



US Fencing Coaches Association

How to Become a Maître (Level 5)

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What Is A Maître (Fencing Master)?

The French word Maître when used in the context of fencing refers to a “Fencing Master.” In Italian, this person is known as a Maestro. The term is not meant to express a relationship between student and teacher that is one of dominance, nor is it meant to imply a dominant relationship between colleagues. Merely, it is intended to express that a particular individual has reached “mastery” level of their craft, namely, the instruction of fencing. The rank of Maître should be assumed humbly and with the attitude that one may still have much to learn!

Gaining the rank of Maître does not imply an end of learning, as all fencing professionals should be dedicated to advancing themselves and the community. Persons who have achieved this rank are expected to contribute to the development of the sport by mentoring new coaches, serving on leadership committees and examination boards, and conducting themselves with the highest of professionalism and ethics.

The title of Fencing Master is honored throughout the fencing world. Coaches at this level have a thorough knowledge of fencing and how to teach it at a high level, and are held in high regard by their peers and students. The world-wide authority for certification of Fencing Masters is the Academie d’Armes Internationale (AAI). The USFCA is the branch of the AAI in the United States.

Fencing Master is the highest level of accreditation. Masters are capable of teaching fencers from beginners to high-level competitive champions. Masters can also train other coaches to become Prévôts or Masters.

A coach can be certified as a Master in an individual weapon (e.g. Maitre d’Fleuret - Foil, Maitre d’Sabre, Maitre d’Épée), and after passing all three will be certified as a Maitre d’Armes - Master of Arms.

This certification requires passing the Prévôt written exam, a written thesis and a comprehensive practical and oral examination, given by a board of three USFCA fencing masters that are certified to give exams.

Fencing Masters are expected to be able to give a challenging individual lesson to a fencer at a high level (e.g., to compete at a national level), as well as to be able to instruct novices in the fundamental skills. The Master should be able to give smooth and effective lessons involving actions of advanced tactics, changes of distance, choice of reactions, and variations of initiation. The Fencing Master must also be able to demonstrate, teach and elicit proper technique from their students.

Along with lesson skills the Master should be familiar with training regimens and physical training, in order to direct the practice sessions, physical training, lessons, and competition schedule of serious competitors. This requires knowledge of various types of physical conditioning methods and periodization.

As a potential businessman, the Master should be aware of the physical risks and financial liability involved in both the instruction and management of a fencing club or team. As a likely manager or owner, knowledge of safety procedures is paramount.



Quick Guide to Earning Your Certification

Certification Checklist

- Become a member of the USFCA (www.usfca.org)
- Read the study guides for Prévôt (Level 4) (available online at www.usfca.org in the reference section available to members)
- Pass the online Prévôt (Level 4) written exam with a minimum score of 75 out of 100
- Submit a Master's Thesis to the USFCA that is accepted.
- Pass a practical exam for each weapon for which certification is desired with a minimum score of 75%

Additional information about the certification process is contained in this document, but the checklist above can be used to help you keep track of your progress while you work to earn your certification. The US Fencing Coaches Association wishes you every success as you begin your journey in becoming a fencing master.

Note: *To earn a certification, it is helpful to work as an apprentice to a USFCA member certified professional.*

Quick NOTE: The NCDP Steering Committee and CAB are working to develop a process for Maître that involves a series of formative assessments given at NCDP clinics. Please look for these to be out on the USFCA website soon.

Specifics to Earning Certification

Candidates must be a current member of the [USFCA](http://www.usfca.org). Membership information can be found online at www.usfca.org.

Candidates must pre-register and pay online to take both the written and practical exam. To take the written exam, go to the USFCA website, log in as a member and look under "Testing and Course" for the Prévôt (Level 4) written exam. After paying for the exam, the candidate may take it. The test should be taken in a quiet and private testing area. Under no circumstances should the test be reproduced or disseminated.

The online exam will be graded automatically and your score will be displayed at the end of the exam. Print out the final exam score for your own records. The printed exam score must be used to show that the written exam was passed, enabling the candidate to schedule a practical exam. USFCA will maintain a record of all exams attempted. If the USFCA determines the exam/testing environment has been significantly compromised, the examination can be considered invalid.

Each certification candidate will have two chances to pass the exam per exam fee within an eight hour window of time. If the candidate fails the written exam they may register and pay again online and attempt the exam again when better prepared. Only one written test needs to be taken and passed for each level of certification. (Taking a second practical examination in an additional weapon does not require taking another written exam.)

After passing the written exam, the candidate must complete and submit a thesis paper. Coaches wishing to embark on the process to receive their Fencing Master certification should contact a member of the Certification and Accreditation Board. A formal request should be made in writing or by email. The candidate



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may select anyone to help coordinate the thesis project. The CAB chair will assign a Thesis Review Committee.

Once the thesis has been submitted and approved, the candidate may take the practical exam. A minimum score of 75% on the practical exam is required to pass a weapon. There is no time limit between practical weapon tests and no requirement that a fencing coach take more than one weapon to earn certification.

Fees must be paid online at the USFCA's website prior to the test. The candidate has to print out a proof of purchase to show the examiners that the practical exam was prepaid online.

If the candidate passes the Prévôt (Level 4) written test, the written Moniteur test is no longer needed for lower certifications such as Moniteur practical exams. However, if the candidate fails the Master practical exam, a lower level certification is not given (Moniteur or Prévôt) no matter how close the score is to passing.

