



Podcast Transcript

Using Dictation Practice to Prepare Students for the Writing Test

Hello, I'm Dr. Michael Jones from the USCIS Office of Citizenship. Thank you for listening to our podcast on the use of dictation to prepare students for the writing component of the naturalization test.

The naturalization test has two major sections—civics and English. The English test has three components—reading, writing, and speaking. Although I'll focus primarily on the writing test in this podcast, dictation practice will help students on the speaking test as well. Test scoring guidelines can be found on the Citizenship Resource Center at www.uscis.gov/citizenship.

During the writing portion of the test, a USCIS Officer will dictate a sentence to the applicant. If the applicant is able to write the dictated sentence according to the USCIS test scoring guidelines, the applicant has passed the writing test. If the applicant does not write the dictated sentence correctly, the Officer will dictate up to two additional sentences. As long as the applicant is able to write at least one of the three sentences correctly, he or she will pass the writing test.

The USCIS Office of Citizenship has developed a set of Vocabulary Flash Cards which are available for free at www.uscis.gov/citizenship. Print copies are available for purchase through the U.S. Government Printing Office bookstore at <http://bookstore.gpo.gov>. These flash cards contain the English vocabulary items needed to prepare for both the reading and writing tests. To distinguish the two sets of words, the reading vocabulary is labeled "Reading" and appears on a red background, whereas the writing vocabulary is labeled "Writing" and appears on a blue background. Each card includes a vocabulary word on the front with space on the back where students can practice writing skills using that word.

To prepare students for the dictation-based writing test, teachers should practice dictating both the individual words and phrases from the writing flash cards as well as complete sentences. Although the sentences for the writing test are not available to the public, teachers can use combinations of vocabulary words to create simple meaningful sentences. Teachers can also allow students to practice listening to various voices by asking the class members to dictate questions to one another. Try to vary genders, language groups, and voice qualities, such as soft and loud, deep and high, and fast and slow. In doing so, teachers will help prepare students for the voices and accents that may be encountered during the naturalization interview with a USCIS Officer.

Using dictation is one of the many tools a teacher can use to prepare students for the naturalization test. Many practitioners believe that dictation assists students in the acquisition of all four language skills—reading, writing, speaking and listening. This helps them learn sentence structure, allows them to practice listening and comprehension skills, and offers opportunities for self and peer correction.

For more instructional resources, check out the Teachers section of the Citizenship Resource Center. I'm Michael Jones and on behalf of USCIS, thanks again for listening!