



1065 Dove Run Road, Suite 5
Lexington, Kentucky 40502
Office: 859-266-4807

2023 CERTIFICATION EXAM APPLICATION FORM
(Please print in block letters.)

First Name:	Last Name:	
Company Name:		
Street Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Home Phone:	Mobile Phone:	E-mail:
Do you have a current version (rvsd 2023, attached) of the Conservancy’s Certification Program?		
Indicate which special features you plan to build on-site the week prior to your timed test (see Note below):		
<p>Please enclose the required Certification Exam Day Fee(s) as follows (please circle one or more): DSC Exams*: Level I Drystone Mason - \$300.00; Level II Journeyman – Timed Test \$400.00 + Special Features \$400.00; Level III Master Craftsman – Timed Test \$450.00 + Special Features \$450.</p> <p>Please make checks payable to: Dry Stone Conservancy.</p> <p>*Note: The above Certification Exam Day Fees cover only the timed tests occurring in Central Kentucky during DSC-organized Exam Days, and concurrent examination of wallheads and other special features built on-site prior to the timed tests. Applicants wishing to reserve a different exam date and those wishing to set up an exam beyond Central Kentucky should call the office at 859-266-4807 for information about additional fees to cover the examiner(s) fee and travel expenses.</p>		

Conditions of Certification

Successful certification candidates may request their information be included on the Conservancy’s *Referral List of Certified Professional Dry Stone Masons*. In order to insure that the Certification Program retains the respect that it and you have earned, we ask every successful applicant to carefully note the following Conditions of Certification:

- 1) Conservancy-certified Dry Stone Masons may not represent themselves in any way that implies they are Conservancy employees or have achieved a higher certification level than that which has been earned. This includes advertising, business cards, websites and letterheads.
- 2) Conservancy-certified Dry Stone Masons may not represent themselves or practice as Dry Stone Conservancy affiliated instructors until they have completed and passed the training and are invited to instruct Conservancy organized training courses.
- 3) Masons whose workmanship falls beneath that exhibited for the test may be removed from the Conservancy’s Referral List until a re-test has been taken and passed.
- 4) Conservancy-certified Dry Stone Masons are expected to conduct themselves as professionals and manage their businesses in a reliable, honest and sober manner.
- 5) The Dry Stone Conservancy reserves the right to remove masons from the *Referral List of Certified Professional Dry Stone Masons* whose activities bring the Conservancy and/or the Certification Program into disrepute.

I have read and agree to abide by the Conditions of Certification should I be successful in my test.

Signature of applicant: _____ Date: _____

Notes for Guidance

In addition to the *Guidelines for Inspecting/Examining Drystone Fences and Retaining Walls* on the next page, the examiners will be looking at the following points during the timed test:

- Safety.
- Site preparation and organization.
- Foundations - ground well prepared, foundation level and firm with uniform projection, stones no less than 3" thick, well packed and leveled.
- Face stones - all joints covered, no chinking (front pinning), bedding level, no floating joints, thoroughly packed with no light showing through.
- Tie rocks - no more than 36" apart on center, packed and locked to all adjacent stones.
- Line & straightness - The line of the wall along its path, leveling across small dips and hollows.
- Batter - Uniform inward slope of the correct proportion for rock fence (usually 1:6).
- Cover course (where used) - Laid touching each other, packed and locked to adjacent rocks.
- Coping - Uniform angle, well locked.

While the Conservancy will always be supportive of those wishing to be certified, please do not look upon the test as a foregone conclusion. For the Certification Program to have meaning it is important that certain minimum standards are maintained.

Applicants will be informed of the reasons, should they not pass, and every assistance will be given to them in improving their skills. This will vary, but it may be the offer of a place on another training course, or work experience with an instructor.

Conditions of Certification

(For your record)

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- 5) The Dry Stone Conservancy reserves the right to remove masons from the *Referral List of Certified Professional Dry Stone Masons* whose activities bring the Conservancy and/or the Certification Program into disrepute.

I have read and agree to abide by the Conditions of Certification should I be successful in my test.

