



# Setting Yourself Up for Success

Navigating the certification process can be a little daunting, but with some preplanning, it can be an achievable and rewarding experience.

**Step 1: Establish Timeline & Budget:** Typically, a chef can start and finish the process within 6 months. The key is looking ahead. Review all the costs of certification from application fee, refresher classes, exam fees including food for your practical exam, and final fee. Make a plan; then work your plan.

**Step 2: Get Organized & Garner Support:** Discuss your goal with your employer, your family, your chapter. Find support, tips, mentorship everywhere. You can do it alone, but it's a lot easier with support.

**Step 3: Gather Important Documents & Submit Initial Application:** Once you identify the level that best meets your qualifications, print the initial application and attach the requested educational and work experience documentation.

**Education:** There is a certification path for everyone regardless of whether or not there is formal education. The documentation must verify completion of the 3 – 30-hour (or 2 semester credit hours) mandatory classes in Nutrition, Safety & Sanitation, and Supervisory Management. If these classes were taken more than 5 years ago, an 8-hour refresher in each subject is required. These classes are available online.

For example,

- If you have an AOS in Culinary Arts, document with a transcript.
- If you have a Certificate of Culinary Arts, document with a transcript.
- If you have taken some college credit, document with your high school or GED diploma **and** college transcript **and** designated number of continuing education hours for the level you are applying for including mandatory classes and refreshers, if required.
- If you never went to college, document with your high school or GED diploma **and** designated number of continuing education hours for the level you are applying for including mandatory classes and refreshers, if required.

**Work documentation:** You only need to document *the minimum number of years listed* for the level you are applying. The documentation can come from multiple employers but must be within 10 years. Provide the employment documentation form or ask them to write a letter including the dates of employment, title, general job duties and any supervisory experience (if applicable, with number of direct reports in food production) on company letterhead. Culinary experience must be in a food service operation.

*Even though the practical exam is the last piece to be completed, you are encouraged to practice early and often. Identify when and where you will take the practical exam. Review the Practical Exam Handbook and pay close attention to what you are to demonstrate. Be sure to practice all the way through not just in segments. Have a certified chef take photos and critique your practices.*

**Step 4: Study & Pass Written Exam:** Start studying for the written exam early so that as soon as your initial application is preapproved, you may take the exam. Remember there are practice tests and study guide tips on the Website.

**Step 5: Practice & Pass Practical Exam:** Review the Practical Exam Handbook that corresponds to your examination and practice. Successful candidates practice 8-10 times with the helpful critique of a mentor. Identify the location and date, then register early to secure your spot. Contact the test administrator with your specific questions.

**Step 6: Submit Final Application to Complete Your Certification:** Submit the final application along with pass forms for both the practical and written exams along with final payment.

Got questions? Call or email Certification at [certify@acfchefs.net](mailto:certify@acfchefs.net) (800) 624-9458 x 505