

PRACTITIONER CERTIFICATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

What is Practitioner Certification (PC)?

First published by the [Association for Challenge Course Technology](#) in June 2007, the [Practitioner Certification standards](#) were intended to provide a resource for both facilitators and course managers to consistently measure practitioner knowledge and ability. Much in the way that Wilderness First Responder provides a benchmark for one's training and experience in the field of wilderness medicine; PC is designed to serve as a common language to describe a facilitator's training and background in the challenge course industry. It is not, however, intended to replace solid hiring practices and thorough training.

Is the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) certifying me?

No, ACCT does not currently provide direct certification. Instead, ACCT publishes PC standards and then accredits Professional Vendor Members (PVM) to test to those standards. PVMs are submitted to a rigorous process that examines their background and ability to effectively, accurately, and ethically administer and manage PC testing. So what you have is a PC to ACCT standards... not an ACCT PC – clear as mud?

Are there different types of PCs?

Yes. PC is divided into several categories. Depending on the extent of your experience and your professional role in the industry, you can choose from Level 1, Level 2, and Course Manager. Each of these levels are further divided into tracks, describing the type of courses that they apply to: Spotted-Only (also known as Low Courses), High-Only (belayed events at height), Full (a combination of both low and high courses), and Site/System Specific (pertains to a specific course or type of course). System specific or course types may also categorize the certification as a challenge course, zip line tour, or aerial trekking course. In addition, belayed courses can be further broken down into the belay system used: such as traditional static, vertical or traversing dynamic, continuous/smart belay, or multiple systems.

Will the same certification apply at different courses?

Yes... and no. If you plan to work at multiple courses throughout your challenge course career, you will need to keep that in mind when you choose your certification. Each certification is transferable to the extent that the course where you are working matches the level, course, track, and system you tested for. For example, if you have a Level 1, Challenge Course, Full, Static certification, you can take that to another full challenge course, as long as they utilize the same static belay system, and your employer should recognize your certification. However, if you have a site or system specific certification of any level, it will only apply to that challenge course site or that particular system. Regardless of the transferability of your certification, there's no substitute for solid training to local operating procedures – wherever you may go. Whoa – that's a lot to take in.

Which level...track...system... is right for me?

That depends on a few factors, such as experience, professional goals, and budget. Take stock of your experience, and what you may qualify for – then consider your long-term plans in the field. The trick is to find a place to start (Level 1, Site Specific?) and develop a plan for where you want to go (Challenge Course Manager, Full!). Feel free to contact the Challenge Design office and ask for Katie – she's our resident PC pro and can help you find the right fit for your needs.

What does Challenge Design offer?

Challenge Design can train and test for all PC levels, tracks, and systems.

Where do I go to get certified?

While Challenge Design does occasionally offer open enrollment testing, often we work with programs to schedule testing at the program site. If you are a part of an organization (or a group of organizations) interested in scheduling a training or testing event, contact the CDI office. Our services include customized on-site training and certifications, as well as pre-conference or other regional certification events.

For individual certifications, start by checking the CDI Facebook page for upcoming open enrollment events or peruse the ACCT event calendar for courses in your region and matching your specific needs. Make sure you don't sign up for a zip line tour operator certification class if what you are really looking for is a low challenge course facilitation cert – the testing entity should be able to clearly explain what they will be testing and whether or not it is transferable.

Tell me about this test – what kind is it and how long does the test take?

There are two parts to the test: written and practical. The written test typically takes practitioners about an hour to complete. Practical test times depend on the type of course and number of practitioners testing, but you can typically expect the skills assessments to last 2-4 hours. Both tests are traditionally scheduled the same day, but we do occasionally split them to accommodate travel.

What happens if I don't pass?

Written tests require a score of at least 80% and successful demonstration of each category of practical skills is required to receive the certification. If you do not make a passing grade, you can retest within 90-days, though not the same day as the initial testing. For written exams, the whole exam must be taken again. For practical skills, only the missed skills will need to be performed again. After 90 days, if you opt to re-test, you will need to take both parts of the test in their entirety. Additional fees may apply for re-testing.

Can you accommodate practitioners with disabilities?

Yes, please notify us at the time of your application as to the nature of your disability and/or needs.

How much does it cost?

Prices for certification vary greatly based on the level of certification, group discounting, and travel expenses associated with on-site testing. Generally, costs range anywhere from \$175 – 400 per person. The best way to determine the cost to you is to contact Challenge Design for a personalized estimate.

What are the qualifications for each type of certification?

The best resource for details regarding the certification criteria is the current edition of the Association for Challenge Course Technology Challenge Course and Canopy Zip Line Tour Standards. A copy of the standards is available for purchase online at www.acctinfo.org. Generally speaking, the Level 1 certification will require documentation of between 8-40 hours of training (depending on track/system), and the Level 2 certification will require 40-80 hours of training in addition to 200 hours of experience facilitating related courses. Naturally, the Course Manager certification require additional management-specific training and experience.

How long does each certification last?

Level 1 is valid for 1 year, Level 2 is valid for 3 years, and Course Manager is valid for 5 years.

I've been doing this stuff for years – can't I just jump right in?

Sure! If you are able to meet minimum qualifications through documented experience and training in a portfolio, then you can test to that level. You may be asked for additional information (such as prior training syllabi) and we highly recommend an additional review training prior to test day.

Will I need to create a portfolio from scratch?

No, ACCT has a template available for you – which you can also download from www.acctinfo.org.

Do I have to get all of my training from Challenge Design Innovations?

No, absolutely not. With documented training provided in your portfolio, you are welcome to take the test without a single day of Challenge Design training. We would, however, highly recommend at least a short review session with Challenge Design to make sure we are all on the same page. Many practitioners we have worked with have found this extremely valuable on test day. For more information on trainer qualifications, check out the ACCT Qualified Course Professionals Guidelines available at www.acctinfo.org.

What if I don't meet the minimum qualifications – or I'm not sure I'm ready?

No problem! Challenge Design offers personalized on-site training for all levels and we can put together a plan to help you work your way towards your desired level of certification. Even if you do meet the qualifications, but have concerns about testing, Challenge Design offers pre-test reviews that can be scheduled prior to certification testing days. These review sessions can help answer your questions and have proven to significantly improve pass-rates among practitioners.

Great, I'm interested... now what?

The first step is to contact Challenge Design for an application. This form helps us to determine, at a glance, what level and track you are eligible for. We may request additional information later, such as a resume and portfolio, but this gives us a good place to start. From here we will help you determine best fit, and if you meet the PC qualifications, we will work with you to schedule your testing (and training if requested). Two-weeks prior to testing day, your completed portfolio and resume are due so that they can be reviewed by the Challenge Design office and our trainer/testers. Note: this step may not apply for level 1 certifications if you are Challenge Design-trained since we will already have your records. You will receive the results from your certification test the same day. The Challenge Design trainer/tester will review the test with you, providing feedback and answering questions you might have. You can expect to receive your certification card within 3 weeks of your test day.

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