Signature of applicant: _____ Date: _____



GUIDELINES FOR INSPECTING & EXAMINING DRYSTONE FENCES & RETAINING WALLS

(Modified from DSWAGB's *Key Points for Examiners*)

Preparation and Execution of Foundations

- a) Foundation dug down to firm subsoil and leveled. If building on fill, compact to specifications.
- b) Foundation stones laid with length running into wall, at least half of stone depth under the wall above.
- c) Foundation correct width for wall height, plus specified projection both sides.
- d) Foundation well packed with stones of diminishing sizes (not gravel)
- e) Largest available stones are used in the foundation.

Wall Build and Packing – First and Second Lift

- a) Stones placed tightly together with no gaps.
- b) Face stones with minimum 1/3 depth and maximum 2/3 depth running into wall.
- c) No running joints further than two rows of stones.
- d) If built random, i.e. not coursed, there should be a definite level line at tie height.
- e) Good use of hearting, thoroughly packed, carefully hand placed and pinned, not thrown or dumped in.
- f) Tight wall faces, stones should not move when kicked.
- g) No face pinning or chinking. Leveling plates are acceptable if well tied into wall and adequate thickness.
- h) Definite level line at cover course height.
- i) Largest stones used in bottom lift, gradual transition to thinnest stones in upper courses.

Tie Stones

- a) Laid at approximately 1-yard intervals, on center, with 2" to 4" projection (or as specified).
- b) Walls taller than 4 feet require additional rows of ties at 18" vertical spacing, with staggered placement.
- c) Check that ties are laying solidly on the wall, well packed with no voids or daylight and no movement.
- d) If long ties are unavailable, shorter overlapping ties can be used provided they overlap at least 6 inches.

Cover Course

- a) Covers laid with flattest side down in a continuous row with 1 to 2 inch projection both sides (or as specified).
- b) Check that covers are laying solidly on the wall, well packed with no voids or daylight and no movement.

Coping and Finish

- a) Copings should sit solidly on their own bases rather than propped up on pinning.
- b) Copings placed at specified angle, single or double as specified.
- c) Double copings should have tie copings placed at one-yard intervals.
- d) Check that copings do not move, copings are well locked with minimal pinning, pins neat and blended into wall.

Batter

- a) Wall should come in smoothly and evenly at specified batter.
- b) No visible bulges or hollows.
- c) Face stones selected and placed with faces that follow batter. No visible stepping in of courses.

Line and Straightness

- a) Obvious correct use of lines to guide work, set taut and level for correct wall dimensions, batters, levels and stone course heights as specified.
- b) Ties and covers placed at same level, evenly spaced.
- c) No bends or bulges in length of wall.
- d) Curves smooth and continuous, without bends or angles, correct batter preserved inside and outside of curve.

Wallheads

- a) Stones well tied back along the wall faces.
- b) Good selection of stones laid 2-on-1 and 1-on-2, using larger stone than face stones.
- c) Minimum depth of stone running into the wall maintained for upper and lower lifts.
- d) If coped, the wallhead should be topped with a single block of sufficient height and weight to support copings.

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CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR DRY STONE MASONS

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Dry Stone Conservancy (DSC) is a publicly supported nonprofit 501(c)3 organization whose purpose is preserving drystone structures and promoting the craft of drystone masonry—the technique of building rock fences and stone walls without mortar.

The Conservancy's Certification Program, federally registered in 2001, is designed to promote public confidence in dry-laid stone as a desirable building technique and in the skills of certified drystone craftsmen. As a part of this purpose, the DSC conducts training courses to teach generally accepted international drystone construction standards, and maintains a register of independent professional masons.

The DSC program is the only national certification program for dry stone craftsmen in the United States. The program was modeled after the highly successful professional registry of the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain (DSWA), and was tailored to the needs of preservationists and professional designers in the United States, including the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and the National Park Service.

Basic training in drystone fence building is regularly offered in Kentucky for aspiring craftsmen and the general public. Special courses are taught on request in other states for aspiring drystone masons, and at various national and state parks for park maintenance personnel. Advanced training is offered periodically in partnership with sponsoring agencies at restoration sites throughout the country. It is not mandatory, however, to attend a DSC training course to become certified.

