

Teaching Tip

TITLE: **Citizenship: Conversation Strategies**

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Accompanies podcast on:

Citizenship: Teaching Conversation Strategies in the Citizenship Classroom

In the podcast *Citizenship: Teaching Conversation Strategies in the Citizenship Classroom*, citizenship teacher and author Lynne Weintraub describes several types of conversation strategies that students can use for different parts of the U.S. Naturalization Test (often referred to as “citizenship test”).

The Interview

Example “Could you please repeat the question?”

In this example, the student learns one strategy to use if he or she doesn’t understand a question that the examiner asks during the interview and review of the information provided on the N-400 application form. Lynne coaches students to ask the examiner to repeat the question. This model interview from *Citizenship: Passing the Test—Ready for the Interview** demonstrates the strategy:

Hai’s Interview

EXAMINER: Now, the name you’ve used here is Hai Pham. Have you used any other names since you came here?

HAI: No.

EXAMINER: You don’t go by any other names?

HAI: Could you please repeat the question?

EXAMINER: Have you ever used another name?

HAI: No, just one name, all my life.



From p. 22 of *Citizenship: Passing the Test – Ready for the Interview*, © 2008 New Readers Press, Division of ProLiteracy Worldwide. Used with permission.

First, Lynne asks the students to listen to a role play on the CD that accompanies the book, or she asks a student to role play the examiner while she plays the applicant in the situation portrayed above. Then Lynne and the students discuss the strategy, talk about when to use it and why, and finally practice it.

Note: As shown in the above example, the examiner might reword the question when asked to repeat it to make the question easier to understand. When practicing this strategy with students, you should do the same.

Tip: To ensure that students have to ask for the question to be repeated, the instructor can speak in a soft voice so that it is difficult at times for the students to hear. After being asked to repeat the question, the instructor does so in a normal voice.

In her book *Citizenship: Passing the Test—Ready for the Interview**, Lynne suggests a number of additional strategies for enhancing students’ success in the interview. The corresponding *Teachers’ Guide** gives advice on how to lead classroom activities that promote acquisition of these strategies.

The Civics Test

Conversation strategies can also boost students’ chances of success at passing the civics test. In the podcast, Lynne points out that a number of civics test questions sound quite similar and students may need to clarify *which* question they’ve just heard. Below is a page from *Citizenship: Passing the Test—Civics and Literacy**. The corresponding *Teacher’s Guide** points out two questions that may present a problem for students if the examiner’s speech is rapid or indistinct (or if the student is so nervous that auditory processing becomes difficult). The guide suggests coaching students to ask for clarification with questions such as these, and tells how to stage activities that provide explicit practice with the strategy.

Every country has a **government**.
A country’s government is in its **capital**.
The capital of the U.S. is **Washington, D.C.**

Every state in the U.S. has a capital too.
What is the capital of your state? _____

? **WHAT DOES IT MEAN:** government = people who are in charge
capital = city where the government is

abc **SPELLING:** capital _____

audio **SAY IT:** capital what
cap ih tul wuht

Note: The two official test questions on this page are easily confused by students. Ensure that students can hear the difference between them, and then drill them by randomly asking one or the other as you call on individual students. Here is a strategy to help students clarify which question they are hearing: Write both questions on the board. Have a student ask you the first question, and respond, “of the U.S.? . . . That’s Washington.” Have a student ask you the second question, and respond, “of my state? . . . That’s (name of your state’s capital).” Next, randomly ask individual students the same questions and coach them to clarify using the strategy you’ve just demonstrated.

• What is the capital of the United States? **Washington, D.C.**
• What is the capital of your state? _____

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Welcome to America 11

Lesson page from p. 11 of *Citizenship: Passing the Test – Civics and Literacy*
Insert from p. 8 of *Citizenship: Passing the Test – Teacher’s Guide*, p. 8

*The ideas shared in this document come from the Citizenship: Passing the Test series, © 2008 New Readers Press, Division of ProLiteracy Worldwide. Used with permission. The components of the series are:

Ready for the Interview (student book, audio CD)

Literacy Skills (student book, audio CD)

Civics and Literacy (student book, audio CD)

Teacher's Guide (one guide for all the components)

For more information about the series, visit www.newreaderspress.com.