Resources for Master (Level 5) Candidates

The list below of references and resources are strongly recommended as study materials for the Master (Level 5) candidate, especially if the candidate is not studying directly under the tutelage of a Fencing Master. This list is recommended in addition to the references for Moniteur candidates. Specific information can be found in the USFCA's Suggested Reading List in the resources section available for members at www.usfca.org.

- [Electric Foil Fencing](#) by Lukovich, 1998
- [Epee: A Complete Theory](#) by Vass, 1998
- [Fencing Foil: A Practical Training Guide for Coaches, Parents and Young Athletes](#), Handelman and Louie, 2014, Pattenando Publishing, San Francisco, CA
- [Fencing Sabre: A Practical Training Guide for Coaches, Parents and Young Athletes](#), Handelman and Louie, 2010, Second edition 2015, Pattenando Publishing, San Francisco, CA
- [USFCA glossary](#) – found in the Reference area of the USFCA website
- [Theory, Methods, and Exercises in Fencing](#) by Wojciechowski, 1989
- [Understanding Fencing, The Unity of Theory and Practice](#), by Czajkowski, 2005
- [Risk Management Essentials for Local Sports Organizations](#)

Other important References and Resources for Prévôt Candidates

- USA Fencing rulebook and operations manual
- USFCA - The Swordmaster
- USOC Olympic Coach Magazine

Evaluation Process

Written Exam

The Master candidate will take the Prévôt (Level 4) written exam if it was not already passed during the Prévôt (Level 4) process. For more information on the Prévôt (Level 4) written exam, please refer to the *Prevot (Level 4) How To* document on the USFCA Website.



Submission of a Master's Thesis

The Master's Thesis is an academic paper required of every candidate for the certification level of Master. This thesis paper demonstrates that the candidate has a sound knowledge of fencing, presents the results of intensive research into a topic, and adds to the body of knowledge for the coaching community.

A thesis paper may propose to solve a problem, challenge existing ideas, discuss or interpret existing literature or provide other information valuable to the coaching community. The exact content and nature of the thesis should be determined with the input of the CAB Chair.

To do justice to a topic or problem, and to prove the expertise of a Fencing Master, a candidate should expect that a thesis paper will be approximately twenty five pages in length, plus bibliography.

A shorter thesis paper and video presentation is now permitted. The paper and video can complement, explain and expand on the concepts behind what is presented in either format.

An alternative to the thesis is available (especially for ESL coaches) to obtain a USFCA Master Certification. The alternative to the thesis may involve, but not limited to, answering a series of Research Questions relative to fencing that will require research and/or extensive thought and analysis. Questions may relate to pedagogy, fitness, business acumen or others as deemed appropriate by the CAB.

More specific information about submitting the Master's Thesis can be found in a separate document entitled, "Submission of a Master's Thesis to the USFCA". This document is available on the USFCA's website in the Master's Certification area.

Practical Exam Policies

Three Fencing Masters must sit on a board to give the Master (Level 5) practical exam. They must be current USFCA members and Certified Examiners with the USFCA. The candidate should take the test at an official USFCA coaches clinic – most recommended is the Annual Conference.

If the candidate is registering in advance for examination at a USFCA seminar, workshop, conference, etc., the candidate will be assigned a board by the CAB. Upon request, the Certification and Examination Board can assemble boards to take place at other occurrences. In preparation for the practical exam the candidate should refer to the appropriate books, suggestions and materials on the practical exam study guide.

Practical exams consist of demonstration of the candidate's ability to instruct fencing to individuals. Candidates should be prepared to demonstrate any of the actions listed below in their weapon.

After the exam the Board member(s) will tell the results to the candidate, discuss the exam and answer the candidate's questions. The primary examiner will copy the results on the appropriate forms and forward them to the Secretary of the Certification and Accreditation Board. Any fees should be paid online before the exam. The candidate will receive Proof of Exam Form after the test is completed validating the results and, if passed, later a certificate from the USFCA.



Practical Examination

For a detail of the lesson that should be presented in the Master exam - please see the latest scoresheet on the USFCA website

<https://www.usfca.org/index.php/files/26/Practical-Scoresheets/80/MASTER-Practical-Scoresheet.pdf>

Tips For Taking The Practical Exam

- Be on time and have students ready.
- Warm up, you may need to demonstrate some movements.
- You have the right to ask any questions and express any concern during the exams in a polite and professional way.
- The examiner anticipates that you will introduce yourself, give a brief synopsis of your fencing program and your students.
- Your uniform should be sharp, clean and professional.
- Speak clearly and in a voice loud enough for the examiner(s) to hear you.
- Orient the lesson so that you face the student and the examiners as much as possible.
- Be confident, energetic and pleasant – an appropriate sense of humor never hurts.
- Be rested and ready for the exam so that it will be a positive and fun experience.
- Teach in a natural way – as you would do at your own fencing program. The examiners are interested in hearing your verbal explanations, seeing your demonstrations and seeing how you organize the lessons.
- At the conclusion of the exam the candidate should salute and shake hands with the examiner(s).
- Do your homework, study and feel free to seek help from others in the fencing community. Any member of the *Certification and Accreditation Board* will be glad to answer any questions.