

Citizenship

South African citizenship can, subject to the provisions of the South African Citizenship Act, 1995, be acquired by birth, descent, naturalisation and previously also by registration in specific instances. Citizenship by birth: any person who is born in South Africa and who had at least one parent who was a South African citizen or SA permanent residency permit holder at the time of birth of the person or who was adopted by a South African citizen or permanent resident in terms of the Children's Act, 2005

Citizenship by descent: if you were born outside of South Africa to a South African citizen(s) or were adopted by a South African citizen in terms of the Children's Act, 2005 and your birth was registered in accordance with the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992, you can apply for citizenship by descent by submitting the following documents:

- Form DHA-24, to register your birth in terms of the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992. In the event you were born out of wedlock both parents must sign the birth registration Form BI-24 to confirm paternity
- Forms DHA-529 (completed by yourself and your South African parents)
- Your foreign, unabridged birth certificate
- Yours and your parents' marriage certificate (if applicable) and copies thereof
- If 15 years and older, an application for an identity document (DHA-9) with two identity document photographs that comply with the Passport and ID Photograph Specifications
- Proof of your South African parent(s)' foreign citizenship (if they have acquired such) and a copies thereof
- Proof of identity of your South African parent(s)
- If you were adopted by a South African citizen, submit a copy of the adoption order

Citizenship by naturalization: You can apply for naturalisation if you comply with the provisions of section 5 of the South African Citizenship Act, 1995, namely:

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- - You have a valid permanent residence permit or exemption
 - As a permanent residency permit holder you have had one year's ordinary residence in the Republic of South Africa immediately prior to the application for naturalisation
 - After you acquired permanent residency you have had an additional 4 years of physical (actual) residence in the RSA during the eight years before the application for naturalisation (excluding the year of ordinary residence). Time spent in detention or residence subject to a condition do not count as ordinary or actual residence
 - Or you are married to a South African spouse, and you have had two years of permanent residence and two years of marriage to the South African spouse immediately prior to the application but after you acquired permanent residence status
 - Intend to continue to reside in the Republic or fall within the further categories specified in section 5(1)(e).
 - You are of good and sound character

- You are able to communicate satisfactorily in any one of the official languages of South Africa.
- You have adequate knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of a South African citizen

Minors

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- The responsible parent can apply on behalf of a minor at any time provided the minor permanently and lawfully resides in the Republic.

To apply for citizenship by naturalisation the following documents must be submitted:

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- Forms DHA-63 and DHA-757, completed by yourself
- Your SA non-citizen identity document and copy thereof
- Your marriage certificate (if applicable) and copy thereof
- If divorced, your decree of divorce and copy thereof
- An application for the re-issue of your identity document, including two identity document photographs that comply with the Passport and ID Photograph Specifications
- The prescribed fee for the re-issue of your identity document
- Proof of permanent residence/exemption and copy thereof
- Form SAP 91 with a full set of fingerprints in order to obtain a police clearance report for applicants 18 years and older
- Your parents or your legal guardian must sign the application form (BI-63) if you are under the age of 18
- Payment of the prescribed fee for naturalisation

Citizenship by registration: this category of citizenship only applies to British citizens who lived in South Africa for at least two years immediately prior to 2 September 1949.

You can check the status of your citizenship by contacting the nearest office of the Department of Home Affairs.

Retention of Citizenship

If you want to formally obtain the citizenship of another country while retaining your South African citizenship, you can apply for retention of your South African citizenship by:

- completing Forms DHA-1664 and DHA-529
- paying the required application fee

Please note: the application must be made and approved before acquisition of the other citizenship, or you will lose your SA citizenship automatically on the date that you have acquired the foreign citizenship.

You can submit the forms to any office of the Department of Home Affairs in South Africa, or any South African embassy, mission or consulate overseas.

Automatic loss of citizenship

Unless you have been granted retention of your South African citizenship prior to acquiring another citizenship, you will lose your South African citizenship automatically if you are 18 years and older and

- have obtained the citizenship of another country by a voluntary and formal act, other than marriage, or
- are serving in the armed forces of another country (where you are also a citizen) and that country is at war with South Africa.

Resumption of citizenship

You may apply to have your South African citizenship reinstated if you are a former citizen by birth or descent and you have returned to South Africa permanently or are living in South Africa permanently

Former citizens by naturalisation, must re-apply for permanent residence or apply for exemption thereof, before they can be considered for resumption.

To apply for resumption, you need to

- Complete Forms DHA-175 and DHA-52
- Complete application for identity document Form DHA-9
- Submit two identity document photographs that comply with the Passport and ID Photograph Specifications
- Submit proof that you live in South Africa permanently (municipal account, etc) and copy thereof
- Submit your marriage certificate (if applicable) and copy thereof
- Pay the prescribed fee

Exemption from loss of citizenship

Persons who have lost their South African citizenship by acquiring the citizenship of another country before 6 October 1995, may apply for exemption from the loss.

The following documents are required:

- Completed application Form DHA-1666 and DHA-529
- Payment of the prescribed fee

Renunciation of citizenship

If you are a dual citizen or intend to acquire the citizenship of another country you may apply for renunciation of your SA citizenship.

To apply:

- Complete Form DHA-246
- Submit proof of your other citizenship or confirmation that you are applying for another citizenship

- Submit the documents to your nearest Home Affairs office or South African Embassy, Mission or Consulate.

Deprivation of Citizenship

- You could be deprived of your South African citizenship if you are a citizen by naturalisation and
 - - your certificate of naturalisation was obtained fraudulently
 - you concealed a material fact relating to your application
 - you supplied false information about yourself, or
- If you are a dual citizen you may be deprived of your SA citizenship if you have, at any time, been sentenced to 12 months or more imprisonment in any country for an offence that would also have been a punishable offence in South Africa, or if deprivation would be in the public interest.

A person will be afforded the opportunity to show cause why he or she should not be deprived of their citizenship before a final decision is taken.