

July 2015

# Tutor in Touch



## US Citizenship



One of the most often stated goal of our ESOL students is to obtain US Citizenship. Most of us think that all one has to do to become a citizen is to answer a few questions about US history and take an oath. It is so much more than that.

The government office that oversees the citizenship process is the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The first step one has to take to begin the process is to submit a completed N-400 form. This and all forms related to residency and citizenship can be obtained from [www.uscis.gov/forms](http://www.uscis.gov/forms). One also has to have fingerprints taken at a USCIS facility. The next step is to prepare for the interview...which involves answering questions about US history, demonstrating the ability to read and write a few very basic sentences and the ability to speak English.

For the history portion of the interview, an applicant must answer questions about US history. There are 100 possible questions, of which 10 will be asked, and of those, 6 must be answered correctly. Starting at age 65, individuals who have been a permanent resident for the past 20 years will only have to answer 6 correctly from a possible 20 questions.

The reading and writing portion of the interview has a limited vocabulary, from which the sentences to be read or need to be written, is pulled. For the writing portion, words do not need to be spelled correctly but need to be at least close enough phonetically that the word is easily recognized by the interviewer.

## US Citizenship cont.

The speaking portion of the interview process is the most difficult for many of our students. The interview begins the moment an applicant steps into the interviewer's office. It is expected that the applicant will respond appropriately to everyday exchanges such as "please have a seat", "how are you today?". But the majority of questions, and the ability of the applicant to understand and respond, will be based on the information in the N-400 form. The interviewer may ask for clarification on information on the form with similar, but not exact wording. For example, the form asks for information about marital history. The form uses the word spouse but in the interview, the word that might be used could be husband or wife. This is the portion of the process that is failed most often because of the lack of English conversation skills.



While the process may seem daunting, there are some very good resources available to support someone through the process. The USCIS is a customer service department, which is reflected in their website. The website has not only information about the process, but also has a wealth of educational materials. The link to the educational resources is [www.uscis.gov/us-citizenship](http://www.uscis.gov/us-citizenship)



We also have an entire section in our library that covers citizenship, including workbooks, videos, audio tapes, flash cards and application information.





“Do you understand?” As tutors we are trained to evade this cringe-worthy question, but surely we’ve all been caught on the spot struggling to generate an appropriate question to check comprehension. By reviewing and practicing with a number of strategies specifically geared towards pre-, during, and post-reading comprehension development, you will become a better resource to your

students. Try to focus on a new strategy each session and you’ll soon be comfortable suggesting the right strategy for any particular activity.

### Pre-reading

**Predict.** This may be the all time number one pre-reading strategy. Use the title, headings, pictures, captions, and key words to set expectations about vocabulary and ideas students may encounter in the passage. Surprises have their place in stories, but preparedness gives way to comfortable and enjoyable reading.

**Set a purpose.** Help the student relax by explaining that they may neither understand every single word, nor the meaning of every string of words. Provide a few focus questions to answer by the end of the activity. Reading the questions beforehand helps predict the content of the passage as well.

### During Reading

**Monitor Understanding.** Does the student understand that she does or doesn’t understand? And a more important question perhaps is, does your student feel comfortable admitting when they don’t understand? Plan questions at intervals to check comprehension.

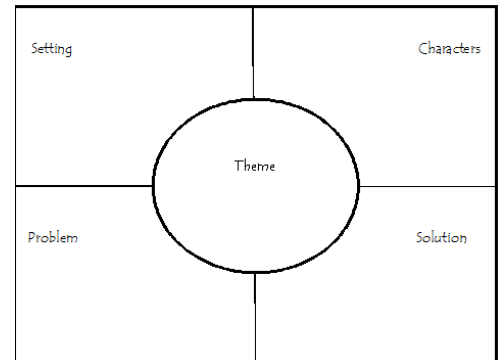
**Pause-Think-Retell.** Allow the student to quietly and independently consider the content, then summarize orally. While the tutor checks comprehension and reviews any misunderstandings, the reader also gets a short mental break from reading, which may increase reading endurance in the long run.



## Post-reading

**Adjust/Confirm Predictions.** The student looks back at the predictions made before reading the passage and uses evidence from the reading to confirm or adjust predictions. Remember to also answer any of the focus questions you set out in pre-reading.

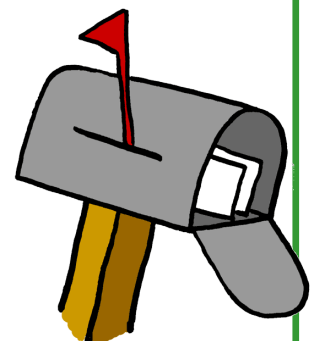
**Reflect.** The student writes, draws, or talks about the reading, giving opinions and using personal experience to react to the passage. Graphic organizers are useful tools at this point, particularly for visual learners. Tutors can choose the appropriate outlet based on the content of the reading and/or student level.



This is simply an introduction to the array of strategies available. **Printable worksheets containing additional strategies are the PDF attachment that accompanied this edition of Tutor In Touch .** As you practice with these tools, be sure to do some of your own reflecting and adjusting: Was that tool level-appropriate for this student? Does the student feel comfortable pointing out areas of confusion? Keep practicing, and eventually as students become familiar, they'll independently reach for these tools to improve their reading skills.

### **REMINDER:**

The normal hours of operation for our library are 9AM to 4 PM Monday through Friday. An after-hours book return mailbox is located at the north end of the building (the end facing Elmwood Ave).



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