translations or by dropping important words. Do not mark down if grammatical or word choice errors do not interfere with clarity.

7. MISPRONUNCIATION AND INAUDIBLE RESPONSES

- Score 0 if the examinee's accent interferes greatly with meaning (unintelligible).
- Score 1 if the accent requires some inference.
- If the examinee's response is inaudible, the examiner should say, "I'm sorry. I can't hear you. Please say that again."
 - Score 0 if the examinee is still inaudible or mostly incomprehensible after one repetition.
 - Score 1 if the response still requires inference.

8. FALSE STARTS

- It is natural for speakers to sometimes make false starts, stutter, or mumble softly while thinking before they form a real response.
- Do not count off unless the false start makes the response unclear.

9. PLAUSIBLE RESPONSES

- Do not mark down if an answer seems improbable, but is plausible.
- Do not mark down if a job or machine name or acronym is stated clearly and is plausible, whether or not it is familiar to the examiner.

10. TENTATIVE RESPONSES

- Sometimes an examinee answers a question with a response that sounds like a question. As long as the answer makes sense, do not mark down. Score on completeness and clarity.

II. COMPLETENESS

1. ONE-WORD RESPONSES

- One-word or brief responses are acceptable to score as 2 if they fulfill the rubric conditions for a 2.

Example: "How did you learn English?" "School."

2. PARTIAL RESPONSES

- Score 2 if all parts of the question are clearly addressed.
- Score 1 if only part of the question is clearly addressed.

3. "REPEATS BACK" RESPONSES

- This is the type of response where the learner tries to answer the question using the same terms as the question given. When the examinee gives some bit of additional information, count as "partial response" and score 1.
- If no other words are used or information given, score 0.
 - Score 1 as "partial response" when the examinee gives some additional bit of information.
 - Score 0 if no other words are used or information given.

Q: What does it mean to owe taxes?

Example: A: It means to owe taxes, and you know, money. (score 1)

III. OTHER TYPES OF RESPONSES

1. TWO-PART QUESTIONS

- For two-part questions with parts A and B, score only part B. It is acceptable for examinees to answer part B in response to the question asked in part A.

A. Have you ever been deported? (not scored)

B. What does deported mean? (scored)

2. "EVERYTHING AND NOTHING"

- Sometimes learners respond with generalities.
- The words "everything" or "nothing," without elaboration, should be scored 1.

3. "I DON'T KNOW RESPONSES"

- For the purposes of this test, "I don't know" alone, without further elaboration, receives a 0.
- The exceptions to this guideline are:
 - Form 973, question #11, "When is your USCIS interview scheduled?"
 - Form 973, question #9, "What city did you enter when you came to the United States?"
 - Form 974, question #7, "Where was your port of entry?""I don't know, I don't remember, or I haven't been given a date" are plausible answers for these questions and receive a score of 2.

4. ADDED "I DON'T KNOW" PHRASES

- Score 2 if an examinee begins or ends a response with, "I don't know", as long as the rest of the answer is complete and clear.
- "What are illegal drugs?" "LSD, marijuana. I don't know." (Score 2 for this response)*

5. SPECIALIZED COLLOQUIAL WORDS

- "Papers" can be clearly taken to mean "documents" provided the rest of the communication is clear.
- "Coyote" is acceptable, referring to a person who helps undocumented immigrants cross the border.

6. ITEM INDEPENDENCE

- Remember to score each item independently of all other items.