



Home Office

## Guide B(OS)

Registration as a British citizen –  
A guide for:

- British Overseas citizens
- British subjects (under the British Nationality Act 1981)
- British protected persons
- British Nationals (Overseas) who have no other citizenship or nationality

April 2025

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# Introduction to the guide

Becoming a British citizen is a significant life event. Apart from allowing you to apply for a British citizen passport, British citizenship gives you the opportunity to participate more fully in the life of your local community.

For your application to succeed you will need to show that you satisfy a number of requirements that are set out in British nationality law. This guide aims to help you to make a successful application. It will also help you to prepare for British citizenship.

The first part of this guide summarises the legal requirements for applying for registration.

You should be aware that under the nationality laws of some countries a person will automatically lose their nationality if they become a citizen of another country. If you have any questions about this, you should ask the authorities of the country of which you are a citizen before making your application. If the country of which you are currently a citizen continues to recognise you as one of its citizens you may continue to be subject to the duties of citizens of that country, when you are in its territory. This may include obligations to undergo military service.

The law covering registration is contained in the British Nationality Act 1981, the British Overseas Territories Act 2002 and the regulations made under them. This guide is intended to help you to apply. It is not a complete statement of the law or policy. Other information about citizenship and immigration is available on our website at [www.gov.uk/british-citizenship](http://www.gov.uk/british-citizenship).

## IAA and immigration advice

You may, if you wish, use the services of an agent such as a solicitor or other competent adviser to help you with your application.

Immigration or nationality advisers acting in the course of business (whether paid or unpaid) are regulated by the Immigration Advice Authority (IAA), an independent body. Nationality advice should only be provided by a person who works for an organisation registered with, or exempted by, the IAA or who is authorised to practise (like solicitors and barristers) by a designated professional body. Certain categories (for example public health bodies) are exempted from the regulatory scheme by Ministerial Order. It is a criminal offence to provide advice or services in contravention of the regulatory scheme. Further information about the regulatory scheme and a full list of IAA regulated advisers are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/immigration-advice-authority>.

# The requirements you have to meet

- You must be:
  - a British Overseas citizen, or
  - a British subject (under the British Nationality Act 1981), or
  - a British protected person, or
  - a British National (Overseas)

AND

- You must not hold any other citizenship or nationality.

AND EITHER

- If you are a British Overseas citizen, a British subject or a British protected person, you must not, since 4 July 2002, have:
  - renounced any citizenship or nationality; or
  - voluntarily given up any citizenship or nationality; or
  - lost through action or inaction any citizenship or nationality.

OR

- If you are a British National (Overseas), you must not, since 19 March 2009, have:
  - renounced any citizenship or nationality; or
  - voluntarily given up any citizenship or nationality; or
  - lost through action or inaction any citizenship or nationality.

**NOTE:**

- It is possible to be a citizen or national of another country even if you have never held a passport issued by the authorities of that country;
- The reference to other citizenship and nationality applies to forms of British nationality as well as to non-British citizenship or nationality.

## The citizenship you will acquire

All successful applicants will become British citizens by descent. As a British citizen by descent you will not normally be able to pass on British citizenship to any children born outside the United Kingdom.

If you are resident in the United Kingdom you may therefore wish to apply for registration under section 4(2), on the basis of five years residence in the United Kingdom. This would give British citizenship otherwise than by descent, which would mean that you could pass on the citizenship to any children born abroad to you after registration. See [Guide B\(OTA\)](#) for more information on registering under section 4(2).

Further information about the requirements for citizenship can be obtained:

on our website at [www.gov.uk/british-citizenship](http://www.gov.uk/british-citizenship), or  
by emailing [nationalityenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:nationalityenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk)

## Your current nationality

This section explains what is meant by birth, ancestry, registration and naturalisation.