DSC-certified drystone masons may be included on the Conservancy's Referral List of Certified Dry Stone Craftsmen, which is supplied upon request to government agencies and the general public. This list is posted on the DSC web site: www.DryStoneUSA.org. DSC-certified craftsmen may incorporate the federally copyrighted DSC Registration Mark on their promotional materials.

CERTIFICATION LEVELS

The Dry Stone Conservancy has multiple certification levels - for drystone masons, journeymen, master craftsmen, drystone authorities, examiners, instructors, and garden masons. All levels in the certification program are for professional drystone masons

Although participation in the DSC training program is not required for certification, it will be of great assistance in acquiring needed skills. As part of the training, the Instructors show slides and a how-to video, and carefully explain the theories of internationally accepted standards. Courses are hands-on and provide the trainees with instruction in every part of building a double-faced drystone fence, while providing continuous monitoring in the field.

QUALIFIED DRYSTONE MASON (Level 1):

Qualified Drystone Mason is the first, beginning, level in the Dry Stone Conservancy's certification program. Candidates who pass the test for correctly building a wallhead, a low retaining wall, and a (timed) drystone fence section, achieve the initial level of Qualified Drystone Mason.

JOURNEYMAN MASON (Level 2):

Journeyman Mason is the second level in advancement in the Dry Stone Conservancy's certification program. It is earned by drystone masons with skills above the beginning (basic) level. Journeyman masons are skilled in building and repairing strong field fences, retaining walls, roadside fences, and stream bank walls, as well as common drystone features such as curved fences, corners, culverts, and stepped foundations. Their abilities include sound techniques, durable construction, and a good production rate.

It will greatly assist a drystone mason who aspires to journeyman certification to participate in the DSC's training projects or to work with Journeymen or Master Craftsmen. These projects give the masons experience in more advanced construction and production techniques, ensure that they understand the theories of internationally accepted standards, and provide continuous monitoring in the field.

MASTER CRAFTSMAN (Level 3):

Master Craftsman certifies masons who are fully proficient in all aspects of building freestanding fences, retaining walls up to 5 feet in height, special features commonly incorporated in drystone fences, and use of a variety of rock types. In addition to excellence in building drystone fences and retaining walls, the Master Craftsman builds pillars, arches, and stiles. Master Craftsmen must conduct their work in a fully professional manner. Essential requirements are construction techniques that provide structural strength combined with a superior production rate.

INSTRUCTOR AND EXAMINER AWARDS:

Qualified Instructors and Certified Examiners are awarded to certified drystone masons who have completed a DSC-sponsored or DSWA training course, and have passed the requirements to become DSC Instructors and/or Examiners.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

HOW TO APPLY FOR ANY CERTIFICATION LEVEL:

Prior to beginning any work to be examined or submitting photos of completed work, please obtain the current certification requirements and a Test Application Form from the Dry Stone Conservancy. Complete the form and return it to the DSC with the application fee at least two weeks prior to the test date. DSC's certification exam days are usually held in central Kentucky in the spring and fall.

Applicants may apply for certification at basic, journeyman, and master levels without having been certified at other levels, but they must fulfill all the requirements for all previous certification tests.

APPLICATION FEES:

For all certification levels, a non-refundable fee is payable in advance of assessment, to cover examination costs and examiners' fees. These fees may be periodically adjusted; check with the DSC office for the current fee rates. In 2021, the fees for examinations taking place in central Kentucky on DSC-sponsored Exam Days are: Level I Drystone Mason - \$300.00; Level II Journeyman – Timed Test \$400.00 + Special Features \$400.00; Level III Master Craftsman – Timed Test \$450.00 + Special Features 450.00. Candidates may also make special arrangements for examinations outside the central Kentucky region or at times other than DSC-sponsored certification days, but will incur additional charges to cover all extra time and travel expenses.

