

## Creating a Citizenship Review Class in a Public Library

Many libraries hold adult citizenship education classes either on their own or by providing space to other educational or community-based organizations. There are three types of citizenship classes. Comprehensive classes consist of a full structured curriculum of up to 15 weeks. Preparatory classes are shorter and for people

who already possess strong English language skills, but need an opportunity to learn the naturalization process and civics content. Review classes are designed for people whose naturalization interview is scheduled a month or less out.

### How Libraries Can Help:

Libraries are neutral and convenient places where immigrants can go to get the information and resources they need on a variety of topics including immigration and naturalization. Many libraries display materials on immigration and naturalization in a designated citizenship corner. These citizenship corners are areas of the library designated to welcome and inform

immigrants within their communities. Setting up a citizenship corner is one way to help immigrants settle into their new communities and feel welcome. Another way is by offering comprehensive citizenship classes, citizenship preparatory classes or citizenship review classes. This tip sheet will give an overview of citizenship review classes and provide a sample model.

### About Citizenship Review Classes:

Citizenship review classes offer an intensive review of the major skill and content areas on the citizenship test for students applying for naturalization. Unlike comprehensive citizenship classes, review classes usually do not devote large parts of the curriculum to developing basic

English skills or teaching in-depth civics content. Instead, review classes target the students who possess the requisite English skills and knowledge of U.S. history and government, but need to review and hone their knowledge and skills.

### How to Create a Review Class:

There is a variety of review class models to choose from. This tip sheet will focus on a basic model that can be adapted to various library environments.

#### (a) Do your Research

First, make sure there is a need for a citizenship review class within your community. Are there already classes offered by local school districts, community groups or faith-based organizations, or colleges or universities? If so, what does their program entail? What types of students do they serve? What are their class schedules and content like? Once you find out this information, decide if your review class would fill a need or

compete with another program. If there are other programs, you might consider contacting them to see if your library could work together with those programs to expand services.

#### (b) Marketing Your Review Class

There are a variety of methods you can use to advertise your review class both in the library and around the community. Word of mouth is often the most common form, but there are other ways to attract more people to your class, including:

1. Fliers: Create a flier in English and in other languages spoken in your community with information about the review class. The expectation is that students enrolling in a

review class have completed a comprehensive adult citizenship education program and can read English at or close to the level required in the interview. However, friends and family members may see the fliers in their native language and pass the information along. Post the fliers in high traffic areas around the community (including community centers and places of worship) and around the library (front door, circulation desk, citizenship corners).

2. Presentations: Giving brief presentations about your program allows you to connect with interested students. Community centers, K-12 schools, or places of worship may have events or space to present information about your class. Inviting students who have already taken the class and can speak to its effectiveness is a particularly useful strategy.
3. Referrals: Build relationships with community-based organizations and emphasize that your review class is designed to complement their comprehensive adult citizenship education courses. Ask them to refer students who have completed those courses so they can keep their knowledge and skills sharp as they prepare for the interview.

### **(c) Identifying Space**

The space you have available will affect your program structure. If you simply want to offer individual tutoring to prepare students for their naturalization interview and test, then a small room is sufficient. However, if you plan to offer a full review class, you will need a room with a large table or several tables and chairs. The furniture must be appropriate for adults (for example, children's chairs may be too small).

If you are offering a full review class, encourage your teachers to make the classroom space as predictable as possible. Unlike K-12 classrooms where teachers usually have consistent and exclusive access to the same room on a daily basis, most adult education programs use shared space. This means that your teachers will likely have to set up and break down their classroom before and after each class. When setting up their classrooms each session, the teacher should try to set it up as consistently as possible so students know where to sit and where to find materials. Posting an agenda in the same spot each time will help students prepare for what they will be doing in class.

### **(d) Equipping the Room**

In addition to tables and chairs, your teacher will need a desk or table on which to spread out materials, lesson plans, etc. Here are a few more basics:

- a. Wall or portable whiteboard and dry-erase markers;
- b. Computer, projector, and screen;
- c. Locking filing cabinet;

### **(e) Instructional Materials Needed**

A citizenship textbook is highly suggested if you are offering a comprehensive or preparatory class. For a review class, a citizenship textbook may be used for reference and homework assignments; however, there would not be enough time to use it to guide the curriculum. If you are working with local organizations offering citizenship courses, and know which textbooks they use, then it would be helpful to have copies of those books available for students to use during the review course.

