



ATA International
Songahm International Headquarters

Upcoming Changes in Testing and Title Requirements for 5th through 9th Degree Black Belts in 2025

We are thrilled to share with you significant updates that have been meticulously reviewed and approved by the Presiding Grand Master, the Masters' Council, and a select group of Seniors. These changes are set to redefine the criteria for testing for 5th through 9th Degree Black Belt ranks and earning the esteemed Mastership Titles. All of these changes reflect the ATA's unwavering commitment to excellence, high standards, and the continued growth of our organization.

These revised Testing and Title Requirements will take effect on January 1, 2025. Detailed guidelines and support materials will be provided to assist Senior Ranks in preparing for these enhanced requirements.

We understand the importance of these changes and their impact on the ATA. As such, we encourage all Licensees, Instructors, and Black Belts to engage with their instructors and ATA representatives to understand the specifics of these updates and how they can best prepare for the new testing standards.

We believe that these enhancements will uphold the integrity of our martial arts tradition while propelling the ATA forward into a future of excellence and achievement.

Thank you for your dedication, passion, and continued commitment to the ATA.

Sincerely,

Grand Master MK Lee
ATA Presiding Grand Master

1. **Updated Testing Requirements:** The testing requirements have been updated to allow everyone the privilege of testing for ranks up to 8th Degree Black Belt if they fulfill the requirements. Testing for 9th Degree remains by invitation only, and anyone who fulfills the requirements will be considered as a candidate for an invitation. The main changes are replacing Leadership Points with Judging Points and replacing Accredited National Participation credits with Personal Development Points.

Rank	Min Age	Min Title	Level 3 Instructor	Time in Rank	Passing Midterms	Personal Development Points (USA/Canada)	Personal Development Points (Outside of USA/Canada)	Judging Points ^{1,2}	Lineage ³	Instructor's Approval
4 th testing for 5 th	22	-	✓	4 Yrs.	3	16	8	140	-	✓
5 th testing for 6 th	27	-	✓	5 Yrs.	3	20	10	175	-	✓
6 th testing for 7 th	33	Master	✓	6 Yrs.	4	24	12	210	-	✓
7 th testing for 8 th	40	Master	✓	7 Yrs.	4	28	14	245	-	✓
8 th testing for 9 th	48 at time of invitation	Chief Master	✓	8 Yrs. at time of invitation	4	32	16	280	3	Invitational Only

¹ Outside of US/Canada: Judging Points are not currently required, but approval by the Masters' Council for the member's region (Latin America, Europe, etc.) is required. For regions that do not have a regional Masters' Council, the ATA Masters' Council must approve applications to test after considering recommendations by seniors in the region.

² These judging credit numbers have been determined through a thorough analysis of current data. We will continue to collect and evaluate this data over the next three years, and adjustments may be made based on any findings.

³ See Page 9 - 10 for an explanation of the Lineage Requirement.

2. Phase-in timeline for all new updates for Testing Requirements

Anyone earning 4th Degree or above on or after **January 1, 2025**, will be required to fulfill the new requirements before testing for their next rank. Any 4th Degree or above who earned their rank before January 1, 2025, will be subject to the requirements described in the Phase-in column of each table below.

I. Midterms

Requirement	Phase-in
8BD Midterms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have 0-1 years of time in rank as of January 1, 2025, you must pass 4 midterms • If you have 2-3 years of time in rank, you must pass 3 midterms • If you have 4-5 years of time in rank, you must pass 2 midterms • If you have 6-7 years of time in rank, you must pass 1 midterm • If you have 8 or more years of time in rank, you must pass 0 midterms

II. Personal Development Points

Requirement	Phase-in
Personal Development Points (US/Canada)	4 Personal Development Points awarded for each Accredited National Participation Event Credit earned prior to January 1, 2025
Personal Development Points (outside of US/Canada)	2 Personal Development Points awarded for each year of time in rank prior to January 1, 2025