POINTS REQUIRED FOR PASSING:

For each certification level, the applicant's work must receive minimum passing marks for EACH test detail. A TOTAL of 70 points out of 100 are required to pass tests at Basic level, 78 points for Journeyman, and 85 points for Master level. The points required for each construction detail are provided with DSC test applications and instructions. Correct techniques are explained in the DSC training handbook, *Building and Repairing Dry Stone Fences and Retaining Walls*. Unsuccessful candidates at any level should practice for at least three months before re-applying.

THE CERTIFICATION PANEL:

Field tests at all levels will be conducted by accredited Examiners appointed by the Dry Stone Conservancy. Two Examiners are needed for all levels above Basic. The Examiners will inspect the work, review the photographs, complete the mark sheets, and send a summary of their assessments to the DSC Certification Panel. The Panel will collect references, correlate and evaluate records, and supply reports on the assessments to the applicants.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS, ALL LEVELS

The DSC will inform expected applicants of the date and place of forthcoming examinations. With permission from the property owner, applicants may visit the site the day before the examination and practice working with the rock. For the basic level only, applicants may dismantle the damaged fence section to bare earth, sort the rock, and prepare the ground prior to the timed test.

For examinations requiring photographs, the photos should be of sufficient detail for analysis, showing (1) the site before any work commenced, (2) the prepared ground and the organization of materials, (3) the completed foundation, (4) the project midway to completion, showing the interior of the structure, (5) the tie level(s), (6) the fence top ready for the cover course, and (7) the completed structure. Please write on the back of each photo the exact location (owner's name, address, distance from the nearest intersection, name of intersection, and location on the property). A sketch map is helpful.

Applicants must submit the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three clients of their projects so that the Certification Panel may independently obtain opinions regarding the skill and professionalism of the candidates.

All applicants must explain personal safety precautions to the Examiners, as listed in *Building and Repairing Dry Stone Fences and Retaining Walls*.

Applicants at all levels must be able to identify projects that are beyond their abilities. They must be able to identify and explain to the Examiners projects that require the expertise of a Journeyman, Master Craftsman, or Drystone Authority. They must know when projects require by law the expertise of professional historic preservation consultants and/or licensed landscape architects, engineers, or architects.

CONDITIONS OF CERTIFICATION

In order to insure that employers retain confidence in the Conservancy's List of Certified Dry Stone Craftsmen, we ask that every applicant carefully note the following Conditions of Certification:

- Certified masons may not represent themselves in any way that implies they are Conservancy employees or have attained a higher level of certification than they have earned. This includes advertising, business cards websites and letterheads, as well as word of mouth.
- Certified masons may not represent themselves or practice as Dry Stone Conservancy examiners or instructors until they have completed and passed the training and requirements to complete the examiner and instructor certifications.
- Certified drystone masons whose subsequent work falls below that produced for their tests may have their certifications revoked by the Conservancy. They will be removed from the certified list until their work improves to the required standards and they have passed re-testing.
- Certified craftsmen are expected to conduct themselves as professionals, and to manage their businesses in a reliable, ethical, skilled, and sober manner. The Conservancy will investigate complaints from employers, agencies, and the public, and valid complaints will result in de-certification. The DSC will remove from the certified list anyone who brings the Conservancy and/or the Certification Program into disrepute.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION, LEVEL 1

Requirements for Certification as a Qualified Drystone Mason

TEST REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must build a double-faced drystone fence, 4 feet tall and 7 feet long, measured at tie level, to the specifications in the testing instructions (obtainable from the DSC office). The test section may have a slope on each end of 60 degrees or more, measured from horizontal (unless otherwise approved). The test is to be built in 8 hours in the presence of the Examiners. If the test is part of an existing fence, it must match the original fence in appearance. Applicants must supply their own batter frames or re-bar, hammers, pegs, and string.

Within 3 days of the test day, applicants are also required to build a wallhead.

Applicants must also have had experience building a 2-foot retaining wall, either as part of a training class, or under the supervision of a Journeyman or Master. The Instructor or Supervisor must attest to the applicant's ability to correctly build a 2-foot retaining wall.

