TIP SHEET

Tips for Teaching Vocabulary in the Adult Citizenship Classroom: Spotlight on *Form N-400, Application for Naturalization*

Applicants for naturalization must complete *Form N-400, Application for Naturalization*. The form includes questions to determine an applicant's eligibility for naturalization. The ability to speak English is a requirement for naturalization, unless the person qualifies for an exception or accommodation, and is determined by responses to questions asked by a USCIS officer during the eligibility interview. An applicant must understand and use English vocabulary to complete *Form N-400, Application for Naturalization* and the eligibility interview. The vocabulary on *Form N-400, Application for Naturalization* covers a variety of themes expressed at a range of English skill levels. Factors such as a person's English skill level and background knowledge of the subject matter will affect comprehension. This document provides teachers with tips to identify potentially challenging words and phrases that students may encounter during the naturalization process, as well as strategies for teaching vocabulary in the adult citizenship classroom.

What Can Make a Word or Phrase Challenging?

Here are some types of vocabulary words or phrases that may be challenging, along with some examples from *Form N-400, Application for Naturalization*. Some of the examples provided may serve to illustrate more than one vocabulary type.

Vocabulary Type	Examples
Technical or legal terms	deferred prosecution, affirm
Word or phrase with multiple meanings	filing, party, present, to serve in
Word or phrase with specific nuances or connotations	to act like, to call yourself
Long words	administratively, paramilitary, sovereignty
Words similar in sound, but different in meaning	list/least, live/leave
Words that look similar but have different meanings	country/county
Phrasal verbs	send in, fail to
Words used infrequently	incompetent, totalitarian, insurgent
Words with multiple syllables	accommodations, administratively
Abstract words that are difficult to visualize	misrepresentation, annulled, rehabilitative program
Words that may be defined differently by individuals	habitual/regular/frequent
Words that change due to ambient circumstances	current (as in current address, water current, and keeping current)

Vocabulary Type	Examples
Compound words	self-defense unit, self-employed (compound adjective), wheelchair, stepchild (compound noun)
Words containing prefixes and suffixes	misrepresentation, nonimmigrant, and indirectly
Words that change in meaning or connotation when used in different parts of speech	sign, file, and check used as *nouns* sign, file, and check used as *verbs*

Teaching Vocabulary

- Teachers should be aware that Form N-400, *Application for Naturalization* is unique because it serves a dual purpose in the naturalization process. It is both a legal form and the basis for the English speaking test. Teachers must be careful not to unintentionally provide legal advice when trying to define or provide content for terms used in immigration forms. For more information, please see *www.uscis.gov/avoidscams*.

- In addition to the vocabulary types listed in the chart above, students may also encounter other vocabulary types during the naturalization process, including idioms and false cognates (words that in English look like a foreign word, but have different meanings). They are likely to also hear phrases that can have multiple meanings depending on the words they are used with. Words common to this category in English are: do, make, get, and have.

- When teaching vocabulary from Form N-400, *Application for Naturalization* or the naturalization process in general, determine if the words will most likely be part of your students' active or passive vocabulary. Active vocabulary words are those that students will need to use. For example, they will need to both understand and use vocabulary words like "first name" and "last name." Passive vocabulary words are those that students know but are not likely to use.

- Explain the words using visuals and provide synonyms to capture the students' attention. Then teach thematically in order to anchor the word or phrase within their memories. A visual for "middle," as in "middle name," might show three objects with the one in the center highlighted. Staying with the example of "name" vocabulary, a teacher might teach the synonym "last name" for "family name."

- Where appropriate, provide a variety of materials that use the word in the way that conveys its target meaning. Ensure that the materials do not contain too many unknown words because students will not have enough context clues to construct a sufficient amount of meaning.

- Create oral and printed learning activities for students to practice words. These should be interactive, fun activities. Some examples include: word associations, word card games, color coding, diagram activities, Cloze (fill-in-the-blank) activities, brainstorming, matching, and unscrambling.

- Check students' acquisition of a word through simple oral or written assessments.

To find additional citizenship education materials and instructional resources, visit the USCIS Citizenship Resource Center at *www.uscis.gov/citizenship*.

U.S. Citizenship
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