Broadly speaking, for the purposes of this guide and application:

- you will be British by birth if you hold any form of British nationality because you were born on British territory;
- you will be British by ancestry if you were born on non-British territory and you hold any form of British nationality through a parent's or grandparent's birth, adoption, naturalisation or registration;
- if you are British by registration or naturalisation, this means that you were not British when you were born but acquired this status as a result of an application for registration or for a certificate of naturalisation (but see also the Notes below).

## Notes

British Overseas citizenship, British subject status and British protected person status cannot be acquired by naturalisation but, if you are a British Overseas citizen or British subject, you may have this citizenship or status because you were originally naturalised as a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies before 1983. If so, you should give details of your naturalisation as a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies.

British National (Overseas) status could only be acquired by registration. If you are a British National (Overseas), you got that status on the date you were issued with a passport describing you as a British National (Overseas).

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# Referees

Your application must be endorsed by 2 referees.

One referee can be of any nationality but must be a [professional person](#). A professional person could include:

- a minister of religion
- civil servant
- a member of a professional body such as an accountant or a solicitor (but not one who is representing you with this application).

The other referee must be the holder of a British citizen passport and either a [professional person](#) or over the age of 25.

Each referee must have known you for at least 3 years.

Each referee must not be:

- related to you
- related to the other referee
- your solicitor or agent representing you with this application
- employed by the Home Office

We will not usually accept a referee who has been convicted of an imprisonable offence during the last 10 years.

Checks may be carried out to ensure that the referees do not have unspent convictions and are qualified to act for you and that their signatures are genuine. It is a criminal offence to provide false information knowingly or recklessly, punishable with up to 3 months imprisonment or by a fine not exceeding £5,000 or both under section 46(1) of the British Nationality Act 1981.

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# Biometric enrolment

As part of the application process, all applicants are required to enrol their biometric details for the purpose of identity verification. We may be able to re-use biometrics provided for previous immigration applications. We will contact you to provide further instructions on how to enrol your biometrics after you have submitted your application.

Children under 18 applying for registration as a British citizen must also enrol their biometric details. Children under the age of 5 do not need to provide fingerprints, but must have a digital photograph taken of their face.

Up to the age of 5, the Home Office only requires a digitised image of the child's face, although the regulation does not prevent fingerprints being recorded from children aged less than 5 years.

Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian at their biometric enrolment appointment.

There is no upper age limit for biometric information to be taken.

An application may be rejected as invalid if the person does not enrol their biometrics when requested.

For more information about enrolling biometrics and the current fee, please visit GOV.UK: [www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits](http://www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits).

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# Documents

## Documentary evidence of your British nationality

Please provide the following evidence that you are a British Overseas citizen, a British subject (under the British Nationality Act 1981), a British protected person or a British National (Overseas):

- Your passport, or
- Your registration or naturalisation certificate, or
- If you have no passport and your claim is through your birth and/or your parents' birth, your birth certificate and/or your parents' birth and marriage certificates.

## Documentary evidence of no other citizenship or nationality

You must provide:

- A letter from the authorities of the country in which you were born saying whether you have ever held that country's citizenship or nationality. If you have at any time held that country's citizenship or nationality but no longer hold it, the letter should also state the date on which you ceased to hold it and why, and/or
- If either of your parents holds a non-British nationality, a letter from the authorities of the country concerned saying whether you have ever held that country's citizenship or nationality. If you have at any time held that country's citizenship or nationality but no longer hold it, the letter should also state the date on which you ceased to hold it and why, and/or
- If you have lived for a period of 5 years or more outside the United Kingdom, outside the country where you were born and outside any country of which either of your parents is a citizen or national, a letter from the authorities of that country of residence saying whether you have ever held that country's citizenship or nationality. If you have at any time held that country's citizenship or nationality but no longer hold it, the letter should also state the date on which you ceased to hold it and why.

If your parents hold different non-British citizenships or nationalities, or if either of them holds more than one citizenship or nationality, you will need to get letters of confirmation from all the countries concerned. Similarly, if you have resided for 5 years or more in more



than one country, you will need to get letters of Page 8 of 10 confirmation from all the countries concerned.