For out-of-state applicants, submit detailed photographs of your wallhead and retaining wall. Photos should be of sufficient detail for analysis, showing (1) the site before any work commenced, (2) the prepared ground and the organization of materials, (3) the completed foundation, (4) the project midway to completion, showing the interior of the structure, (5) the tie level(s), (6) the fence top ready for the cover course, and (7) the completed structure. Please write on the back of each photo the location and owner's name, address and phone number.

ADDITIONALLY

All applicants must explain personal safety precautions to the Examiners, as listed in *Building and Repairing Dry Stone Fences and Retaining Walls*.

Applicants must be able to explain to the Examiners the structural theory for freestanding drystone fences as shown in *Building and Repairing Dry Stone Fences and Retaining Walls*.

Applicants must agree NOT to build retaining walls more than four feet tall, unless under direct supervision of a Journeyman or Master.

Applicants who do not pass on the first try will be informed of the reasons. The DSC will try to help failed applicants improve their skills. Help may be the offer of a place on another training course, or work with a certified journeyman or master.

See also General Requirements All Levels and Conditions of Certification.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION, LEVEL 2

Requirements for Certification as a Journeyman Drystone Mason

TEST REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must dismantle and rebuild, in 8 hours in the presence of the Examiners, a fence section 4 feet tall and 10 feet long (measured at the tie level). The angle of slope on the ends of the test section is to be no less than 60 degrees from horizontal (unless otherwise approved). The rebuilt section must match the visual appearance of the original fence. Several applicants may build their test sections on the same day on the same fence, but each test section must be separate from the others and must be built solely by the applicant. Lengths for each test will be marked out by the Examiners.

In addition to the timed test, applicants must build a simple retaining wall 4 feet tall and 10 feet long, using the principles in *Building and Repairing Dry Stone Fences and Retaining Walls*. The applicant must submit photographs of the retaining wall that are of sufficient detail for analysis as explained above in the General Requirements. The submitted section must be built entirely by the applicant, but the entire wall (beyond the 10-foot section) may be a group project. The applicant must explain to the Certification Panel the drainage requirements, grade preparation, and structural theories for retaining walls.

In addition to their fences, applicants must independently build and submit photos of three of four coping styles: single, double, flat, or boulder.

Applicants must also independently build a 10-foot section of 4-foot high fence with a stepped foundation on a steep slope including covers and copes, a 9-inch by 9-inch (minimum) lintel drain in a freestanding fence, a 10-foot section of 4-foot high freestanding fence with a 7-foot (maximum) curved radius, and a 90-degree corner in a 4-foot high freestanding fence. They must submit photos of each step in the building process and explain to the Examiners the structural theories for each. If help is essential for a particular feature, primarily because of rock size, applicants may request DSC approval beforehand to have a helper lift those rocks.

For features requiring photographs, the photos should be of sufficient detail for analysis, showing (1) the site before any work commenced, (2) the prepared ground and the organization of materials, (3) the completed foundation, (4) the project midway to completion, showing the interior of the structure, (5) the tie level(s), (6) the fence top ready for the cover course, and (7) the completed structure. Please write on the back of each photo the exact location and owner's name, address and phone number.

ADDITIONALLY

Applicants must explain to the Examiners or Certification Panel the structural theory for freestanding drystone fences. They must describe the three major types of fence styles and the principles for structural stability for each variation as explained and diagramed in *Rock Fences of the Bluegrass*.

Applicants must demonstrate to the Examiners or Certification Panel their abilities to interpret drawings and plans, and how to calculate the amount of material needed for a project.

Applicants must know and explain to the Examiners current Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) safety standards. Current standards may be obtained from your state's Labor Cabinet: in Kentucky: Kentucky Labor Cabinet, Division of Education and Training in Frankfort, telephone 502-564-6895.

See also General Requirements All Levels and Conditions of Certification.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION, LEVEL 3

Requirements for Certification as a Master Craftsman Dry Stone Mason

TEST REQUIREMENTS

Each applicant must build, in 8 hours in the presence of the Examiners, a freestanding double-faced drystone fence 4 feet tall and 12 feet long (measured at tie level), incorporating a special feature.