Some materials to consider making available are:

1. USCIS Civics Flash Cards
2. USCIS Quick Civics Lessons
3. USCIS lesson plans
4. USCIS mock interview video
5. USCIS civics test practice videos
6. USCIS English vocabulary cards
7. USCIS online practice tests
8. Form N-400, Application for Naturalization

### **(f) Assessing Students**

Since a review class is intended for students with stronger English skills, it is not crucial that they take a language placement test like the TOEFL or IELTS. It is crucial, however, to assess what your students already know. Consider asking questions from the N-400, the USCIS Civics Flash Cards, and the USCIS English vocabulary cards. It may also be useful to simply survey your students at the beginning of the course to determine their areas of need.

Aside from honing skills, one of the main purposes of a review course is to help students build confidence as they prepare for their naturalization interview with a USCIS officer. One of the best ways to do this is to make sure that any class assessments are as similar as possible to the civics, reading, and writing

tests administered in the interview. Avoid long or cumbersome formal assessments that could increase anxiety and decrease confidence.

### **(g) Organizing Content**

Organizing content for a review class is significantly different than it is for a comprehensive adult citizenship education course. A comprehensive course uses standardized assessments during enrollment to place students based on their ability to read, write, and speak English. Students are then placed in a class with other students at a similar level of English language skills. Such courses also follow a curriculum that organizes the content into a consistent framework for teachers to follow.

In a review class, however, students have already been exposed to the knowledge and skills required for the interview. A high level of structure may not be necessary or desired. Furthermore, in a review class, it is also easier to work with students across multiple levels. Therefore, a flexible curriculum that can adapt to the needs of your students may be more appropriate than a rigid curriculum that follows a precise scope and sequence.

Here are some steps to build a flexible curriculum:

1. Familiarize yourself with the [USCIS Guide to the Adult Citizenship Education Content Standards and Foundation Skills](#).
2. Collect all available instructional materials and resources.
3. Work with teachers and staff to begin creating review activities.
4. Refer to the USCIS Guide to the Adult Citizenship Education Content Standards and Foundation Skills to make sure your activities address every standard at least once.

It is not important to focus on organizing your activities in a specific order because the sequence in which you use the activities will vary with every class based on the needs and challenges of your students. One way to think about it is that if we consider a comprehensive curriculum like a book, where

teachers start at the beginning and work through to the end; then a review curriculum is like a toolbox in which teachers select activities based on the work that needs to be done.

### **(h) Creating Activities**

Students enrolled in a review class should already be familiar with the content. Therefore, whole class instruction should be limited to filling in common knowledge and skill gaps. Focus on providing students with opportunities to practice and strengthen those areas that are still challenging and reviewing more difficult concepts. This means that teachers will need to create a number of activities that students can use to prepare for their interview while reviewing the civics, naturalization, and ESL knowledge and skills they learned in their initial course. Teachers certainly want to include exercises like mock interviews that mimic the interview experience. Aside from practicing their language skills, these exercises help students build their confidence heading into their interview.

Do not rely too much on direct instruction or on individual practice. Seek a balance between several types of activities to keep students motivated and engaged. Exercises like mock naturalization interviews help students build their skills and their confidence. Activities like games, stations, peer-to-peer instruction, and small group discussions allow students to practice with and learn from one another.

Designing activities is a creative process that takes practice. For new teachers, it may be helpful to speak with and observe experienced teachers to establish a foundation of activities to use. The teaching community is generally very supportive, especially for first time teachers, and one of the best ways to build a catalog of activities is to ask other teachers if you can observe their classrooms and watch them teach. You can also go to the [USCIS Citizenship Resource Center](#) and look for upcoming training seminars and institutes in your area. These trainings usually include sessions on using USCIS resources to create activities.



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

[www.uscis.gov/citizenship](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship)