

Reading

Immigrants' Experience at Ellis Island (1892-1921)

Step 1: Arrive at Ellis Island.

Step 2: Undergo medical examinations. The exams were referred to as “six-second physicals,” because the majority were conducted within a six-second glance at an immigrant.

Step 3: Interview with an immigration inspector. During the interview, immigrants answered 29 questions about their identity, including their race, physical health, and how much money they carried with them.

Step 4: Leave Ellis Island. Most immigrants at Ellis Island were free to go within a few hours of their arrival. Only 6% of immigrants were denied entry to the country. The typical reasons for a denial would be that the inspector thought the immigrant carried a contagious disease or that they were likely to become a “public charge”—dependent on government benefits.