Good Moral Character Reference Statement Guide

As of August 2025, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has begun requiring people applying for U.S. citizenship to show proof that they have "good moral character." This means they need to show that they follow social rules and help their community in positive ways.

Due to this new policy, Project Citizenship is requiring two (2) reference statements for each applicant. You must provide us with these statements for us to mail your application. We will not mail your application without them.

In some cases, USCIS may also ask for proof of **"rehabilitation and reformation**." Project Citizenship will determine what additional documents, if any, are needed for each case, and will follow up with you directly to discuss.

Reference Statement Overview

These letters should be written by someone from your community that you know and must show that you "have been and still are a person of good moral character." Each reference statement should include:

- A **header** that includes the writer's full name, address, and phone number/email address
- An **introduction** explaining the writer's relation to the applicant and the writer's background and credentials
- A **statement of support** about the applicant with a focus on the applicant's character and positive contributions to their community with concrete examples
- A **summary** of the key points made in the previous paragraph, alongside the writer's **physical signature in black ink** and the **date** that the letter was written

Who Should Write Your Statements?

The author of these statements should be:

- A person from your community who knows you well and can say that you have had a "good moral character" during the **past 5 years**
    - **3 years** if applying based on **marriage**.
- Ideally, a United States citizen
    - Along with your letter, **we will need to submit proof of citizenship for the author**.
        - This can include a copy of their U.S. Passport, Naturalization Certificate, or Birth Certificate (if they were born in the U.S.)
    - If it is not possible to ask a U.S. citizen, we recommend they be a legal permanent resident.
        - We will need to submit a copy of their state ID/ license or green card, in this case.
- Someone USCIS could see as a "strong and trustworthy" source.
    - We recommend asking an employer, your case worker, your social worker, a religious leader, or a teacher/professor.
    - As a last resort, you may ask a friend or neighbor.
    - **Family members should not write these statements.**

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Reference Statement Checklist

☐ **Step 1:** Identify who will write your reference statements

☐ **Step 2:** Provide the people you have chosen to write your reference statements with the Reference Statement Author Guide and Template

☐ **Step 3:** Make sure they provide a **physical signature in black ink** and that nothing in the letter contradicts what's in your application

☐ **Step 4:** Make sure they include a copy of their proof of citizenship (or ID/ green card, if they are not citizens)

☐ **Step 5:** Send Project Citizenship a copy of your reference statement to info@projectcitizenship.org

☐ **Step 6:** Keep a copy of your reference statement to bring to your citizenship interview

Reference Statement Author Guide

Give this guide to whoever is writing your reference statements to ensure that the statement makes a sufficient case of your "good moral character." Project Citizenship cannot act as a reference source for any applicants.

To the authors of the letters:

- **Please ensure that all information provided in the reference statement is consistent with the information in the application.**
- It is important that you do not falsify any information.
- Consider if you are comfortable with USCIS reading the reference statement and having access to your contact/personal information.
- Consider if submitting your contact/personal information to USCIS will put you at risk regarding your immigration status.
    - Please keep in mind, you are being asked to submit proof of citizenship (copy of your U.S. Passport or Naturalization Certificate) or proof of legal permanent resident status (copy of ID or green card).
- **Be sure to sign the letter using a black ink pen.** USCIS will not accept digital signatures or signatures signed using non-black ink.

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Reference Statement Template

The following template contains information on each section that should be included in the reference letter and examples of what each section may look like. You can provide whoever you choose to write your reference statements with this template to facilitate the writing process.

Once the reference statements are completed, please ensure the applicant sends a copy to Project Citizenship via email (info@projectcitizenship.org) or drops it off at our office (11 Beacon St. Suite 1210, Boston, MA). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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[First and Last Name]

[Your Title/Relationship to Applicant]

[Organization Name (If applicable)]

[Address]

[Contact Information]

1. **Header**
   This is where you will write your personal and contact information.

I am writing to offer my wholehearted recommendation for [Applicant's Full Name] in support of their application for U.S. citizenship. I have known [Applicant's Name] for [duration] in my capacity as [relationship - e.g., neighbor, employer, teacher, community leader], and I can attest to their strong character and commitment to the values of our community.