How to earn Personal Development Points Beginning January 1, 2025		
International/ National Events	Seminars (not competition) at Spring Nationals, Fall Nationals, Worlds, PanAm Congress, European Camp, South African Camp. Also Korea Trip, Athlete Development, ATA Max Gathering, Camp Jahng Soo and any other camp hosted by ATA Headquarters and designated as eligible for Personal Development Points	Total of 2 points per Event
Regional Events	Business Playbook (Karate Atlanta, Vision, etc.), regional seminars offered by ATA Headquarters, and Regional Camps approved in advance by ATA Headquarters for Personal Development Points. You can only earn points for a maximum of one Regional Event per year	Total of 2 points per Event
Members teaching at or hosting International/National and Regional Events will receive Personal Development Points equal to those participating in the events.		

III. Judging Points

Requirement	Phase-in
Judging Points for 4 th Degrees – 7 th Degrees	1 Judging Point will be awarded for every 2 Leadership Points earned prior to January 1, 2025
Judging Points for 8 th Degrees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have 0-1 years of time in rank as of January 1, 2025, you need 280 Points • If you have 2-3 years of time in rank, you need 175 Points • If you have 4-5 years of time in rank, need 105 Points • If you have 6-7 years of time in rank, you need 35 Points • If you have 8 or more years of time in rank, you need 0 Points

How to earn Judging Points Beginning January 1, 2025	
Regionals	3 points per ring*
Districts	3 points per ring*
Nationals	5 points per ring*
Worlds	7 points per ring*
<p>RTTLs and others whose ATA-related responsibilities keep them from judging (tournament personnel, seminar instructors or presenters, or people staffing booths in support of the ATA) will earn points as if they were judging.</p> <p>If you have volunteered to judge but are not assigned a specific ring you will still be awarded judging points.</p> <p>If you are unable to fulfill your judging assignment, you must notify the tournament team and get excused. If you have an unexcused absence from your judging assignment, then the points you would have earned for that assignment will instead be deducted from your record.</p> <p>* Because special abilities rings often have only 1-2 competitors, the number of Judging Points you may earn for special abilities rings are limited as follows: 6 points maximum per day at Regionals or Districts, 5 points maximum per day at Nationals, and 7 points per day at Worlds.</p>	

3. Updated Title Requirements: The Title requirements have been updated to allow everyone the opportunity to earn the title if they meet the requirements. The main changes are Collar Requirements, Lineage, and Awards. With regards to Lineage and Awards the ATA has broadened its definitions to encompass a wider scope of recognition and qualification. This change aims to include more achievements within its official recognition framework, potentially covering a broader range of accomplishments.

Rank	Minimum Age	Level 3 Instructor	Time in Rank	Title Requirement	Collar Requirement ¹	Lineage ²	Qualifying Award	PGM & MC Approval ³
Master	28	✓	1 Yr.	-	-	-	-	✓
Senior Master	34	✓	1 Yr.	Master	Blue	3	-	✓
Chief Master	41	✓	1 Yr.	Senior Master	Silver	6	-	✓
Grand Master	50	✓	1 Yr.	Chief Master	Gold	12	✓	✓

¹ Presiding Grand Master MK Lee and the Masters' Council have developed a new path for you to earn blue, silver and gold collars. Instead of basing the collar on your testing numbers in a single year, the new system will base collar award on your cumulative testing numbers throughout your career. This new policy is available to Licensees in the School Operations section of www.atamartialarts.com.

² There is no Lineage requirement for Key Employees. See below for details

³ "PGM & MC" = Presiding Grand Master and Masters' Council

4. Phase-in timeline for all new updates for Title Requirements

I. Collar Requirements

Requirement	Phase-in
Collar Requirement for Senior Master	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have 0-2 years of time in rank as a 6th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, 2025, you will need a Blue Collar once you earn your 7th Degree and seek to become a Senior Master • If you have 3 or more years of time in rank as a 6th Degree Black Belt (or if you are a 7th Degree Black Belt or above) as of January 1, 2025, there is no collar requirement
Collar Requirement for Chief Master	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have 0-2 years of time in rank as a 7th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, 2025, you will need a Silver Collar once you earn your 8th Degree and seek to become a Chief Master • If you have 3 or more years of time in rank as a 7th Degree Black Belt (or if you are an 8th Degree Black Belt or above) as of January 1, 2025, you will need a Blue Collar
Collar Requirement for Grand Master	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have 0-2 years of time in rank as an 8th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, 2025, you will need a Gold Collar once you earn your 9th Degree and seek to become a Grand Master • If you have 3 or more years of time in rank as an 8th Degree Black Belt (or if you are a 9th Degree Black Belt) as of January 1, 2025, you will need a Silver or Gold Collar