Kentucky applicants must design, build, and submit photographs taken during repair or construction of an “edge fence,” 4 feet tall and 8 feet long, and explain to the Certification Panel the structural theory for the work. Applicants from other states must design, build, and submit photographs of a (pre-approved) special fence or wall type or feature indigenous to their regions.

Applicants must also design, build and submit photographs of the other special features not built for their timed tests: a stile, arch, and pillar (at least 4 feet tall and 2 feet square). The required features may be part of a group project, but must be designed and built by the applicant alone. Applicants must explain to the Certification Panel the structural theories for each required feature as described in *Building Special Features in Dry Stone* (obtainable from the DSC office or the DSWA).

Applicants must also build and submit photographs of a (pre-approved) special feature or project of their own choosing. Marks for this feature will be based on difficulty as well as technique.

Applicants must submit photos to the Certification Panel showing their abilities to use the rock type that was not part of their timed tests

- (1) flatly-bedded rock, or
- (2) rounded or angular (irregular) rock, depending on the applicant’s local rock type.

For features requiring photographs, the photos should be of sufficient detail for analysis, showing (1) the site before any work commenced, (2) the prepared ground and the organization of materials, (3) the completed foundation, (4) the project midway to completion, showing the interior of the structure, (5) the tie level(s), (6) the fence top ready for the cover course, and (7) the completed structure. Please write on the back of each photo the exact location and owner’s name, address and phone number.

ADDITIONALLY

Applicants must have participated in an accredited training course on load-bearing drystone retaining walls over 10 feet in height, and have demonstrated to the project instructor/supervisor competency in building such a wall.

They must demonstrate to the Examiners their abilities to work and shape rock; and how to move and lift heavy rocks, using sleds, rollers, lifting straps, chains, cables, tongs, and chain dogs; and work-site safety regarding machinery, equipment, and scaffolding.

Applicants must describe to the Examiners or Certification Panel site and materials variables that affect a project’s design including but not limited to: bearing capacity of the soils; surcharge; flood conditions; compression strength; weathering and frictional resistance of rock types; suitability of various backfill, drainage, and footing materials; and building codes and ordinances. Two registered, licensed landscape architects are on the DSC staff and board to assist with these subjects, if needed.

See also General Requirements All Levels and Conditions of Certification.



SUMMARY OF BUILT FEATURES REQUIRED FOR CERTIFICATION

Requirements	Level 1 Qualified Drystone Mason	Level 2 Journeyman Drystone Mason	Level 3 Master Craftsman Drystone Mason
TIMED drystone fence, 4 ft tall x 7 ft long, in 8 hours	X		
Wallhead, built within 3 days of test	X		
Retaining wall, low (1.5 to 2 ft tall) with flat caps (can be part of workshop)	X		
TIMED drystone fence, 4 ft tall x 10 ft long, dismantle & rebuild, in 8 hours		X	
Retaining wall, 4 ft high x 10 ft long		X	
Stepped foundation on a steep slope, 4 ft high x 10 ft long w/covers & copes		X	
3 Coping types, of 4 types - single, double, flat, or boulder		X	
Lintel drain		X	
Curve		X	
Corner		X	
TIMED drystone fence, 4 ft tall x 12 ft long with special feature, in 8 hours			X
Edge fence or boulder wall, depending on national region, 4 ft tall, 8 ft long			X
Drystone fence using irregular, rounded or flat-bedded rock (other than the rock type used on the timed test).			X
Arch			X
Pillar			X
Stile			X
Special feature of the applicant's choice (pre-approved)			X
Refer to the full DSC Certification Program description for "Additionally" required verbal responses and practical demonstrations for each level.	X	X	X
Refer to the full DSC Certification Program description for additional "General Requirements" for all levels.	X	X	X
Refer to the full DSC Certification Program description for additional "Conditions of Certification" required for all levels.	X	X	X

Applicants may apply for certification at basic qualified, journeyman, and master levels without having been certified at other levels, but they must fulfill the requirements for all previous certification tests.