If you do not provide documentary evidence, as described above, to show that you do not hold another nationality or citizenship, the Home Secretary may not be satisfied that you meet this requirement. If that happens, your application will normally be refused.

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# Application processing times

We aim to conclude citizenship applications within 6 months from the date on which we receive your application. Please do not contact us within this timeframe to request an update on your application – we will get in touch if we need any more information to help us make a decision.

You will usually get a decision on your application within 6 months – but some applications may take longer. If we expect that it will take longer than 6 months to decide your application, we will contact you to advise of this.

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# Citizenship ceremonies

If your application is successful, and you are aged 18 or over, you will be invited to attend a [citizenship ceremony](#).

## If you are in the UK

You will receive an invitation from the Home Office, and this will confirm the local authority you should contact to arrange your ceremony.

You must ensure you have immigration permission to remain in the UK until you have completed your ceremony. A citizenship application does not provide you with immigration permission in the UK.

## If you are outside of the UK

Arrangements will be made for you to attend a ceremony at a British Embassy; High Commission; Consulate; Governor's Office or Lieutenant-Governor's Office.

Your ceremony invitation may be sent to you via email. If you have not received this, we recommend that you check your email's spam or junk folder before contacting us.

**You must arrange and attend your ceremony within 90 days of receiving your invitation.** The date by which you must attend your ceremony will be given in your invitation.

If you have special needs or concerns about attending your ceremony, please bring these to the attention of the local authority once you have received your invitation.

**If you do not attend your ceremony within 90 days without good reason, your application for citizenship will be refused and you will need to re-apply.**

## At the ceremony

You will be asked to affirm or swear an Oath of Allegiance to the Monarch and to pledge your loyalty to the UK. This is a legal requirement for adults and is the point at which you will become a British citizen. Following this you will be presented with your certificate of citizenship as a British citizen.

## Exemptions

Successful applicants are rarely exempt from attending ceremonies. Exemptions may be granted where applicants are physically unable to attend or if their mental state would

make it inappropriate for them to attend. If you wish to be exempt, you should say why and provide supporting evidence.

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# Will I get digital status showing I am a British citizen?

There are no current plans to provide digital evidence of British citizenship. If you wish to travel, you will need to get a British passport or certificate of entitlement to the right of abode.

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# Travelling to and from the UK after registering

Once you become a British citizen, you will no longer be able to enter the UK using your BRP or digital status, or by presenting your citizenship certificate at the UK border.

For travel purposes, you can [apply for a British passport](#) or for a [certificate of entitlement to the right of abode](#) that can be placed in a valid foreign passport.

Please refer to GOV.UK for information on [how long it may take to get a British passport](#) or [how long it may take to get a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode](#). You may wish to consider this before applying for citizenship (for example, if you have plans to travel outside of the UK).

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# Deprivation

You may be deprived of your British citizenship if it is found to have been obtained by fraud, false representation or the concealment of any material fact. The Home Secretary may also deprive you of British citizenship if they are satisfied that deprivation is conducive to the public good and you would not be made stateless. Following the Immigration Act 2014, the Home Secretary may also deprive naturalised persons of their British citizenship if the person has conducted themselves in a manner which is seriously prejudicial to the vital interests of the United Kingdom and the Home Secretary has reasonable grounds for believing the person is able, under the law of another country to become a national of that country or territory.

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# Citizenship-related queries

If, having read the information set out in this guidance, you have questions about applying for British citizenship, you can email the Citizenship and Nationality Enquiries team at [nationalityenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:nationalityenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk).

You should also contact them to let them know if you have made an application and your circumstances change (for example, you move house, get married or are arrested).

If you've not had a response, we recommend checking your email's spam or junk folder before contacting UKVI again.

If you require anything else, please [contact UK Visas and Immigration for help](#).

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