2. **Introduction**
   The goal of the introduction is to establish your background and credentials, as well as your relationship with the applicant.
   You should be able to attest to the applicant's "good moral character" in a meaningful and relevant way.

Throughout the time I have known [Applicant's Name], they have consistently demonstrated qualities that reflect good moral character. These include: [brief description of volunteer work, mention of caregiving roles, stable employment history, any degrees, certificates, or educational achievements, and/or any steps taken to address past issues such as fulfilling court conditions or repaying debts.]

(Note: You do not need to provide every example listed in the template! A few examples relevant to the applicant's case are fine.)

3. **Body**
   The goal of the body paragraph is to provide a strong statement of support on behalf of the applicant.
   You should explain specific ways in which the applicant has demonstrated "good moral character" within the last 5/3 years and provide concrete examples of this.

[Applicant's Name] is a valued member of our community who embodies the standards of integrity, responsibility, and civic mindedness expected of U.S. citizens. I believe they meet and exceed the expectations of good moral character as defined by USCIS guidance. Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

[Your Signature, Printed Name, and Date]

4. **Summary and Closing**
   The final paragraph of the reference statement should summarize the key points made in the previous paragraphs.
   The closing section should also include your "wet" or physical signature and the date that the letter was written.

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Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will Project Citizenship review my reference statements before mailing my application?

    a. Project Citizenship's legal team will only review your reference statements to ensure that all information included in these letters is consistent with the information in your application. Project Citizenship will not change or edit your reference statements in any way.

2. Who should write my reference statements?

    a. Each reference statement can be written by a community member that knows you well and can make a compelling case on how you've demonstrated "good moral character" over the last 5/3 years. This could include, but is not limited to, your employer, case worker, social worker, neighbor, friend, religious leader, teacher, or professor. They should not be members of your family.

3. Should my reference statements be written by a Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) or U.S. Citizen?

    a. At this time, we are recommending that statements are written by U.S. Citizens. If that is not possible, the statements should at least be written by an LPR.

4. How many reference statements/supporting documents will I need for my application to be mailed?
    a. Applicants will need to submit two signed reference statements. Along with the statements, the writers will need to include copies of their proof of citizenship or ID/Green card.
    b. If we need any other supporting documents, we will reach out to you and let you know.

5. Can my reference statements be in a language other than English?

    a. Yes, the letters can be in any language. A translation will be required, though, for any reference letters written in a language other than English.

6. How long should my reference statements be?

    a. 1 to 2 pages is sufficient for each reference statement, but there is no formal length requirement.

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Supporting Evidence

Alongside their reference statement, applicants may be asked to provide Project Citizenship with supporting documentation that demonstrates the applicant's "good moral character." You will also be asked to keep a copy of these documents for your citizenship interview. Below is a list of potential documents that can be used as supporting documentation, categorized by the positive character traits they demonstrate. **You do not need every document on the list.** Depending on the specifics of the applicant's case, we will ask for specific documentation before we mail the application. Any additional documentation an applicant wishes to submit with their application/bring to their interview is optional. Keep in mind that this guidance may change as this is an evolving situation.

Positive Character Trait	Potential Supporting Documentation
Education	➢ Degrees/Certificates ➢ Letters from Teachers/School Staff ➢ Educational Honors
Community Involvement & Contributions to the U.S.	➢ Letters from Nonprofit or Faith-Based Organizations, Children's School about Involvement ➢ Past Volunteering
Family Caregiving Responsibility	➢ Letters from Neighbors, Doctor, Teacher, Social/Case Workers ➢ Record of Timely Child Support Payments
Stable & Lawful Employment History	➢ Letters from Current and/or Past Employers ➢ Certificates/Awards
Compliance With Tax/Financial Obligations	➢ Tax Records ➢ Record of Timely Mortgage, Loan, Rent and/or Tax Payments
Rehabilitation & Reformation (Required if applicant has demonstrated any negative attributes/past offenses)	➢ Rectifying Overdue Child Support Payments or Other Obligations ➢ Compliance with Probation or Other Conditions Imposed by a Court ➢ Community Testimony from Credible Sources ➢ Reformation or Mentoring Those with Similar Pasts ➢ Full Repayment of Overpayment of Benefits Such as SSI ➢ Full Payment of Overdue Taxes ➢ Rehabilitation from Alcohol and/or Illegal Drug Use