II. Lineage Requirements

Requirement	Phase-in
Lineage for Senior Master	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have 0-1 years of time in rank as a 6th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, 2025, you will need 3 in your lineage once you earn your 7th Degree and seek to become a Senior Master • If you have 2-3 years of time in rank as a 6th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, 2025, you will need 2 in your lineage • If you have 4-5 years of time in rank as a 6th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, 2025, you need 1 in your lineage • If you have 6 or more years of time in rank as a 6th Degree Black Belt (or if you are a 7th Degree Black Belt or above) as of January 1, 2025, you need 0 in your lineage
Lineage for Chief Master	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have 0-1 years of time in rank as a 7th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, you will need 6 in your lineage once you earn your 8th Degree and seek to become a Chief Master • If you have 2-3 years of time in rank as a 7th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, 2025, you will need 4 in your lineage • If you have 3-4 years of time in rank as a 7th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, 2025, you will need 2 in your lineage • If you have 5-6 years of time in rank as a 7th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, 2025, you will need 1 in your lineage • If you have 7 or more years of time in rank as a 7th Degree Black Belt (or if you are an 8th Degree Black Belt or above) as of January 1, 2025, you need 0 in your lineage

Requirement	Phase-in
Lineage for Grand Master	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have 0-1 years of time in rank as an 8th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, you will need 12 in your lineage once you earn your 9th Degree and seek to become a Grand Master • If you have 2-3 years of time in rank as an 8th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, 2025, you will need 11 in your lineage • If you have 4-5 years of time in rank as an 8th Degree Black Belt as of January 1, 2025, you will need 10 in your lineage • If you have 6 or more years of time in rank as an 8th Degree Black Belt (or if you are a 9th Degree Black Belt) as of January 1, 2025, you will need 9 in your lineage

The Lineage Requirement is satisfied by counting the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Masters in your lineage (traced through their seniority instructors and training instructors). Masters count for your lineage even if they are no longer active. However, if a master has left the ATA and joined another organization, then the Masters’ Council has discretion not to count that master as part of your lineage. • All active licensees in your lineage (traced through their seniority instructors and training instructors). • All active school or club licenses in your name • All active licenses for schools or clubs that you owned for at least 5 years before transferring them to a different owner • All verified ex-employees with school or club licenses if the licensee was granted in 2024 or later and the following requirements are satisfied: (a) employment is verified with W-2s or other evidence, (b) the employee worked for you for a minimum of 2 years and (c) no more than 12 months passed from the time of employment to the time the ex-employee became a licensee. The Masters’ Council may vote to waive requirement (c) in special circumstances (for example, if your ex-employee goes to college before opening a school or club).

There is no Lineage Requirement for Key Employees, defined as anyone who meets ALL of these requirements:

1. Plays a significant role in the operations of a licensed location
2. Works for a senior who meets the lineage requirements for the title that the Key Employee seeks
3. Has that senior's approval to earn the title

In order for an employee to qualify for the Key Employee exception to the Lineage Requirement, their employer must submit an Online Application for Key Employee and must receive final approval from the Presiding Grand Master and the Masters' Council.

III. International Awards

Qualifying International Awards

Beginning January 1, 2025, any of the following awards will satisfy the Qualifying Award Requirement for the title of Grand Master:

1. Hall of Fame
2. Any of the following awards if earned in 2022 or later:
 - Songahm Special Service Award
 - Presiding Grand Master Award of Honor
 - Sun Lee Service Award
 - Jahngsoo Award